

STHC Briefing Paper On The Sudden Announcement By DfE That The Pupil's Usual Mode Of Travel Field Is No Longer To Be Collected As Part Of The National School Census

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This paper contains the “facts” of the matter around this announcement as far as I can glean from the DfE website. The hope is that it contains enough background information, direct quotes and points of contact to enable all the stakeholders who currently benefit from the collection of mode of travel data through school census to successfully engage with officials within DfE, and the relevant Minister For Schools (one Nick Gibb, MP for Bognor Regis in West Sussex (see http://www.conservatives.com/People/Members_of_Parliament/Gibb_Nick.aspx), to get this decision reversed.

Note much of this document contains direct quotes from the DfE website / pdf documents to save readers the trouble of having to do the detective work themselves (hence the amount of content!). These are shown in *Times New Roman italics* with the particularly pertinent passages highlighted in **yellow**, my words are in normal arial font. I have added as many of the relevant urls where possible.

These notes are divided into the following sections:-

- 1. Announcement to remove mode of travel from school census**
- 2. Original announcement about the “Root & branch review of data collections” and wider “Reducing Bureaucracy In schools” initiative**
- 3. The DfE Bureaucracy Reference Group**
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1. Announcement to remove mode of travel from school census

The announcement about the removal of mode of travel from school census is contained within e-Bulletin no. 50 of the Information about children, education and schools (ICES), dated 29th July 2011 (see <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmin/ims/a0063993/information-about-children-education-and-schools-ices-bulletin-formerly-the-dsp-bulletin> and click on link for bulletin 50 on the right hand panel to view the pdf).

The relevant section is section 5, which indicates that mode of travel is one of only 5 fields to be removed from school census after this “root and branch” cull:-

5) Root & branch review of data collections – outcomes regarding the School Census (Contact: Simon Grigor - Data Development Unit)

The Secretary of State has considered some recommendations relating to the School Census as part of the root and branch review of DfE collections and agreed to the following:

- the flag to identify a 'Gifted and Talented' pupil should be dropped from School Census;
- a pupil's Usual Mode of Travel should no longer be collected in School Census;
- a school's Gender of Entry should no longer be collected in School Census;
- a school's Gender of Sixth Form Entry should no longer be collected through the School Census;
- Class Activity should no longer be collected from secondary schools.

The Secretary of State was also made aware of the concerns expressed by a number of LAs about the move from termly to annual collection regarding pupil address and pupil ethnicity, one of the outcomes of an earlier data review. He has said that he is content to reintroduce termly collection of pupil address, but not ethnicity.

The Root and Branch Review of Data Collection is ongoing, and the Secretary of State is considering further recommendations regarding other collections and more news will appear in a future article when he has responded.

A further article appears below setting out the approach and timescale being taken to the School Census changes following discussion with MIS suppliers

The "further article referred to above is section 7, which indicates that suppliers of schools information management system (SIMS) software were notified of the changes to school census on 15th July - presumably so that they could update their automated reporting routines that upload the particular data fields from their system that are required for the particular census to the data gathering authorities at the touch of a button.

Note there are 3 census's throughout the school year, with mode of travel being included in the January census.

It indicates that these changes are very last minute as far as the usual notification to suppliers goes:-

7) School Census 2012: Changes to requirements (Contact: Gill Turner - Data Development Unit; Mel Armstrong - Schools Data Unit)

Following the results of the root and branch review of DfE data collections (see Section 5 above), version 1.2 of the Technical Specification for the 2012 School Census was issued to software suppliers on 15 July 2011. This version does not include:

- Gifted and Talented Indicator - previously collected in Spring, Summer and Autumn);
- Usual Mode of Travel - previously collected in Spring;
- Gender of Pupils (Entry to School) - previously collected in Spring, Summer and Autumn;
- Gender of Pupils (Entry to Sixth Form) – previously collected in Spring, Summer and Autumn;
- Class Activity for secondary schools – previously collected in Spring.

