

HOW TO RUN A CYCLE TRAIN

In Guernsey Schools



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This document explains how to set up and run a cycle train for any school in Guernsey, based on the experience of the island's first cycle train at St. Martin's Primary School. It includes templates that can be copied and modified, as well as further resources, guidance and support to make the process simple, straightforward and successful.

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What is a cycle train?

A cycle train is a great way to enable children to ride to and from school semi-independently, giving them the opportunity to gain experience of riding on the road in a more protected environment than riding solo. It is a guided group, marshalled at least front and back by adult volunteer riders, that rides a set route at set times, picking up or dropping off children along the way. Not only does it help children gain competence and confidence in travelling independently, but it's also fun and sociable!

What do you need to set up a cycle train?

First of all, you will need an organiser – ideally someone in the school community. It will take a few hours' work to set up initially, but after that the organisation doesn't take long.

Then you (the organiser) will need the agreement of the school headteacher (any that need reassurance can contact Claire Giles at St. Martin's Primary), and their agreement to promote the cycle train through the normal school communication channel/s.

It is a volunteer-run activity so you will also need some volunteers. They can be the parents of children who are participating or DBS-checked community volunteers. For safety and safeguarding purposes there should always be at least two adults per group of children, but if the group has more than eight children it is recommended to add adults at a ratio of around 1:4. It is useful if you can start the process knowing that you have a few willing volunteers already, but you can recruit more through the registration process.

Most importantly, you will need children who would like to ride to school with their friends.. They are usually in plentiful supply!

How do you set it up?

Once you have the agreement of the school's headteacher, you will want to decide on which day or days you will run the cycle train – for example for a single day, or for a whole week such as Alternative Transport Week, or every Friday. Then you can create a form.

Creating a form

We use Google Forms, so if you do not already have a Google account (e.g. Gmail) it may be easier to set one up. (Alternatively, you could recreate it in Microsoft Forms or similar.)

1. Use [this link](#) to access the template. (Please don't modify the original document.)
2. Click on the three vertical dots in the top right-hand corner and then select 'Make a Copy'. Rename your copy as appropriate.
3. Once you have saved your own copy locally, customise the form to your school. You will need to change the name at the top, the zones (if you're using them) and the map to suit the school's catchment. Everything else can stay the same, unless there's anything you want to change (e.g. the banner at the top, or to add in day/date options if appropriate).
4. Your form is now ready to share/distribute, so click the purple 'Send' button near the top right-hand corner. That will give you options to create a link to the form, or email it directly to people (with the form included in the email if you choose, which often makes the process easier for recipients).

Inviting participation

Use the school's communication channels (e.g. Class Dojo, Facebook page, assembly, school noticeboards etc) to tell the school community about the cycle train. You will want to include some text to explain what a cycle train is. Here is some suggested text that you might want to modify:

Inspired by Alternative Transport Week, we are starting up a cycle train to and from school. The cycle train is a fun way for children to ride their bike to and from school in a group with their friends, accompanied by adults, to help them gain experience and confidence travelling more independently. Routes will be designed to pick up and drop off children as close to their home as possible. If your child is interested in taking part, please fill out this form. There is no specific age limit: as long as children can ride accompanied on the road, they can take part. Parents who are able to ride with the cycle train are also invited to volunteer.

Administering the database

Information from submitted forms will be automatically collated on a spreadsheet (Google Sheets). Contact information, including emails and phone numbers, will be included. It is important to keep this data secure and not share it with anyone other than those who need it for the purpose of running the cycle train. Any group emails should blind copy (bcc) recipients and volunteers (who will need phone numbers for parents of children in their group) should not share or use that information for any other purpose.

Plotting the route/s

Once people have registered their interest, you can start planning your route/s. You will have information from the form about where participating children live, so plot a route that gets as close as possible to each home. You might want to call parents to make sure you know exactly where the pick-up point is, or agree a more convenient one if they live out of catchment or if it is very difficult to incorporate their home in a route. The size of the catchment area and the distribution of participating children's homes relative to the school will influence how many routes you will need.

If you have a Google account, you can use [Google My Maps](#). You can plot the pick-up points and it will help you plan a route, which you can alter manually. Try to avoid busy main roads and tricky junctions if there's a reasonable alternative. Once you've plotted your route/s, it's worth doing a quick recce to help estimate your timings, which you can then add onto your map. Once you've pinned down the details of the route, timings and groups, your map is ready to share. Here's [a link to an example map](#), where each route is a different layer: click the check boxes to show or hide each one.

Finalising details

By now you will have plotted your route/s, and if there is more than one you will know how the children will be grouped. Through the registration process you will hopefully have gathered some more parent volunteers. Make sure you have enough adults (at least two per group, and at an ideal ratio of 1:4).

