

## Threemilestone school and cycling.

### **Introduction.**

I have been a keen cyclist for the last 15 years.

I can remember each of the bikes that I owned as a youngster and I can still remember the feeling of freedom and independence that was created by being able to cycle up to the shop or over to my friend's house when I was growing up.

In September 2008, I was lucky enough to go on a course, run by British Cycling, which trained me to become a Go-Ride instructor. Threemilestone School became a member of British Cycling and we received an excellent bag of equipment and training materials which I was able to use during the summer term when I ran a Go-Ride club, after school for Y5 and Y6 pupils, where they had the opportunity to learn, and then practise, a selection of cycling skills on the school field. These skills are not linked to road safety skills directly (like Bikeability and Cyclewise) they are more closely affiliated to the sort of skills that would benefit children who are considering training to participate in cycling competitions, but most importantly they are great fun. The children, who came to the Go-Ride club, made amazing progress and were delighted with themselves, and were obviously working on their cycling skills at home.

Seeing these children having such a great time on their bikes and knowing how much enjoyment I get from riding my bike, as often and as far as I can, made me consider those children who never get the chance to learn to ride a bike at all.

Additionally, Threemilestone School was one of the earlier schools to write a Travel Plan. We identified that our main focus would be to reduce the number of cars that visit our school, thus improving the quality of the air around our school and making the roads quieter and safer for the children who walk to school. We are aware of all the benefits for the children; socially, environmentally, physically and educationally, that walking to school offers and so, for the last 4 years, we have been actively encouraging our children to use an alternative to a car - wheels or feet to get to school. We have been participating in both of the National Walk to School weeks each year, for the last 4 years, and we organise a whole school walkathon to coincide with the May Walk to School week.

## **Healthy Schools Plus**

In the Spring of 2009, I was able to attend a course, run by the Health Education team, which was introducing Healthy Schools plus. I had been wrestling with the paper work and evidence to reaccredit our school with Healthy School status for quite a while and I went along in the hope that I would move myself further along in that process. What I actually learned was many times more exciting!!!

I applied for a grant to support a Healthy Schools plus project at Threemilestone School. Lucky us; our project was funded and we were off!

## **Aims of our project**

*Raising physical activity* levels is a National, as well as a local, focus for children and young people and our project intended to do this.

*Increasing skills* - the Go-Ride club was available for Y5 and Y6 children, but a limited number of children are able to attend, and only children who are already able to ride a bike and own their own bicycle. I wanted to reach those children who can't yet ride a bike and may not have the opportunity to learn. However, there is a certain stigma amongst older children about not being able to ride a bike, and as I teach Reception children it would be very difficult for me to reach the older children during school time. My proposal was that we would endeavour to teach our youngest children to ride bikes.

*Access for all* - in the same way that our youngest children are all at different stages with their reading and writing skills, so there would be a huge variety in their skill, confidence and experience when it came to cycling. However, I wanted to be able to move each child forward from where they were. This meant that I needed to be able to provide a variety of types and sizes of wheeled vehicles.

## **Resources**

Prior to this project, my head teacher and I had been discussing balance bikes and the way that continental children use them to learn to ride a bike, as opposed to stabilisers in this country, and so we decided that we would buy a couple of balance bikes (£40 from Argos) to put in the shed with the scooters and trikes that we already had. These balance bikes turned out to be worth their weight in gold when it came to developing the skills necessary to be able to ride independently.

However, with the start of this project, we realised that we were going to need a lot more storage space. We researched the cost of another, larger shed, but I was really reluctant to spend a quarter or half of the

money on storage - we wanted the money to be used on equipment for the children. I was put in contact with a very helpful man (also a keen cyclist in his spare time) who was very excited about what we were intending to do and he arranged for us to buy, from *CORMAC*, an old (and slightly damaged) metal container. This wonderful man even arranged that it would be delivered, by crane, onto our school field. (I will not go into the technicalities involved in having an enormous yellow metal container installed onto a PFI controlled school field - I will just say that some people stated it could not be done, but the gentlemen that I dealt with at Interserve and County Hall were incredibly helpful and excited at the thought of helping our youngest children gain such an important skill) We obtained some reconditioned railway sleepers and Mr Dyer, the Chairman of our *Governing Body* collected them in his tractor and trailer. Our container arrived in June, and by the following Monday it was no longer yellow, but a very smart and shiny dark green!!