We are extremely grateful to software suppliers for working with us on these changes which have come through at a late stage in their development cycle.

Version 1.2 of the Technical Specification is available at

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmin/ims/datacollections/schoolcensus/a0076969/school-census-2012>.

The XSLT based on version 1.1 of the Technical Specification was released to software suppliers on 18 July and the familiarisation blade is now available to them.

XSLT based on version 1.2 of the Technical Specification will be released by mid-August.

The above changes will also need to be reflected in the School Summary Report and it is planned to release version 1.1 of the specification for this in August.

Very interestingly ICES Bulletin 49, published in June 2011 (see

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/i/ices%20bulletin%2049.pdf>)

also discusses the 2012 School census on page 1. However nowhere on it's bulleted list of either new data items or changes to existing data items does it mention mode of travel!!!

It does say that version 1.1 of the technical specification (presumably still containing mode of travel) had been made available to software suppliers for final review on the 23rd of May 2011.

2. Original announcement about the “Root & branch review of data collections” and wider “Reducing Bureaucracy In schools” initiative

A Google search on “DfE Root & branch review of data collections” throws up an article on the DfE website dated 23rd May 2011, which announces the aforementioned “Root & branch review of data collections” (see <http://www.education.gov.uk/b0075738/reducing-bureaucracy/budrens>):-

Reducing bureaucracy in schools:

Reviewing data burdens

We are conducting a root-and-branch review of all data collection requirements on schools (including the School Census) and putting in place a more robust scrutiny process to oversee data burdens in the future.

This review will aim to identify measures to streamline the data returns completed by schools for central government, freeing up time for schools to focus on their core purpose of teaching and learning. It will look at all school data collections and advise on how to minimise data burdens on schools in the future. This will help the Department meet its commitment of a 30 per cent reduction in frontline data collection burdens by 2011/12.

This is part of a 15 page article that announces the wider “Reducing Bureaucracy In Schools” initiative (see

<http://www.education.gov.uk/b0075738/reducing-bureaucracy>).

Note the links on the right side of these 15 pages are extremely apposite for identifying the relevant groups within DfE responsible for making these changes.

The bottom half of page 1 of the article states the following:-

Your views

The Government is committed to engaging with front-line professionals to ensure our proposals have a real and meaningful impact on reducing bureaucracy for schools.

As part of this commitment, we have already launched a new practitioner reference group – the Bureaucracy Reference Group – to advise the Department on how existing bureaucracy can be reduced and to help prevent the creation of additional burdens by advising on the likely impact of new policies and procedures.

If you would like to feedback your views on further steps that could be taken to reduce burdens, please email us.

Contact details

Schools reducing bureaucracy team

Email: bureaucracy.views@education.gsi.gov.uk

3. The DfE Bureaucracy Reference Group

Thus it appears that this newly formed “Bureaucracy Reference Group” must somehow be involved in the specific request to remove the mode of travel from the school census has come from. Following the link on the right side of the article gives the background and more importantly the membership of the group. This does include a teacher from Cornwall, now part of the STHC, as well as one from Devon (see

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/cuttingburdens/b0066552/bureaucracy-reference-group/>):-

The Bureaucracy Reference Group

The Bureaucracy Reference Group (BRG) has been set up to advise the Department for Education and its agencies on reducing unnecessary bureaucracy in schools.

Working in a range of maintained schools and academies across the country, the current Bureaucracy Reference Group includes experienced, current primary, secondary and special school headteachers, teachers and support staff from across England. Therefore, it brings a valuable and vast range of front-line skills, knowledge and ideas to the Department.

It replaces the former Implementation Review Unit (IRU) and had its first meeting on 7 October 2010.