When on-boarding any new participant or volunteer, a phone call is usually the best form of communication in the first instance so you can make sure they're aware of the details and they have a chance to ask questions.

That can then be followed up with an email detailing the routes and timings, and setting out what everyone can expect. Here is an example:

Information about the cycle train
 Because the St. Martin's Cycle Train is the first of its kind in Guernsey, we thought it would be useful to set out the following guidelines so everyone knows what to expect.

We will:

- ride the pre-arranged routes keeping to the estimated times as closely as possible
- slow down or stop to allow our 'passengers' to join the 'train'
- provide at least two adults to ride with the children – one at the front of the group (the 'driver') and one at the back (the 'conductor'), with the children in the middle – unless we make bespoke arrangements with you
- take all reasonable precautions to ensure the children's safety during the ride
- provide you with the relevant contact details
- contact you if there are any changes to the proposed plans

You should:

- ensure your child's bike is roadworthy - in particular that the brakes work well and the tyres are pumped up and puncture-free
- ensure that your child wears a helmet that's in good condition and ideally also a high visibility jacket or vest (available from school on request)
- be responsible for the decision that your child is competent to ride accompanied on the road
- be aware that this is a volunteer-led activity and that, although all reasonable precautions will be taken to ensure a safe and comfortable journey, no additional insurance has been taken out so cyclists travel at their own risk

On the spreadsheet, you can add tabs for each cycle train day so that you know which volunteers and children are on each route and on each journey. Here's a template of how you could organise the information (NB this just lists the children in order of pick up: some stops there would be more than one):

Route A – Jerbourg	Morning [plus names of volunteers on route]	Afternoon [plus names of volunteers on route]	Contact Number [tel for parents of each child]
0830 – Jerbourg	[Name of child A]	[Name of child A]	[Child A's parent's tel]
0835 – Calais Crossroads	[Name of child B]	[Name of child B]	[Child B's parent's tel]
0838 – Le Hurel	[Name of child C]	[Name of child C]	[Child C's parent's tel]
0839 – Old Mill Triangle	[Name of child D]	[Name of child D]	[Child D's parent's tel]
0842 – Bella Luce	[Name of child E]	[Name of child E]	[Child E's parent's tel]
0845 – School	[Name of child F]	[Name of child F]	[Child F's parent's tel]
	[Name of child G]	[Name of child G]	[Child G's parent's tel]
	[Name of child H]	[Name of child H]	[Child H's parent's tel]
Route B – Damouettes	Morning [plus names of volunteers on route]	Afternoon [plus names of volunteers on route]	Contact Number [tel for parents of each child]
0830 – Damouettes	[Name of child I]	[Name of child I]	[Child I's parent's tel]
0833 – Hubits de Bas	[Name of child J]	[Name of child J]	[Child J's parent's tel]
0835 – Greenacres	[Name of child K]	[Name of child K]	[Child K's parent's tel]
0838 – Church corner	[Name of child L]	[Name of child L]	[Child L's parent's tel]
0845 – School	[Name of child M]	[Name of child M]	[Child M's parent's tel]
	[Name of child N]	[Name of child N]	[Child N's parent's tel]

Route C – Dairy	Morning [plus names of volunteers on route]	Afternoon [plus names of volunteers on route]	Contact Number [tel for parents of each child]
0830 – Dairy	[Name of child O]	[Name of child O]	[Child O's parent's tel]
0833 – Les Bourgs Shop	[Name of child P]	[Name of child P]	[Child P's parent's tel]
0835 – Carmel	[Name of child Q]	[Name of child Q]	[Child Q's parent's tel]
0838 – Les Merriennes	[Name of child R]	[Name of child R]	[Child R's parent's tel]
0845 – School			
Route D – Chemin Le Roi	Morning [plus names of volunteers on route]	Afternoon [plus names of volunteers on route]	Contact Number [tel for parents of each child]
0830 – Chemin Le Roi	[Name of child S]	[Name of child S]	[Child S's parent's tel]
0835 – La Ruelle	[Name of child T]	[Name of child T]	[Child T's parent's tel]
0840 – Rue des Grons	[Name of child U]	[Name of child U]	[Child U's parent's tel]
0845 – School	[Name of child V]	[Name of child V]	[Child V's parent's tel]
	[Name of child W]	[Name of child W]	[Child W's parent's tel]
	[Name of child X]	[Name of child X]	[Child X's parent's tel]
	[Name of child Y]	[Name of child Y]	[Child Y's parent's tel]
	[Name of child Z]	[Name of child Z]	[Child Z's parent's tel]
Route Leaders			
[Volunteer A's name]	[Volunteer A's tel]		
[Volunteer B's name]	[Volunteer B's tel]		
[Volunteer C's name]	[Volunteer C's tel]		
[Volunteer D's name]	[Volunteer D's tel]		
[Volunteer E's name]	[Volunteer E's tel]		
[Volunteer F's name]	[Volunteer F's tel]		
[Volunteer G's name]	[Volunteer G's tel]		
[Volunteer F's name]	[Volunteer F's tel]		

Please remember to keep people's personal data secure and not share it beyond those that need it.

