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F1 star Lewis Hamilton backs road safety scheme

A road safety campaign for school children has been launched in Surrey by motor racing star Lewis Hamilton.

The educational scheme for pupils aged 14 to 18 will offer hands-on driving experience and training.

Pupils will also have discussions about the responsibilities of being not only a driver, but also a passenger and a pedestrian.

It was developed by council, fire and police officers, with the Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy in Weybridge.

Former Formula One world champion Hamilton launched the scheme on Sunday.

He said "It's a great thing for young kids to come here and at least raise awareness."

And he added: "Hopefully, they'll come here and they'll walk away with a little bit more knowledge which will equip them even better for when they take their own driving lessons and tests."

County council leader Andrew Povey said: "School children are the drivers of the future so it is vital we educate them now about the importance of responsible driving."

Driving academy

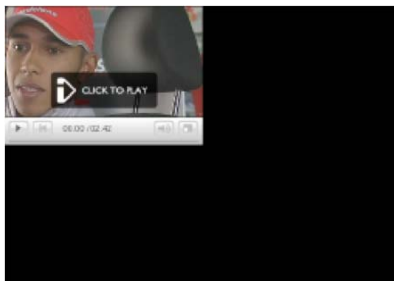
The scheme, called RoadSense, will be offered to schools as an add-on to the existing curriculum and follows government campaigns to reduce the number of road deaths and injuries among children and young people.

It will initially be offered to 5,000 pupils across Surrey, before being rolled out across the country.

The course includes an hour-long introduction, a 90-minute practical session behind the wheel and then an hour-long discussion group.

Students will do the practical session in groups of three and have half an hour each on the track at Mercedes-Benz World, under the guidance of a Driving Academy Coach.

Wilfried Steffen, president of Mercedes-Benz UK, said it would help pupils to develop a responsible attitude to driving before they and their friends start to drive.



Lewis Hamilton: "I think it's a fantastic initiative"



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