Current membership of the Bureaucracy Reference Group:

Jane Lees (Chair)

Headteacher - Hindley High School, Wigan

Penny Barratt

Headteacher – The Bridge School, Islington

Sue Barratt

Headteacher - Bournville Junior School, Birmingham

Kerry Brimfield

Business manager – Dyson Perrins Church of England Sports College, Malvern

Clare Buchanan

Teacher (Head of Expressive Arts) – Ridgeway High School, Wirral

Colin Cartwright

Business Manager - Teesdale School, secondary school, County Durham

Kate Dethridge

Headteacher – Churchend Primary School, Tilehurst

Marsha Carey Elms

Executive Headteacher – Kendrick School, Reading and Reading Girls School

Andrew Fielder

Headteacher - Sandy Hill Academy, Cornwall

Gavin Gray

Teacher (Head of Science Faculty) - Isle of Sheppey Academy, Kent

Ian Hemelik

Headteacher - Manor Primary School, Devon

Bill Holledge

Assistant Headteacher – Culloden Primary School, London

Graeme Hornsby

Business Manager – Lutterworth College, Leicestershire

John Martin

Headteacher – Cheslyn Hay Sport and Community High School, Staffordshire

Keith Nancekievill

Headteacher - Hinchingsbrooke Secondary School, Huntingdon

Anne McCormick

Executive Headteacher - Queen's Park Lower School, Orchard School and Sheperdswell School, Bedford and Milton Keynes

Peter Simpson

Executive Principal - Brooke Weston Partnership, Northamptonshire

Richard Tarr

Teacher (Head of RE) - Immanuel College, C of E secondary school, Bradford

Amanda Whittingham

Advanced Skills Teacher and Assistant Headteacher – Wensley Fold C of E (voluntary-controlled) School, Blackburn.

The Implementation Review Unit's A Review of obstacles to delivery in schools

The Implementation Review Unit's A Review of obstacles to delivery in schools was commissioned by the previous administration as part of the 2009 White Paper Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system [see <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/i/iru%20review.pdf>]. They were tasked to 'undertake a thorough audit of how our policies are implemented to identify any obstacles which prevent effective delivery' and develop a range of practical recommendations for schools, local authorities, the Department and its delivery partners that will help reduce bureaucratic burdens.

While the report was researched before May 2010, it contains some interesting insights, which we are considering in full. The Government is committed to reducing bureaucracy in schools and freeing up teachers, heads and governors to focus on raising standards.

4. The DfE "Star Chamber"

The "Star Chamber" is the group within DfE that control all data collection exercises and who presumably (?) have ultimate responsibility for the School Census. To quote from the article "What is the Star Chamber" cited in the right hand links (see <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/cuttingburdens/starchamber/a0063720/what-is-the-star-chamber>):-

The Star Chamber is one of the main vehicles in the Department's drive to reduce bureaucracy impacting on LA children's services (including education) and schools. It was formed in 1999 to review existing and proposed data collection exercises originating from within the Department and relaunched in October 2006 with a wider remit and enhanced powers. The Star Chamber ensures new data collection exercises

- *do not create unnecessary burden*
- *do not duplicate in content existing collections*
- *seek to keep data requests to the absolute minimum needed to develop policy amalgamate and streamline exercises wherever possible.*

*Until late 2008, decisions were based on consideration of proposals both internally, by data and finance experts, and by an **External Scrutiny Group (ESG) comprised of headteachers and LA representatives.***

*In November 2008, the methodology and decision-making chain was simplified to reflect the Department's public commitments to reduce data burdens on schools and LAs and in recognition of the balanced approach the ESG had taken in their scrutinising. **The ESG was then renamed the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board and given the power to make the decisions on whether the collection proposals should receive approval.***

*The **secretariat** would be pleased to offer initial advice, at the outset, when policy colleagues requiring Star Chamber clearance are planning any data collection exercise involving schools or LAs.*

Contact details [Star Chamber Secretariat]

Roger Edwards
Data Services Group
Telephone: 01325 735499
Email: roger.edwards@education.gsi.gov.uk

Simon Grigor
Data Services Group
Sanctuary Buildings
London
SW1P 3BT
Email: simon.grigor@education.gsi.gov.uk

5. The DfE “Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (SCSB)”

The above description of the “Star Chamber” indicates that the “Star Chamber Scrutiny Board” is the main player here, thus the following pages contain quite a lot of stuff about them. Delving further into the links yields the following background information on the SCSB (see - <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/cuttingburdens/starchamber/a0063772/star-chamber-scrutiny-board-terms-of-reference>):-

Remit of the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (SCSB)

The SCSB will review all Department data collection proposals relating to services for children, schools and families.

