

Academy pupils complete virtual Tour de France

CHILDREN, parents and teachers have joined together to complete a famous bike race route. With the Tour de France postponed due to the coronavirus crisis, a group of schools decided to take on the route at home.

Burnt Mill Academy Trust, which has primary and secondary schools in Harlow, Epping and Stansted in Essex and Newham in London, launched the Virtual Tour de France for students, teachers and parents.

The trust, which had to cancel its own annual sponsored bike rides from Harlow to Stratford for students, invited its community to cycle the 3,470km route between them.

Noel Lysons, head of art and design technology at BMAT school Burnt Mill Academy in Harlow, is taking part. He said: "I've always enjoyed cycling, so when the Government said we were only allowed out of the house once a day for exercise, it was the natural choice for me. "I had already been cycling every day when the BMAT challenge was set and I estimate I have covered 1,000 miles since lockdown began. "I think the BMAT Virtual Tour de France challenge has inspired a few more people to get out on their bikes, which is great."

Those taking part have recorded the distance of their bike rides, with a daily tally showing where on the route the group had reached.

Phil Dawes, BMAT director of PE and sport, said: "Our students really look forward to taking part in our sponsored bike rides. To make up for this and to coincide with National Bike Week, we held the Virtual Tour de France and invited as many of the BMAT family as possible to take part. "Everyone could play a part; on racing bikes, mountain bikes, hybrids, static bikes and even bikes with stabilisers and push-along bikes."



Burnt Mill Academy Trust pupil Sidney takes part in the trust's virtual Tour de France

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'Parents should decide if it's safe to go back'

By Lewis Berrill

A COUNCILLOR has blasted the Government over plans to reintroduce fines for parents if they do not send their children back to school in September.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has revealed a return to school will be "compulsory" and families may face financial penalties if they keep their children at home – unless there is a "good reason" for the absence.

Independent Loughton councillor Stephen Murray has labelled the decision to resume the fines – suspended when children began returning to school following the coronavirus lockdown – "outrageous."

Cllr Murray said: "As a local teacher, I feel very strongly that

parents or guardians need to be the final decision takers as regards the welfare of their own children. And for the Government to threaten to fine those who decide to keep their children at home is just outrageous."

The Epping Forest district councillor said social distancing – even at a reduced one metre – is "almost impossible in state secondary schools" due to the number of pupils and the size of classes, rooms and corridors.

Cllr Murray added: "By all means try and open as normal in September but in my opinion, parents and guardians should have the final say over their own children's welfare and should not be bullied back by a threat of a Government-imposed fine."

Mr Williamson confirmed the return of fines on LBC radio ear-

lier this week.

He said: "It is going to be compulsory for children to return to school unless there's a very good reason, or a local spike where there have had to be local lockdowns."

"We do have to get back into compulsory education as part of that, obviously fines sit alongside that."

"Unless there is a good reason for the absence then we will be looking at the fact that we would be imposing fines on families if they are not sending their children back."

Schools began welcoming pupils back on June 1, but many parents kept children at home. The latest Government figures show 34 per cent of all Year 6 children attended on June 18, up from 26 per cent on June 11.

Police disperse 'abusive' teens

POLICE dispersed a large number of teenagers being "abusive" in Brentwood High Street on Monday.

Essex Police received reports of a large group of people, all believed to be teenagers, being abusive and creating a disturbance on Brentwood High Street at around 9.35pm on Monday.

Officers utilised a dispersal order covering Brentwood High Street, the town centre area and

Kings Road down to Brentwood Railway Station.

It remained in place until 10pm on Tuesday and gave officers the power to direct anyone in that area to leave and not to return for the period the order is in place to reduce the likelihood of member of the public being harassed alarmed or distressed or there to be crime or disorder.

Inspector Terry Fisher said: "We have acted quickly to put

this order in place to deal with the disorder that has broken out in the centre of Brentwood.

"This type of behaviour is not acceptable and we won't tolerate members of the public being subjected to abuse or any behaviour which may cause them to fear for their safety."

"We will continue to work with our partners to address issues of anti-social behaviour and keep you safe."

READERSHIP

TOTAL COMBINED AUDIENCE Source: Telmar

133,596 online and local print readership April 2016

READERS Jicreg

40,066 people read the Guardian Series every week

11,496 Circulation Jan 2015 - Dec 2015

WEB AUDIENCE Omniture

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1,328,823 unique users visit the site every month.

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