

# **OPERATION JEEPERS**

## **Northumbria Police**

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# **OPERATION JEEPERS: PROMOTING ROAD SAFETY OUTSIDE SCHOOLS.**

**Force: Northumbria Police**

**Contact: PC Keith Flaherty 0191 4547555 Ext 64035**

Operation Jeepers is the name given to an initiative aimed at promoting road safety and reducing the number of school runs made by parents using motor vehicles. This initiative was run in Gateshead East Area Command during 2003. The community beat managers took ownership of the problems on their geographic area of responsibility and approached the problem in a systematic and problem-solving manner.

The relevant community beat manager was contacted by the head teacher of Windy Nook Primary School concerning the very real problem the school had with parents parking their vehicles outside of the school when delivering and collecting their children.. Parents were parking in contravention of yellow zigzag lines painted outside the school entrance and were committing other road traffic offences. However the more important problem was one of safety. The vast numbers of cars posed a serious threat to the safety of pupils.

Gateshead Local Authority had already entered into partnership with numerous primary schools in the area under the Safer Routes to School initiative. PC Flaherty worked within the remit of this program but approached the problem at Windy Nook School by adopting a graded response to solving the problem with parking, which involved both education and enforcement.

The problem was to be tackled in 3 phases:

- Sending a letter to parents warning them of the danger to children their excessive car use was causing.
- Officers attending the school at the relevant times and giving parents verbal advice or warnings.
- If above phases have no success dispatching traffic wardens to prosecute parents using the fixed penalty system.

In addition to the above measures the Community Beat Manager also gave practical displays in the use of the Muniquip speeding device. This fitted in with the technology aspect of the school curriculum and also displayed the dangers of speeding to the children and the police attitude towards it

The initiative proved to be so successful that the letter and advice was all that was needed to solve the problem. To date no active program of prosecution has been needed. The initiative will serve as a blueprint on how to liaise with partners and implement a measured policy of enhancing road safety at the town's primary schools.

## **SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL INITIATIVE**

The Safer Routes to School initiative is a program ran by Gateshead Local Authority. The prime aim of this scheme is to reduce the number of instances in which parents take their children to school by car. The congestion caused by vehicles parking outside of school entrances had become a major problem in the borough. Parents' vehicles caused major problems of obstruction and congestion when they took their children to school in the mornings and picked them up in the afternoon. The peak times for congestion were identified as being between 8.45am and 9.00 am in the morning and between 3.00pm and 3.15pm in the afternoon.

The scheme's aim falls under the umbrella of the government's School Travel Plans, which aims to promote partnership working between the Local authority, individual primary schools, the police and local transport agencies. The overriding aim of this national initiative is to reduce the number of car journeys made to school and thereby **promote road safety**.

Gateshead Council currently works with 29 school communities to develop a School Travel Plan. A working group has been formed at each school made up of governors, parents, school staff, parents and pupils. Each school community is working to produce a written document, which highlights the need to reduce the number of car journeys. A list of schools in Gateshead East Area Command, which have signed up to this agreement, is listed at appendix 1. However, the document will also highlight what engineering changes have taken place around the school, or what engineering changes the would like to see effected in order to promote road safety and especially the safety of the pupils attending the school.

Police involvement with the scheme is seen as an integral factor in achieving lasting success. Police officers are encouraged to promote road safety and enforce road traffic legislation around school entrances by using a graded approach. The officers are invited to attend school at the appropriate times and advise parents of the dangers their parking poses and also politely warn those parents whose parking is actually violating road traffic legislation that they could face prosecution. The final stage would be actually prosecuting those parents who continually commit offences when parked outside school gates. The identified offences are:

- Parking within the yellow zigzags at the school entrance
- Double parking
- Willfully causing an obstruction
- Parking to near to a junction

## **The problems at Windy Nook School**

Windy Nook School is located in the east of Gateshead and is one of the 29 schools, which have signed up to develop a School Travel Plan with the Local Authority. The school faces a single carriageway road with a speed restriction of 30mph. The school has a marked yellow line zigzag close to the entrance of the school, which provides some parking spaces, however these are at a premium. A map of this school and the surrounding area can be seen at appendix 2. Mrs. Bathan, the head teacher at the school contacted her local community beat managers PC 843 Flaherty and 1421 Foster in order to discuss the worsening situation with them. The school head highlighted concerns about school parking in and around the area of the school by parents who were dropping off their children in the morning and picking them up again late afternoon. Parents were indiscriminately parking vehicles around the entrance to the school and the area where yellow keep clear lines were situated.