The group will consider issues relating to

- *technical feasibility of the information collected. For example, does the proposal fit with existing sources or would something new have to be developed?*
- *relevance and 'fit for purpose' of the information collected (in particular to the frontline in driving performance)*
- *timing of the collection – whether it might be of greater effectiveness if it were collected at a different time*
- *the method of collection*
- *Value for Money – whether the benefits of data collection are likely to outweigh the costs.*

These factors will all be considered in the context of maximising value of data collections, minimising the burden and reducing duplication by collecting data once and using it many times.

Following consideration, the SCSB will make a decision about whether the collection should go ahead.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the SCSB are

- *to review proposed data collections from the Department (and, where such arrangements are agreed, other partner organisations)*

- *where necessary, seek revisions to ensure the proposal is fit for purpose (with support from internal scrutineers and the secretariat)*
- *once discussions with the relevant policy areas are complete, decide whether a collection proposal should be approved in full, approved conditionally, or rejected.*

In addition, the group has the following secondary objectives:

- *discuss developments in education and children's services data, making recommendations where appropriate, for example about changes to definitions, or about collections, or parts of collections, that might be ripe for discontinuing*
- *monitor the progress and implementation of new collections, taking a view on their operation and usefulness and feeding back any concerns to the Department*
- *act as a consultation forum regarding other relevant developments with a link to children's, schools or family services data.*

Method of working

1. *The Star Chamber secretariat will receive electronic templates from policy teams. Each will be recorded and allocated a reference number.*
2. *The SCSB will meet monthly to allow members to discuss templates and also meet with policy teams if appropriate. The agenda will be sent to members a week before the meeting. All relevant business case templates received during the previous month, normally up to five working days before the meeting, will be forwarded electronically to members. In exceptional circumstances, templates received up to two working days before the meeting will be considered (once resources permit, the secretariat will investigate electronic methods other than email that will allow members to view their papers).*
3. *Any member unable to attend the meeting is welcome to pass any comments to one of the two leads for consideration at the meeting.*
4. *Relevant comments from internal scrutineers shall also be made available to the board at their meetings.*
5. *SCSB meetings will be managed by the Data Services Group (DSG) and are normally chaired by the Department's Head of Statistical Profession, Malcolm Britton.*
6. *Upon completion of their discussions on each business case, SCSB will decide to approve (including conditionally) or reject each case. There will be an appeal process to a "virtual" panel comprising*
 - *Olivia McLeod, Director, Supporting Delivery Group*
 - *Mela Watts, Director of Performance and Reform*
 - *Jude Hillary, Head of Statistical Profession and Chair of the SCSB*
 - *Ian Birnbaum, Director of Children's Services, London Borough of Sutton.*

Please note: An SCSB rejection will not automatically mean proceeding to appeal.

Membership

The group is formed from frontline LA representatives involved in children's services data, including education, social care and early years, plus serving headteachers from primary and secondary education. Ofsted has a standing place on the group.

Members' terms of office will usually last for four years, with changes made to a quarter of the membership annually, starting with a quarter changing in autumn 2012 and then a quarter changing annually.

New LA members will be nominated by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), which will endeavour, when doing so, to address particular knowledge gaps that may be relevant as well as maintain a representative mix of large- and small-sized authorities, unitaries and shires, etc. Should the ADCS encounter difficulty in getting nominees, the Department will attempt to stimulate interest and, should this not be forthcoming, consider extending the length of service of existing members.

