

# FACTS about COP26 & Air Pollution for parents & carers

## What is COP26?

COP26 is the **2021 United Nations annual climate change conference** which is taking place in at the Scottish Events Campus (**SEC**) in **Glasgow** and will be the biggest meeting of world leaders that the UK has ever hosted!

Each year, COP takes place in a different country. COP25 **was held in** Madrid, Spain, in 2019, during which **Greta Thunberg** gave a now-famous speech. During this meeting, important **targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions** were agreed.

At COP meetings, governments from across the globe agree on **targets for the future**, with the aim of **reducing greenhouse gases** and **protecting the planet**. These decisions affect people all over the globe; they help us all work together to become **greener** and more **sustainable**.

Due to COVID-19 this year's conferences was delayed and is now happening on the **1st-12th of November 2021**.

## What does COP26 mean for our school?

We are committed to do our part and help **alleviate the climate crisis** by **encouraging** as many **parents, pupils** and **teachers** to travel to and from school in the most **sustainable ways** possible. This is why we are encouraging pupils to **walk, cycle, scoot, take public transport** or **Park & Stride**, where families live too far away from school to sustainably travel the entire journey.

## What can you do?

Help us to make a cleaner, greener and safer school run by **waking, cycling, scooting** and **Park & Striding** to and from school whenever possible. Let's keep our kids safe by keeping our school gates clear from congestion and air pollution!

## How to reduce your carbon footprint?

- Walk, cycle or scoot on short everyday journeys, including the school run
- Start recycling at home and on the go
- Composting
- Using re-usable water bottles and plastic-free straws
- Turn the lights off when leaving a room

Thousands of people just like you are already playing their part. So why not become an **Everyday Climate Hero** by reducing your impact on the environment today!



To find out other ways to reduce your carbon footprint check out:

<https://www.soilassociation.org/take-action/protect-the-environment/cut-your-carbon-footprint/>

### What is Net Zero?

Net zero means finding a balance between the greenhouse gases that an individual or organisation puts into the atmosphere, and those that are 'taken out'.

In other words, it's making sure that for **all the gases emitted**, you are **removing the same amount from the atmosphere**, making yourself '**carbon neutral**'. Achieving net zero is necessary if we are to tackle climate change and protect people, the planet and our natural world.

The UK has set a target of being Net Zero by 2050.

### What does Net Zero mean for me?

The first step to becoming net zero is to avoid emitting greenhouse gases in the first place. This could mean using **less energy** at school, **walking, cycling or scooting**, instead of going by car, and **reducing your food waste**.

The second step is to find ways to neutralise or 'offset' any remaining emissions that can't be avoided, as it's impossible to reduce emissions completely. Offsetting can be done in a variety of ways, including **planting trees** (which absorb excess greenhouse gases from the atmosphere).

Sourced from: <https://together-for-our-planet.ukcop26.org/schools-pack-get-inspired/>

## FACTS about Air Pollution for parents & carers

### What is air pollution and why is it so bad for my child?

Air pollutants are substances in the air that can harm people, plants and animals. Some air pollutants are naturally occurring, such as the pollutants released by wildfires and volcanic eruptions. Other air pollutants are **human-caused**, such as the pollutants released by **transportation, electricity** generation and **industrial** production. Air pollutants can cause **health problems for humans** and contribute to **climate change**.

**Road traffic**, such as cars, motorbikes, vans, buses and lorries are the biggest causes of air pollution! That's why **walking, cycling and scooting to school is so important!**

### Air pollution can cause:

- Breathing problems
- Lung and heart diseases such as asthma
- Affect your immune system (so you catch infections more easily)
- Make you cough, wheeze, sneeze, feel dizzy and have itchy eyes
- Give you green snot
- Difficulty sleeping



### Did you know?

- In 2019 in the UK, nearly **38.4 million vehicles** were contributing to the pollution in the air.
- Pollution is one of the main causes of asthma which affects 5.4 million people in the UK. 1.1 million children (1 in 11) are receiving treatment for asthma and 4.3 million adults (1 in 12). (YPTE, 2021).
- **Petrol fumes** contain **carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, soot, oil vapour and lead** - all potentially dangerous to human health.

## ACTIVITIES to complete with your family

### ON YOUR WALK, CYCLE, SCOOT OR PARK & STRIDE TO SCHOOL

Why not participate in the **Sustainable Travel Scavenger Hunt** and see what pollutants you can spot with your child. How many did you see? Did the pollutants outweigh the positive activities/objects/animals you spotted?

Can you spot?	How many did you see? (estimate)	What effect does this have on the air you breath (+/-)?
Vehicles driving		
People walking		
People scooting and biking		
Vehicles idling (parked with engine on)		
Litter		
Electric cars		
Recycling bins		
Electricity (e.g. streetlights, electricity towers)		
Trees		

At the end tally up to see if you have more + or – on your chart. Is your walk to school too polluted?