Once set up, how do you get it started?

The day before each cycle train (if it's weekly), send a confirmation message by email (bcc recipients) and/or WhatsApp (if you have decided to set up a group chat – consent-dependent, obviously) covering:

- The route/s and timings;
- Which adults are riding on the/which route, along with their phone numbers;
- The assembly point at school so that those riding on the return journey know where to meet (ideally near the bike racks!);

- The latest weather forecast, if relevant (for example prompting people to bring waterproofs if there's going to be rain); and
- A prompt to let you know any relevant info, e.g. if a child has something after school so won't be on the return ride home, or if they have something bulky to get to school.

Make sure your volunteers have:

- A list of the children they're picking up at each location, with contact phone numbers for each;
- The same kind of information for the return journey so that they know which children to collect at school; and
- Your contact details and the school's phone number.

If any have a bike trailer, or a bike that can carry luggage, that can be handy to help children with heavy bags/musical instruments etc. Even without a trailer, adults can help by taking bags for children that might struggle with them.

What happens on the day?

Morning

For each route, your volunteers should be at the first pick up point by the start time. Set off with the child/ren from the first stop in between the two adults – one of whom should ride at the front and the other at the back. When you get to the next pick-up point, slow or stop to allow the child/ren to join. If any child isn't waiting, the route leader should call the contact number for the parent to check if they're on their way.

Afternoon

Once all the children who are on the return run have assembled with the adult volunteers, set off along the reverse of the morning route and drop children off at their homes along the way. The timings will usually depend on how long it takes for the children to assemble at school, so it's not usually practical to issue an accurate arrival time.

General guidelines

- Ride as a loosely-bunched group, rather than in single file;
- For large groups, additional adults should ride near the middle on the right-hand side of the group;
- Adults should ride in a prominent position and clearly communicate to the group any upcoming turns, traffic lights etc in good time for the children to respond;
- Adults should also proactively communicate with other traffic, bearing in mind that some of the children may not be able to indicate.
- Ride at the pace of the slowest child to keep the group together – which means the adult at the back communicating with the adult at the front of the group;
- If there are any tricky junctions or right-hand turns across busy roads on the route, the lead adult can stop the traffic while the adult at the back of the group can ride across with the children, and take the lead while the adult who'd stopped the traffic slots in at the back; and
- If the group is split (for example by traffic lights) find a safe place to pull over and wait to reassemble.

What does a cycle train achieve?

In our experience, the cycle train has been an incredibly rewarding thing to run as it:

- Helps children learn how to travel independently, increasing their competence and confidence riding a bike on Guernsey roads;
- Gives children who might not otherwise have the opportunity the chance to ride to and from school, increasing their level of physical activity and all the benefits that has (including on concentration in the classroom!);
- Helps parents who might not be able to ride with their child/ren to school;
- Reduces environmental impact (carbon emissions and air quality);
- Improves safety around the school by reducing the number of motorised vehicles in the area; and
- Brings the school community together: it's a fun and sociable thing to do, as it spans different year groups and peer groups.

It's lovely to watch children grow in confidence. Older children often shine through helping younger riders in the group, and many go on to ride to school on non-cycle train days as well. We found unexpectedly that the cycle train helped change parents' travel habits too!

Overall, running a cycle train to and from school expands people's travel options and helps to raise the profile of active travel in the school and wider community.

We have designed this guide to make it as easy as possible to set up your own cycle train, with templates that can be copied and modified for your school. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions: we're keen to see more cycle trains in the island and are happy to help!

Links and further info

Support Contacts

- St. Martin's Primary Active Travel Team: smpactivetravel@gmail.com
- Lindsay de Sausmarez (SMP CT Co-ordinator): hello@lindsay.gg and 07781 431705
- Alex Costen (Active Travel Officer at the Health Improvement Commission): alex.costen@healthimprovement.gg and 01481 210427
- Better Journeys Project: hello@betterjourneys.gg

Active Travel

- [Active Travel | Health Improvement Commission](#)
- [Key findings from the 2022 Children and Young People's Survey](#)
- [Benefits of exercise - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [Children who walk to school concentrate better \(sciencenordic.com\)](http://sciencenordic.com)

Resources

- [Create a Google Account - Google Account Help](#)
- [Template Cycle Train Form](#)
- [Example Google My Map](#)
- [Google My Maps How To Guide](#) and [Video Tutorial](#) (which is long, but it has chapters to help navigate to the relevant sections so you don't need to watch the whole thing)

Thank you and good luck!