Serving headteachers will be recruited through an appeal to the National Association of Head Teachers and the Association of School and College Leaders.

A quorum for the board's meeting shall be five of the external members.

Supplementary footnotes

Collections of other protocol-signatory organisations

Organisations with close links to the Department (e.g. the General Teaching Council, Ofsted) have signed a protocol with the Department, committing themselves to a collective responsibility to minimise data collection burdens. Part of the commitment is to police any requests for new data collections. Should an organisation not have the resource to carry out such policing internally, the Department will consider extending the activity of the Star Chamber to cover them.

Collections of other government departments (and any third-party bodies associated with them)

The Star Chamber has no authority over the collections of other Departments. However, a "gentlemen's agreement" exists among the Heads of Statistical Profession to alert the HoSP in the Department when a collection is planned that may impact on schools or LA children's services.

Star Chamber papers

Due to the nature of the discussions, which may involve areas not yet in the public domain, SCSB members are asked to exercise caution in sharing papers with local colleagues and, if in any doubt, not to do so. When sending out papers, the secretariat shall endeavour to highlight any paper that appears to warrant restrictions in access.

The SCSB does produce an annual report (see <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/cuttingburdens/starchamber/a0063977/star-chamber-scrutiny-board-annual-reports> and click on right hand links to get either the 2009-10 or 2008-09 report). The 2009-10 report is only 8 pages long and was produced by Simon Grigor of the Star Chamber Secretariat in December 2010. The following sections are pertinent:-

Appeals

7. **An appeal process exists** whereby policy teams who believe that they have strong grounds for exemption or a relaxation to Star Chamber guidance, or have good reason to believe that the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board has not acted reasonably in carrying out its functions. A panel comprising the Department's Director of Supporting Delivery Group, Director of Performance and Reform, Head of Statistical Profession, and a LA Director of Children's Services, considers such cases. There have been no such appeals in 2009-10.

8. **A further level of appeal exists, to a designated Minister.** At the start of the year this Minister was Diana Johnson. Following the change of government the role has been taken over by **Nick Gibb**. Mr Gibb has received initial briefing about the SCSB and in due course will be invited to a meeting

Other work

9. **The examination of business cases is the main area of the Board's work. Board members frequently take questions back to their home authorities and consult with local experts there in the particular areas under discussion. But the Board also has a secondary role discussing and monitoring developments in education and children's services data.** Particular areas discussed this year include:

- Acting as one of a number of consultative groups for the review of data collections called when the new government took office. This work, which is also involving the examination of data collection activity by related Arm's Length Bodies, continues;
- Discussing data collection ideas at a formative stage. A number of policy areas have taken this approach and found it very beneficial;
- Linking with the Information Authority (with whom SCSB have a Memorandum of Understanding) about shared areas of interest on Post-16 data;
- Linking with the Implementation Review Unit and then its successor, the Bureaucracy Reference Group, so that they alert us about policy discussions with data implications, and we alert them about data collections that might have wider policy concerns that they might not know of. The IRU Chair attended an SCSB meeting during the year.

During the year the Board also had a visit from Sue Higgins, DCSF (then) Director-General of Corporate Services. Sue was interested to view the Board in action and said how supportive she was of their role.

Cross-Government Data Sharing

16. While being fully aware that there are various groups who are vehemently opposed to any such sharing arrangements, **the Board consider that there are burdens benefits yet to be realised that could result from a greater level of cross-government data sharing.** For instance, linking HMRC's tax credit data with data collected through the School Census could give a reliable measure of deprivation at pupil level for use in the operation of the pupil premium without introducing any new collection material.

