

### Translink Travel Challenge Case Study – St Malachy’s Primary School

Teacher Name	Leverne Murphy
School Name	St Malachy’s Primary School
Number of Pupils	327
Eco-Schools Status	4 Green Flags
Topic	Translink Travel Challenge

#### Information on the Translink Travel Challenge

Translink sponsor the Eco-Schools transport topic, which encourages schools to think about developing sustainable travel plans. Together with Eco-Schools they have run the Travel Challenge for the past decade. In 2019, we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this successful collaboration.

As well as helping the environment and saving money, the Challenge has the added benefit of reducing congestion at the school gates, promoting physical and mental health, and teaching pupils valuable life skills. The Challenge comes with a handy toolkit of resources including lesson plans, inspirational ideas for completing your challenge, and monitoring sheets for recording your results. The Challenge helps schools progress towards the Eco-Schools Green Flag award and of course there are some great prizes on offer too.

#### Questions and Answers with St Malachy’s Primary School, Newry

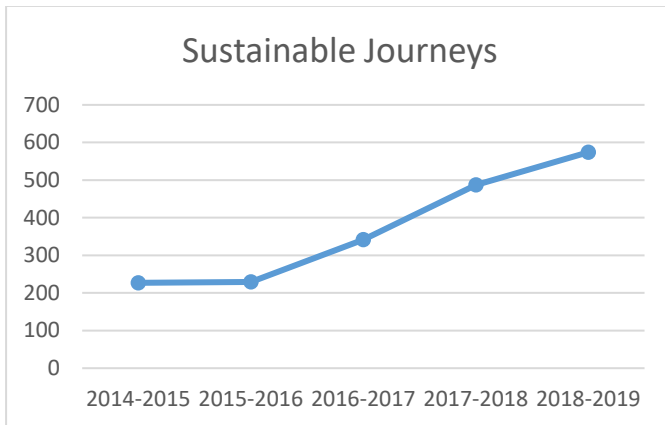
- Q. Why did you want to take part in the Translink Travel Challenge?
- A. Initially we wanted to take part in the Challenge as it was a great way to promote the topic of Transport and to obtain ‘Green Flag’ status. Now we take part in the Challenge to promote environmental education to future generations. One of our Student Council members said, **“We are an Eco-School and we want to represent our school as such to show we are the best school.”**
- Q. When did you start your first challenge?
- A. First recorded challenge started in 2011/12
- Q. How was the Challenge received by pupils, parents and school members the first year of your participation?
- A. In our first year the Challenge was received as something exciting, we could see it was for the benefit of everyone even if they were not directly involved. We informed parents and the local community through our Eco-Newsletter and school notice board as well assemblies. We had just obtained the Bronze and Silver awards and wanted to achieve Green Flag status for our school, so everyone was on board with this new initiative.
- Q. Did you find it easy to run the Challenge for 10 years in a row?
- A. The Challenge was/is easy to run because Eco-Schools have designed it that way! Chiemezue from our Student Council said, **“I thought the travel challenge was really good because you can’t just be using your car all the time, if we lived a long way away we came up with solutions, just so we could take part in the Challenge.”** Taking part in the Challenge for many years has meant it is second nature to the children coming to school now to think in a more

sustainable way, and not just for travel. Our school knows the benefits of being an Eco-School and welcomes taking part in such challenges.