## **Police Response**

PC Flaherty responded to the situation at Windy Nook School by implementing **Operation Jeepers** appendix 3. The aim of the operation was quite clear and was to:

- Promote road safety around the school
- Enforce road traffic legislation if necessary
- Educate the pupils' parents about the dangers of their actions

All the above measures were to be carried out with the full cooperation of staff at Windy Nook and the Local Authority.

**Operation Jeepers** was to be ran in three distinct phases and showed the graded approach to the problem by PC Flaherty.

**Phase 1** A letter was drafted and a copy of the letter was addressed to the parents/guardians of the pupils at the school. The letter informed the parents of the dangers of indiscriminate parking around the school and the likelihood of prosecution under the fixed penalty scheme

**Phase 2** Community Beat Managers provided a high visibility presence at the schools on selected days. Offenders would be given verbal advice if necessary.

**Phase 3** It was intended under this final phase to get traffic wardens to visit the area at the relevant times if the other two phases had had no effect. Fixed Penalty Tickets would be issued or the registration numbers of offending vehicles and the drivers would be dealt with through the extended fixed penalty scheme

PC Flaherty composed the letter, a copy of which is attached at appendix 4 and the headmistress at the school agreed to photocopy the letter and give a copy to every pupil to take home to their parents/guardians. The letter was not composed in threatening terms but merely pointed out to the parents that staff and the police were relying on their assistance to resolve the parking problem outside of the school. PC Flaherty was anxious to stress the dangers of indiscriminate parking, pointing out that the situation was *an accident waiting to happen*.

However, the officer also made it quite clear in the letter that if parents did not cooperate then they would be prosecuted if found committing any offences.

In addition to the above measures officers used the Muniquip to monitor speeding on Albion Street outside the school. Speeding was another concern highlighted by the head of the school.

Officers also conducted a road safety lesson using the Muniquip for the benefit of the children. The children witnessed police officers using the device, stopping offending motorists and showing how the police can enforce laws on speeding. This exercise had two benefits: it fitted in with the technology side of their curriculum and secondly it made them aware of the dangers of speeding motor vehicles.

**Operation Jeepers** has been so successful that PC Flaherty and his colleagues have not progressed to phase three of the operation. The letter and accompanying advice given to parents outside the school has had the required effect, with the result that the problem at the school with indiscriminate parking has been resolved.

The above operation was a simple initiative, which showed good partnership working by the Local Authority, school staff, police and ultimately the parents of schoolchildren to resolve a growing problem. The operation has been such a success that it has been decided to use this particular initiative as a template for dealing with all the other schools who are contracted to the Safer Routes to School protocol in Gateshead East.

## Appendices

1. Schools involved in School Travel Plan Program
2. A map of Windy Nook School and immediate area
3. Operation Jeepers
4. Letter to parents/guardians.