The annexes are of great specific relevance to our case. Annexe 1 of the report lists the current members of the SCSB. Interestingly there are a couple of member from existing STHC authorities - South Gloucestershire (I'm sure the person listed is the MIS officer that sent me their census data in the past)

and Lincolnshire, with some other authorities that were part of our STHC bid eg. Kent

Annex 1 – List of Board Members

Chair: Malcolm Britton, Head of Statistical Profession, DfE [retired from DfE in December 2010 along with his deputy Margaret Frosztega, and replaced by Jude Hillary as chair of SCSB]

Members:

Sharon Barker Leicestershire LA

Philip Brocklehurst Kensington & Chelsea LA (up to April 2010)

Stephen Clark Lancashire LA

Karen Crowston Birmingham LA

Bruce Farajian South Gloucestershire LA

Ros Gulson Head, Walton Girls' School, Lincolnshire

Rashid Jussa Surrey LA

Karen Kennedy Medway LA

Adam King Ofsted

Gordon Lester Head, Egremont Primary School, Wirral

Meena Kishinani Barking & Dagenham LA

Jeanette Miller Southampton LA

Nigel Nicholds Norfolk LA

Cathy Piotrowski Central Bedfordshire LA

Tim Riley Birmingham LA

Max Winters Bromley LA

Ray Woodhams Barnsley LA

Debbie Wright Kent LA

One member takes a lead each month in feeding back the comments of the Board to attending policy representatives

...whilst Annex 2 lists all the cases considered by the board between November 2009 and December 2010. There is no point in reprinting it here but nowhere does it mention “mode of travel in school census”, which means that this case has only been put to the board in the last 6 months (the board meets on a monthly basis).

6. Putting it all together

What

Collection of Pupils Usual Mode of Travel should no longer be collected through school census.

Who

The proposer to remove mode of travel is currently unknown but can be narrowed down. Somebody, either a civil servant from within the DfE or a professional teacher member of the recently formed “Bureaucracy Reference Group”, must have put a case to the DfE Star Chamber and the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board to have the mode of travel removed from school census.

However this proposal, which must have been post December 2010 as it is not listed in the 2009-10 SCSB annual report list of cases, must have received a case number and therefore should be trackable through their system.

When

Officially this must have been between mid June and 15th July 2011. The June 2011 ICES Bulletin (presumably published in late June although no date is given on the document itself) fails to mention anything about removal of mode of travel in its article on changes to the forthcoming 2012 school census, but does mention that version 1.1 of the school census technical specifications (presumably still containing mode of travel) was sent to software suppliers on the 23rd of May. The July bulletin containing the announcement of the removal was published on July 29th. The article there states that version 1.2 of the technical specifications, which no longer contains mode of travel, had been sent out to suppliers on the 15th of July.

7. Suggested courses of action

There are 2 parallel prongs of appeal / attack, internally through the intra-government official channels, and externally through politicians, both the minister responsible and your own MP.

Intra-governmental (Internal) Route To Appeal

i) Contact the Star Chamber Secretariat

The Star Chamber secretariat is the first point of contact and only line of communication to either the Star Chamber or the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board. Their contact details are once again:-

Roger Edwards
Data Services Group
Telephone: 01325 735499
Email: roger.edwards@education.gsi.gov.uk

Simon Grigor
Data Services Group
Sanctuary Buildings
London
SW1P 3BT
Email: simon.grigor@education.gsi.gov.uk

There is a direct email address to the Star Chamber - starchamber.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk - but I suspect that this will just go through to the secretariat so a phone call to either Roger or Simon, perhaps with a follow up email to this official address, will be the quickest route in.

ii) Officially appeal to the Star Chamber Scrutiny Board against the decision

There is an official appeal process to a "virtual" panel comprising members of the SCSB:-

- Olivia McLeod, Director, Supporting Delivery Group
- Mela Watts, Director of Performance and Reform
- Jude Hillary, Head of Statistical Profession and Chair of the SCSB
- Ian Birnbaum, Director of Children's Services, London Borough of Sutton.

If you are not happy with that

iii) Officially appeal to the Schools Minister against the decision

Nick Gibb, MP for Bognor Regis in West Sussex (see

http://www.conservatives.com/People/Members_of_Parliament/Gibb_Nick.aspx), is the Schools Minister responsible for the work of the Star Chamber and the Scrutiny Board. No doubt however he would only be notified once the internal appeal board had made its decision and the complainant then decided they wanted to take it further.