- Q. Could you describe the response to the Challenge for the years following your first one?
- A. **“I was in Primary 4 when I first took part, it was really fun because I was getting exercise and helping the environment. I really liked walking with my friends”**, said Madison. As a teacher and Eco-Schools coordinator, I found it easy to continue the Challenge because the children are enthusiastic about taking part each year; I could not have done it without the students. Every child is happy to take part every year, as an individual it is great to do a little bit to help your environment. The train trip to Belfast for the Celebration Event has also been a great incentive. Translink have always made us feel like first class passengers, the children and I feel rewarded for all our hard work.
- Q. How did you decide to run the Challenge in your school? Describe how you promoted it and encouraged other pupils to take part.
- A. We promoted the Challenge through an assembly, letting everyone know the benefits of travelling sustainably and how they could do this. The Eco-Schools activities were a great help in promoting this to children and teachers. A possible train trip to Belfast if we won was also a great incentive. The big chart was discussed and put up in an area which was accessible to the children filling it in, but also to inform others of our progress (we still do it this way today). The children taking part included the Student Council members, eco-club members and the sunshine club (early morning club, aged 6 to 11). Each morning the children would fill in their travel information to and from school and discuss the different ways in which they could travel to school, this included the walking bus (organised by parents) or the children would meet up with friends on their route to school.
- Q. Explain how you reported your results to Translink and Eco-Schools
- A. We collated all our journey results over a 4-week period as it was then and sent them off to Eco-Schools who worked out how sustainable we were as a school.
- Q. How would you promote the programme to other schools and institutions as ambassador of the Challenge?
- A. We would promote the Translink Travel Challenge by saying **‘WHY NOT TAKE PART’**. There are so many advantages to taking part, like: it is fun, your school can have Green Flag status, it develops a sense of camaraderie, and it is easy to fill in the chart or to do it online. Show them pictures of our fantastic time in Belfast, during the Final Event, when we won and most of all, to develop an environmental awareness and to know that they can actually contribute to a better and more sustainable form of transport in their daily lives.
- Q. What are your future hopes for travel at St Malachy’s?
- A. We asked the Student Council what our travel hopes for St Malachy’s would be, they said: in an ideal world they would like to see compulsory car share, which means less cars, a free electric bus service for all children attending primary and secondary schools and walking buses all year round. In the meantime, we need a car park, as there are no actual parking spaces outside of our school area. More people should walk to school throughout the school year and not only at Challenge times. Bring back the Lollipop Person who helps you across the busy school road. These ideas will be brought to the attention of our Principal. We will continue to take part in the Translink Travel Challenge each year and strive to make an environmental difference to the way we travel through education and the Eco-Schools programme.

### St Malachy's Primary School – five years of results

Five years results submitted by St Malachy's, on the online platform of the Eco-Schools NI website, show a significant increase in sustainable journeys at the end of the two-week project. A percentage increase of 153% has been registered from 2014-15 to 2018-2019, with a consistent growing and positive trend; this gives evidence of the active participation of the school to the Challenge and their commitment to improve their lifestyle towards more sustainable ways to go to and from school.



*Thank you, on behalf of St Malachy's pupils, Student Council, Miss N. Rafferty & Mrs L. Murphy*



First Year Participation of St Malachy's Primary School



A collage of years of St Malachy's Travel Challenge

## St Malachy's Primary School Eco-Schools Project Officer Visit



On 28<sup>th</sup> February the Eco-Schools Project Officer visited St Malachy's to meet Ms Leverne Murphy and the Eco-Committee. The meeting was pupil focused, and questions were asked, to better understand their attitude towards the programme and sustainable transport. The overall outcome from their answers was excellent.

The pupils have a complete understanding of what sustainable transport means and why it is important to improve the quality of our everyday life through-positive behaviour change. One of the most interesting aspects was to observe the pupils' enthusiasm while talking about the Challenge and the social aspect of it. Walking to and from school is a moment to increase social relationships and to improve social skills. Pupils clearly see sustainable transport as a way to tackle environmental issues, and they definitely contribute to it. To the question, 'What is your favourite part of the Challenge?' 80% of the students replied the social aspect of it, along with their commitment to reduce air pollution. A unanimous answer was given by the students when asked if they can see the entire school participating with enthusiasm to the challenge. More than 50% of the students interviewed said they enjoy the walking to and from school so much, they have decided to walk all year when the weather is decent outside the two-week Challenge.



The pupils feel empowered by this project since they can see how their behaviour has a strong impact on community behaviour. They are the leaders in this programme and they are proud of that.

During the final event for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Translink Travel Challenge, St Malachy's pupils and teachers were awarded with a special recognition for their 10 years commitment to the project.