**Schools involved in School Travel Plan Programme 2003**

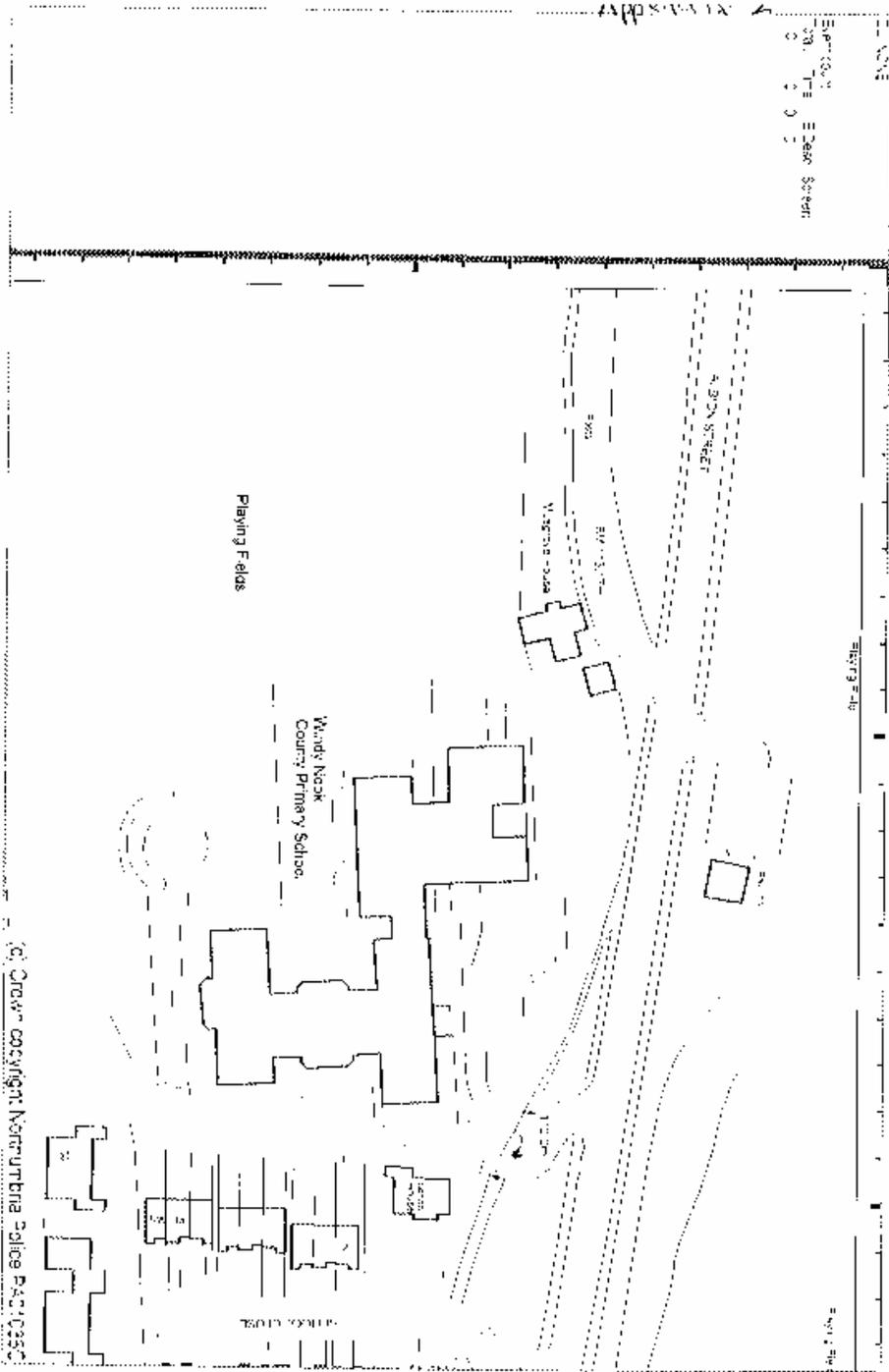
17 schools in the east area - F.A.O. Sgt. Clive Prest

1. Harlow Green Infant School
2. St. Anne's RC Primary School, Harlow Green
3. Golegate Primary School
4. Oakfield Infant School
5. Oakfield Junior School
6. The Drive Primary School
7. Fell Dyke Primary School
8. Kells Lane Primary School
9. Roman Road Primary School
10. South Street Primary School
11. Beauding Primary School
12. St. Joseph's R.C. Primary, Gateshead
13. Glynwood Community Primary School
14. St. Peter's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School
15. Windy Nook Primary School (Jan 04)

