

Cycling – Health & Safety

Here we are nearing the end of summer and the start of a new school year. Which reminds me that at Burford School we will soon be planning the Cycling Awareness course that we aim to run for Yr 6 kids in the summer term.

But have you had a fun summer with plenty of exercise? I ask this because cycling is a wonderful form of exercise. It can be gentle and fun, or use it as a hard aerobic workout. And the excellent thing about it is that it takes the weight off your legs, so it won't stress your knees like jogging. And it doesn't cause stress on your back like swimming can. So, it's a good safe exercise as well as being fun and a means of transport that's faster than walking (or jogging) and healthier than motoring.

Ah, but it's not Safe on our roads, I hear you saying. Well you do have a point there, even though accidents do happen to car occupants and pedestrians as well. So how do we make it safer? First we need to be visible. Bright colourful clothes during the day and light, preferably reflective gear at night. There are all sorts of reflective bands and jackets available if you cycle regularly at night. You should, by law, have reflectors front and rear on your bike, and of course there are lights for night use, again front and rear. A lot of cyclist these days seem to favour flashing light at the rear. There are two points worth noting here, it's are not legal unless used as a secondary light attached to your clothing AND they are not as safe because judging distance to one of these flashing lights is much more difficult and hence dangerous than a normal light.

What about our tender bits? Well nowadays you can get Gel filled saddles for bikes that are very comfortable, but I didn't mean those tender bits. I'm talking about your head. It is very fragile when it comes into contact with a hard road surface even from a modest 4 to 6 feet. **SO WEAR A HELMET.** In Cycling Awareness we insisted on them before Bucks County Council made them mandatory for all participants.

I find it frustrating to see kids, not all I hasten to add, that we have had on the course a few weeks earlier who have already given up wearing a helmet, where are the parents in this? Do they not care? Some obviously don't, but others set a confusing standard by putting their young kids in helmets but NOT themselves. If anything happens to them, who will look after the kids? We wear safety belts in cars as a matter of course now, so why not helmets? So start them wearing a helmet as soon as they start on 2 wheels and get one for yourself at the same time. AND wear it.

Mike Williams was only telling me the other day how he came off his bike coming down near the 3 Horse Shoes, not particularly fast, he pulled into a lay-by and his bike slid away from him on the shiny granite cobbles. He very badly grazed his shoulder and had large lumps of gravel stuck into his helmet and in his own words "I shudder to think what might have happened without the helmet". Something similar happened to my daughter. She confused the front and rear brakes and went straight over the handlebars landing on her nose; the front of the helmet protected her face as well as her head. I also personally know of other stories that also prove the merit of a helmet. Wear it as a fashion statement; a good one costs less than a pair of trainers.

And finally understanding how to cycle safely as a road user is a very important part of staying safe and healthy on the road. We aim to do this for any kids aged 10 or

over, aimed at Yr 6. The Cycling Awareness course is run by volunteers on behalf of Bucks County Council for you. Any volunteers, parents or guardians of children from any years in the school, or even outside the school, will be more than welcome. It's great fun and a very worthwhile exercise, in more ways than one.

Happy and Healthy cycling.
Robin StJohn Smith – 01628 474363