We now had somewhere to store our new bikes - I cannot tell you how excited the children were!

After we had bought our container, paint and railway sleepers we had sufficient money to buy 3 Dawes bikes, 3 more balance bikes and an assortment of helmets.

The bikes that we bought are of a particularly high quality - they are aluminium so they are light and easier for the children to handle, they have good quality components so they are responsive, and I hope, durable. They are also non-gender specific - this is quite rare in a child's bike! We started to acquire the bikes and balance bikes and storage during the end of the Spring term 2009. We had 60 children in the 2 Reception classes and obviously the 7 balance bikes and 3 silver bikes (which is what the children call the proper bicycles) were wonderful resources but not sufficient to allow the children the access we wanted to give them. Despite the fact that we had the bikes and scooters and trikes out on the playground as often as we could, we supplemented their access by organising regular bike and scooter days. These were days when the children were invited to bring their bikes or scooters to school and we would use them for a variety of activities. We organised obstacle courses, we washed them, we observed how they work (early forces work) and we drew them.

### **Observations**

We kept detailed notes on the children and their developing skills but one of the things that was particularly obvious was that at home, quite a number of the children were not used to moving their own bikes and scooters around and being responsible for them. This meant that at the beginning of this project, the children also had to be taught how to organise themselves in order to be able to learn to ride a vehicle. They had to be taught how to find the helmet that they know fits them, how to park their vehicle safely and carefully and how to move their vehicle around.





We also purchased a dozen waterproof suits and a wide selection of wellies so that we are able to use our vehicles when the field is wet and muddy and the weather is damp.

#### **What we did.**

We are very fortunate at Threemilestone School, as we have 3 large fields and 3 large flat, level playgrounds which are joined by pathways. This means that we have the ideal environment for learning to ride. We allowed the children to use the bikes, balance bikes and scooters as often as we could, but always supervised. The children knew that they were not allowed on any of the vehicles unless they had a helmet on, and as we had a variety of types and sizes, the children learned which helmet fitted them properly. The children learned to balance on the scooters and then the balance bikes and once they were able to balance and propel themselves on our large playgrounds, they learned to pedal and use the brakes on the silver bikes. Those children who were unable to coordinate the pedalling action were able to practise on our 3 wheeled trikes so that they could master the rotating pedals without having to continue to try to balance at the same time.

## **Statistics**

The Reception children started to have extended access to the bikes and wheeled vehicles on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and at that point, 7 of the Reception children (all boys) were able to ride a silver bike independently. We decided that a child was riding "independently" when they were able to ride across the playground unaided and were able to start themselves off and stop themselves without any help.

By the end of the Summer term, 47 of the 60 Reception children were riding the silver bikes independently and the remaining 13 were doing quite well on the balance bikes.

We compared our Reception pupils to the Reception pupils in the nearby schools.

I asked all the primary schools in our area to find out how many of the children in their Reception class(es) can ride a bike independently (without stabilisers).

Threemilestone - 47/60 - 78%

Treleigh - 17/30 - 57%

Treyew - 6/13 - 46%

Veryan - 3/8 - 38%

Gorran - 7/19 - 37%

Mithian - 5/15 - 33%

Tregolls - 9/29 - 31%

Cusgarne - 2/10 - 20%

We felt that these results meant that the project had been successful and had had a significant impact on the skills of our Reception children.

## **Bike and scooter days**

We had several Reception class bike and scooter days. The first was on 13th March 09

The children enjoyed 5 activities throughout the whole day -

- Washing their vehicles and riding through the water and looking at tyre prints
- Sketching their vehicles
- Playing on playground
- Exploring forces

- Obstacle course

The children thoroughly enjoyed the day but generally, stamina was low and they were completely exhausted by the amount of exercise and fresh air. Riding on the field was hard for most, as it was bumpy but not particularly wet. Small wheeled scooters were very difficult on field and many of the children chose not to use them.