14 schools in the west area - F.A.O. Sgt. Paul Hewson/Paul Colburn

- Ryton Infant School
- Ryton Junior School
- Dunston Hill Primary School
- St. Mary's RC Primary School, Whickham
- Emmaville Primary School
- Fellside Primary School
- Front Street - Whickham
- St. Mary and St. Thomas Aquinas
- Kingscote Comprehensive School
- Barkby Mow Primary School (Jan 04)
- Marley Hill Community Primary School
- Ravenworth Terrace Primary School
- St. Joseph's Catholic Infant School - Birley
- Winkton West Lane Community Primary School

**Further schools to be advised as they join the School Travel Plan Programme**



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**OPERATION**

**JEEPERS**

## INFORMATION

Windy Nook Primary School is situated on Albion Street, Gateshead. The school faces a single carriageway road with a speed restriction of 30 mph. The road has a marked yellow line zig zag zone close to the entrance of the school. There is a small car park opposite the school which provides some parking spaces, however these are at premium. It is a common fact that most family's own a car and there is an increased volume of traffic on our roads. The road is at its busiest at the beginning of school day and at the end of the school day. All of these factors have led to parking problems at the school. Parents/ guardians of pupils who attend the school are parking their vehicles indiscriminately during these periods causing a danger to the pupils of the school. The road is subject to a long term problem solving approach with the local authority and a safer route to school plan has been implemented.

## INTENTION

To identify persons who park their vehicles indiscriminately or in contravention of any road traffic legislation. Deal with the offenders fairly through the use of advice and if necessary enforcement. Continue to liaise with the school and the local authority over the safer route to school plan.

## METHOD

The operation is to be executed in three phases:

- Phase one A letter is to be drafted and addressed to the parents/ guardians of the pupils at the school. The letter will inform the parents/ guardians of the dangers of indiscriminate parking and the likelihood of prosecution under the fixed penalty scheme.
- Phase two Community Beat Managers will provide a high visibility presence on selected days at the appropriate times. Offenders will be given verbal advice if deemed necessary.
- Phase three Enforcement. Traffic Wardens are to visit the area at the relevant times, issue fixed penalty notices or note the registration of offending vehicles and deal with through the extended fixed penalty scheme.

## ADMINISTRATION

The phase one letter is to be drafted by the Community Beat Managers responsible for the area where the school is located. The school have agreed to photocopy the letter and each child within the school will be given a copy to take home and give to their parents/ guardian. Traffic Wardens shall submit any FPN's as normal and any

extended fixed penalty's through the Central Ticket Office at HQ. The OIC Pc Flaherty is to be notified regarding the number of notices issued.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Normal Airwave channel GAT 1 will be utilised.

## RISK ASSESSMENT

The risk assessment is deemed low in this operation. Officers/ Wardens carrying out duties in the area of the school are advised to wear high visibility vests. When speaking to a motorist this should be done from the pavement and officers are advised not to stand at the drivers side door and expose themselves to the obvious dangers of traffic on the road.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Officers/ Wardens are reminded that any action they take must be governed within the principles of the Human Rights Act, that is being legal, necessary and proportionate.



## Northumbria Police

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15th October 2003

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to ask for your help in solving a problem that we are all concerned about: the issue of cars parking outside of schools in the area. Cars are parked near schools, in places that are not only unlawful, but cause a **real danger** to pupils and everyone going in and out of school. It is no exaggeration to say that an accident is waiting to happen.

Just take a moment to imagine how **you** would feel, if by indiscriminate parking, **you** were responsible for a child being injured or even killed? Was it worth saving a few minutes extra walk?

We are asking you to help us to make matters safer for your children.

Do you need to use your car?

Could you leave 10 minutes earlier and walk to school?

Could you leave 5 minutes earlier and find a safe place to park 300 metres away from the school?

This school year we will be taking action against anyone who commits an offence. We will be issuing fixed penalty tickets to anyone who is committing an offence. This means a fine of £30 to be paid within 28 days. Additionally, if a person commits a second offence outside the school we will be looking to prosecute that person through the courts.

If you have to use your car, please think about where you park it. We realise that parking is a problem due to the amount of vehicles on the road today, but we should all have the same priority - the safety of children.

Thank you for your co-operation.

PC 8431 Labetty and PC 1421 Foster

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Northumbria Police Authority