

NEWS

Environment



Coun Douglas Johnson, executive member for climate change, environment and transport, discusses climate change issues with children at Porter Croft Church of England Primary Academy

School's five years campaigning for safe green travel for pupils

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It has been a busy week at a Sheffield primary school, where students have been hard at work addressing climate change issues.

Porter Croft Church of England Primary Academy on Pomona Street is also one of four schools in the city with a School Street, which restricts traffic on a road outside the school during drop-off and pick-up periods as part of its ongoing campaign.

And its success in encouraging safe and sustainable travel did not come easily, as it took five years to

persuade students and families to choose cleaner methods to commute to school rather than driving.

Speaking as world leaders gather for the COP26 climate change summit in Glasgow, headteacher Cath Thomas said the school had staged active promotions over the years by encouraging pupils to walk to school, introducing Wheeley Wednesdays and campaigning for the road to be closed over the past three years.

This school has achieved Mode Shift - Active travel Gold status and is now aiming for the newly created platinum status.

Ms Thomas said: "We got the road closed in front of our school beginning September and a one-way

system was put in place at the beginning of half term which helps to stop traffic in front of the school at the end of the day.

"I think people found it tricky at first about where to park but now everyone is very calm, and this has become a very positive area."

Coun Douglas Johnson, executive member for climate change, environment and transport, who visited the school and praised its efforts to address climate change.

He said the 30-minute road closure during the beginning and end of the school day is part of a trial by the council and has been introduced at schools which have successfully enforced

traffic calming measures.

Coun Johnson said: "As a result, the council has been able to make alterations to the road, making it one way and putting up signage to warn people about how important not to be driving down here during school time."

The three other schools involved in the experiment are Carfield Primary School, Nether Edge Primary School and Greystones Primary School, but Coun Johnson encouraged others to get on board.

Ms Thomas said tackling climate issues has been well ingrained in the school, with the children participating in COP26-related activities.

She said: "We think the climate change issues are

very important at our school so the children this week have been doing a lot of work on COP26 activities.

"We have been writing letters to MPs to ask what they're doing and explain to them what we are already doing as a school.

"We have also been building Lego models for a better world, we have been planting seeds, making posters and writing poems and generally finding out what COP26 means for the world."

The United Nations is currently hosting the 26th global climate change conference, chaired by the UK,

and is widely regarded as the world's last best chance to stop climate change from becoming uncontrollable.

Former US president Ba-

rack Obama told the summit that island nations are the 'canaries in the coalmine' of climate change and are sending a message on the need for urgent action.

Speaking as the talks enter their second week, he said not enough has been done to combat climate change and called for united action.

Mr Obama said larger nations should shoulder more of the burden of fixing the climate crisis - as a theme of the talks on Monday is support for poorer countries to cope with the problem.

He said: "In many ways, islands are the canary in the coalmine in this situation.

"They are sending a message now that if we don't act then it's going to be too late."