If you are not part of the Education machine, either the DfE or it's LEA outposts, which most of the stakeholders in school census mode of travel data aren't, then I can't see any reason why you shouldn't go straight to the Star Chamber Secretariat. I would copy in your authority MIS people on any official correspondence you send, as well as obviously beginning the internal process to raise an official protest from your authority to DfE if possible, but I wouldn't wait for this to happen before contacting the secretariat wearing your "stakeholder in school census mode of travel data" hat.

As the SCSB only meets monthly any official appeal will likely take several weeks, especially as we are now into school holiday season.

Political Route To Appeal

Obviously as concerned citizens, either private individuals or business people or representatives of professional bodies etc., we can appeal to the minister involved directly or through our own MP. The more directions the appeals are coming in from, and the sooner they start coming, the better!

8. Grounds for Official Appeal

All the stakeholder in School Census Mode of Travel Data will have their own specific grounds for appeal, which they would obviously have to state in any official appeal correspondence to the SCSB. For example we at Travel Health Check Ltd. have:-

- STHC customers that have already commissioned and paid for us to analyse their School Census Mode of Travel Data for the 2011-12 school year and beyond!
- spent substantial amounts of money, time and research and development effort (not to mention blood, sweat and quite a few tears!) into developing the STHC output in partnership with our local authority clients over the last 5 years. As is evident from our website www.sthc.co.uk - from the client testimonials, to the 3rd party citations from the Chief Medical Officer, the Department for Health / NHS and Sustainable Development Commission,

and the analysis data made publically available through our interactive Instant Atlases (such as one giving the identifying schools with the greatest number of pupils who live within a reasonable walking distance who come by car) - our output based on the spatial analysis of school census mode of travel data is well received and actively used by the 1.6 million pupils, teachers and local authority officers from the 4500 schools (22% of LEA schools in England) that we analysed in 2010.

- And lots of other stuff that we are too angry to be able to list here right now...

Obviously there are the more general grounds for appeal contained in this paper:-

- the lack of consultation with the stakeholders, especially as “the Root and Branch Review of Data Collection is ongoing”
- the swiftness of the process – from suggestion out of nowhere, to the official (presumably documented?) business case to the Star Chamber (or STCB), to the final decision, to the uncharacteristic re-issuing of official technical guidance to suppliers, in less than 4 weeks – now that’s fast for any organisation let alone the leviathan that is the Department for Education!
- Inherent contradiction between the stated aims of this “Reducing Bureaucracy In Schools” initiative - the “freeing up time for schools to focus on their core purpose of teaching and learning” - and the fact that the school census mode of travel data is actively being used as a teaching resource by schools themselves. We have documented proof to show the School Travel Health Check output (created from the spatial analysis of school census mode of travel data) has not only been well received by the 4500 (22% of LEA schools in England) that were analysed in 2010 but is also being actively used as a teaching resource by them. Furthermore the recent Modeshift survey of schools carried out as part of their LSTF bid proposal showed that a high percentage of schools were actively using their school census mode of travel data as part of their teaching curriculum.
- Inherent contradiction between the acknowledgement of the Star Chamber / SCSB that there are untapped benefits to wider data sharing by DfE with other government departments and the known catastrophic impact that the removal of the mode of travel from school census would have on other central government initiatives (eg. LSTF funded projects), let alone at local authority level (eg. school travel plans, which as far as I know are still a compulsory document in any planning proposal submitted by a school).
- Etc, etc I am sure there are many more that you could write here yourself.

We urge all stakeholders in mode of travel data to please pursue the repealing of the decision to remove it from the school census as urgently and as vehemently as possible! Please feel free to circulate this paper to as many of your colleagues / contacts as possible. Please do let us know of any course of action you are undertaking!

Angus McDonald

***Travel Health Check Ltd.
2nd August 2011***