

The Right Bike

Selecting a bike

There are several different types of bike on the market. Selecting the best one for your child can be very confusing. The very cheapest use poor components and may not survive the rigours of childhood cycling. Rigid frame bikes are better for road cycling than suspension bikes, which are designed for off-road use.

Fitting a bike

The child should be able to stand astride the bike with both feet on the ground and be able to touch the ground with the toes of one foot when sitting on the saddle.

As with any bike, you should make sure it is in good working order and is fitted with a bell and reflectors.



Maintenance Check

Before setting out on a bike your child should be taught to check the following:

Tyres should feel firm when squeezed and be free of cuts and bulges

Wheels should not wobble and all spokes should be tight

When the front brake is applied and the bike pushed forward, the rear of the bike should rise

When the rear brake is applied and the bike pushed forward, the rear wheel should skid

Handlebars and saddle should be securely fixed so they do not twist or move up and down

Chain and gears should work smoothly. After oiling, any excess oil can be wiped off with a rag

Lights, reflectors and bell should be securely fixed. Batteries in lights must be working.



Cycling and Your Child

A Fact Sheet for Parents





Photo © Tom Crispin



Cycling to school allows you to avoid the congestion of the school run, and helps your child to become healthier, happier, more independent and confident.

Cycling to school will:

Make your child more alert for the day ahead

Keep your child fitter and healthier

Allow your child to socialise with other children who live locally

Help your child to make connections within their community

Give your child a sense of responsibility and independence

Develop road sense within your child

Reduce traffic and congestion around the school

Improve the quality of the local environment



You may be worried about the safety of your child cycling to school because there is a belief that cycling is particularly dangerous, but this is not the case.

A bicycle journey is just as safe as walking: mile for mile a child cycling on the road is safer than their friend walking on the pavement.

No special clothes are needed for cycling but you should ensure that any loose clothing cannot get caught in moving parts.

Some children choose to wear a helmet, it should be noted that helmets are only designed to withstand low speed impacts, and do nothing to prevent a crash occurring.

In 2005 there were no child cyclist fatalities in the whole of the London area.



Photo © Tom Crispin

Increasingly schools are promoting cycling for children over 8 years old, and National Standard cycle training is often part of the curriculum.

National Standard cycle training is the best way to prepare your child for cycling to and from school. Good on-road courses will cover all the following:

Maintenance – how to carry out a daily bike check

Road positioning – how to see and be seen

Traffic awareness – how to look all around including behind

Communication – getting eye contact with other road users

Making intentions clear – how to signal left and right

Cycle facilities – how and when to use on and off road cycle lanes

Security – how to secure a bike with a lock

Depending on local conditions your child may be offered further training including some or all of the following:

Mini roundabouts – turning left, right and going ahead

Built roundabouts – how and when to use and when to walk across

Pedestrian lights – where to stop and when to move on

Junction lights – when to use and when to walk across

Cycling at night – extra care needed and using lights

Busy roads – how to use and how to cross

Multi-lane roads – how to turn left onto them

Filtering – when to filter and when to wait

Once a child has completed an on road National Standard cycle training course you may like to consider them cycling to school independently