The next was on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009

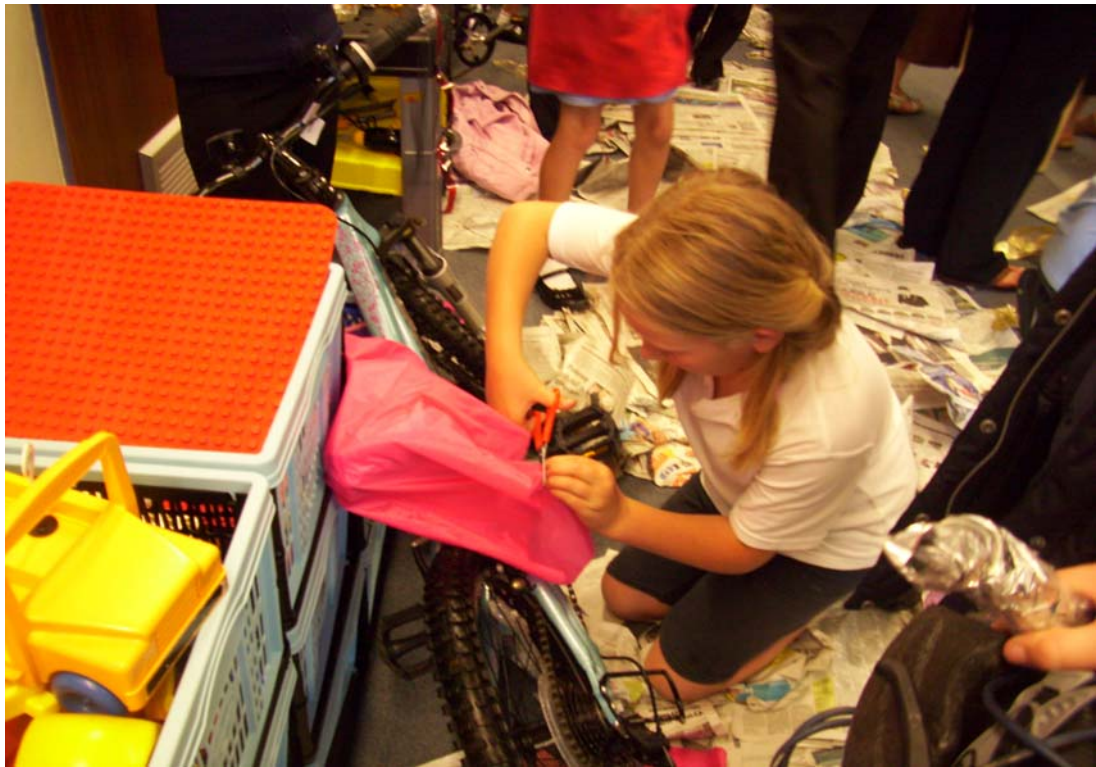




### **Whole school bike day**

This was planned for 16<sup>th</sup> July and was planned in conjunction with the County Travel Officers who came and worked with all our pupils. The activities that the children did included Bling your bike, bike safety and helmets, and how bikes have changed over history. We had originally planned to do some cycling outside, but July 16<sup>th</sup> was quite possibly the wettest day in history and so no-one set foot outside all day! All the children in the school were involved and nearly every pupil brought a vehicle to school.





We had a lot of bikes at school that day!



### **National Bike week**

We kept a daily record of how many bikes are in our bike racks in the summer term. The underlined figures were the figures for National Bike Week.

|                 |           |            |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| 30.04.09 -      | 16 bikes  | 6 scooters |
| 05.05.09 -      | 9 bikes   | 6 scooters |
| 06.05.09        | 11        | 4          |
| 11.05.09        | 22        | 2          |
| 18.05.09        | 23        | 2          |
| 21.05.09        | 18        | 5          |
| 22.05.09        | 22        | 7          |
| 08.06.09        | 16        | 2          |
| 11.06.09        | 20        | 7          |
| <u>15.06.09</u> | <u>58</u> | <u>24</u>  |
| <u>16.06.09</u> | <u>68</u> | <u>23</u>  |
| <u>17.06.09</u> | <u>51</u> | <u>16</u>  |
| <u>18.06.09</u> | <u>57</u> | <u>21</u>  |
| <u>19.06.09</u> | <u>66</u> | <u>20</u>  |
| 22.06.09        | 49        | 8          |

### **Review of last year**

I was delighted with the success that the Reception children had last year; especially as we only started the project in March and we only had 3 balance bikes and 3 silver bikes between 60 children.

I was hopeful that the next intake (36 children) would achieve 100% riding independently.