### EXTRA ACTIVITY AT HOME

With your children plan your walk to school and count how many vehicles you see on your way. Why? To help you understand that road vehicles are the main cause of air pollution in London. But remember to follow the green cross code and be careful on the roads. Remember your children are watching how you behave when walking or cycling so setting a good example is very important.

Vehicle type	Tally	Vehicle type	Tally
Car		Lorry	
Motorbike or moped		Pedestrian	
Bus		Bike / Scooter / Skateboard	
Van		Other	

### AT HOME – QUIZ FOR PARENTS (Ask your child/ren to quiz you)

**Homework:** Now test your parents on how much they know about air pollution! Ask them these 7 easy questions and give them a gold star if they get more than 6 right and a silver star if they get more than 4 right.

The answers are on the back and only you can see those. When the quiz is finished, read your parents the right answer if they got a question wrong. Good work!

#### 1. What is air pollution?

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#### 2. Why is air pollution bad?

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#### 3. What is the biggest cause of air pollution?

- a) Burning fossil fuels at home (coal, wood or natural gases)
- b) Chemical use at home
- c) Industry or power stations (burn gas, coal or oil to generate power)
- d) Road traffic



4. What can you do to reduce air pollution at home?

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5. What can you do to reduce air pollution on your way to school?

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6. What causes 150 balloons of air pollution in 1 minute? Have a guess?

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7. What's the least pollutant way to travel to school?

- a) Scooting
- b) Electric car
- c) Public transport
- d) Walking
- e) Cycling

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. What is air pollution?

Answer:

**Air pollution is made** from gases, smoke, vapours or dust in the air that can harm people, plants and animals. The main air pollutants in our cities are **caused by people as they travel around by different forms of transport, make electricity** or produce things using **industrial processes**.

2. Why is air pollution bad?

Answer:

Air pollution causes health problems for humans and contributes to climate change.

**Air pollution can cause:**

- Breathing problems
- Lung and heart diseases such as asthma
- Affects your immune system (so you catch infections more easily)
- Make you cough, wheeze, sneeze, feel dizzy and have itchy eyes
- Difficulty sleeping



Every year, air pollution causes up to 36,000 deaths in the UK. Poor air quality causes heart and lung diseases and is linked to low birth weight and children's lung development and may even contribute to mental health issues. (Clean Air Day, 2021)

### 3. What is the biggest cause of air pollution?

**Answer:**

Road traffic caused by motor vehicles - cars, trucks, buses and motorbikes - account for nearly three quarters of the greenhouse gas emissions that come from transport. (BBC, 2020)

To find out how clean the air is near you visit - [uk-air.defra.gov.uk](http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk)

### 4. What can you do to reduce air pollution at home?

**Answer:**

Don't burn garden waste, only burn clean, dry wood and smokeless fuel inside. Use an extractor fan when cooking to avoid breathing in the smoke. Open windows and doors when doing DIY (painting) and cleaning with chemicals.

### 5. What can you do to reduce air pollution on your way to school?

**Answer:**

Use public transport, car share, use electric cars or walk, cycle or scoot. Avoid using cars for short journeys, where possible.

**Did you know?** that you breathe more pollution **whilst sitting inside a car** in traffic than you do walking or cycling on the same road.

### 6. What causes 150 balloons of air pollution in 1 minute? Have a guess?

**Answer**

Leaving the car engine running whilst parked creates 150 balloons of air pollution in 1 minute. So it's really important to switch off your car engine when picking up and dropping of your children from school.

### 7. What's the least pollutant way to travel to school?

**Answer**

Trick question, both walking, cycling and scooting are the greenest and least pollutant ways to travel to school as they omit zero pollution!



## AT HOME - WORDSEARCH

Complete the below word search with your child/ren.

### What causes air pollution?

S	I	N	E	P	T	L	O	L	G	T	L	H	N
H	A	L	S	T	H	I	E	C	N	G	L	I	G
S	L	E	E	L	V	T	L	C	P	S	H	T	S
L	L	L	L	R	R	T	C	I	O	O	A	A	A
D	I	I	C	G	L	E	E	D	L	A	T	L	V
V	O	G	I	A	E	R	I	L	S	S	L	V	I
A	T	A	H	S	I	E	E	I	M	L	L	G	M
E	T	A	E	T	R	O	S	N	O	C	A	R	S
I	I	G	V	L	I	T	T	G	K	A	I	G	A
S	S	E	O	N	A	N	T	T	E	L	A	T	I
E	T	I	E	I	I	O	G	G	I	D	T	I	O
A	S	S	H	E	A	T	I	N	G	P	T	G	D
S	A	G	C	L	L	L	R	A	G	V	I	L	S
P	E	T	R	O	L	C	P	E	S	G	L	A	T

HEATING  
LIGHTING  
SMOKE  
CARS  
LITTER  
COAL  
PETROL  
IDLING  
GAS  
VEHICLES



## STARS FOR THE QUIZ

Cut out and colour in the below star to award it to your parents or carers after completing the AT HOME – QUIZ FOR PARENTS.

**Green Star** – more than 6 questions right

**Silver Star** – more than 4 questions right

**No star** – if they scored less than 4 questions right.