### **How I spent the second instalment of grant money.**

The next instalment of money from Healthy schools plus was spent entirely on equipment - 7 silver bikes, 4 balance bikes (with brakes) and some more helmets. This had a big impact on the children's progress as, obviously, the more vehicles we had available, the more the children could practise, and the more progress was made.



This photo was taken to commemorate the arrival of our next lot of new bikes.

### **This year - differences**

The children this year have been very fortunate - they are a much smaller year group than last year - 36 compared to 60. This year, the children have had access to the bikes since September and they now have quite a few bikes, and last year they only started using them in March and there were only 3 silver bikes by the end of the year!

I also feel more confident, as an instructor, about knowing when to let the children practise undisturbed (but supervised), and when to intervene and give a little instruction to the children.

### **Results this year**

In September 2009, of the 36 children who had just started school, 4 of them were able to ride a silver bike independently.

At the end of March 2010, of the 36 children in the 2 Reception classes, 34 of them are riding the silver bikes independently. 2 of the smallest girls are doing well with balancing on the balance bikes and are still practising their pedalling action. These two little girls are particularly slight in stature, so strength in their legs is a factor.

May 2010 - all EYFS children riding silver bikes, independently on the field.

### **Proposals for next year and why!**

I think that it is highly likely that all of the Reception children, this year, will successfully master independent bike-riding. We will continue to use the bikes and wheeled vehicles as often as possible (although the downside of teaching them all to ride is that they are less keen on riding scooters and balance bikes once they can ride a real bike) and they will have to continue to practise taking turns and sharing on 10 silver bikes. I am aware that there were about 12 children last year who did not master bike riding who are now in Y1. I have discovered that 15 Y2s are not yet confident to ride a bike. I propose to run a lunchtime club with those children to give them the opportunity to further develop their skills if they want to. As the weather improves, the rest of the school will be using the field for playtime, leaving the playgrounds empty and if we were to go on the front playground, the less experienced riders could practise without the other children watching them.

I shall also run my *Go-Ride Cycling* club again this summer term with those Y5s and Y6s who want to learn some extra cycling skills.

Bikeability training for Y5s and Y6s was available in the Autumn term and approximately 2 dozen children participated.

June 2010 - *Go Ride* club has 12 very keen members, all making very rapid progress and learning loads of new skills.

*Creative Week 2010 - Lexi and Chris ran cycling workshops*

Mon 7<sup>th</sup> June - 12 x Y1s and Y2s

Tues 8<sup>th</sup> June - 12 x Y3s and Y4s

Weds 8<sup>th</sup> June - 12 x Y5s and Y6s



I am organising some Bikeability training this term for any more children who want some cycling proficiency training.

I hope to organise a bike event for the Summer term to coincide with National Cycling week and the Reception children will have another bikes and scooters day.

I am also hoping to get involved with the "Bike it" scheme when it comes to Cornwall.

July 2010 - Threemilestone school are invited to join Bike It scheme. Discussed, with Sam, the possibility of procuring more cycling racks.

I would really like the financial support of Healthy schools plus, for another year, in order to extend my fleet of bikes and wheeled vehicles further, so that I can better accommodate the range of abilities, ages and sizes of children that I am working with in lesson times and between lessons and after lessons. My intention is that in a few years, Threemilestone will be the school where all pupils are able to ride a bike independently, with confidence and enthusiasm. Maybe that will have an impact, not just on their self-confidence and physical coordination, but also, on their behaviour in adult life. Perhaps they will choose not to always rely on carbon fuelled ways of transporting themselves. Maybe they will have a slightly more positive attitude toward exercise. Perhaps they will find learning to drive slightly more straightforward and maybe they will pass their cycling enthusiasm onto their children. After all, disregarding the extremely hilly terrain, is there a more attractive county to cycle in than Cornwall, with all the trails and tram ways at our disposal? Cycling in Britain is blooming and our Olympic success is an inspiration to the nation. There seems very few arguments not to get on your bike and the more people who do, the safer the roads will become.

We learn about road safety at Threemilestone School too!

(The children are not wearing helmets on this, and only this, occasion, because as we discussed with the children, they would not be going very fast on the scooters because there would be a slow speed limit near pedestrians and zebra crossings and traffic lights!)



We try to make our learning experiential, rich in resources and fun.  
The vehicles have been used in quite a variety of ways!

