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## Formula 1 star Hamilton launches safe driving scheme

By [Emily Harman](#)  
December 07, 2009

FORMULA One sensation Lewis Hamilton helped launch a road safety campaign at Mercedes-Benz World in Weybridge on Sunday.

RoadSense is an educational initiative offering school children from as young as 14 the opportunity to learn how to stay safe behind the wheel of a car.

The scheme follows on from Mercedes-Benz's driving academy - also headed up by 24-year-old Hamilton - and is being introduced in response to government targets to reduce the number of road deaths and injuries among children and young people by at least 50% by 2020.

Year 10 students, aged between 14 and 15-years-old, from Woking High School were the first to take part in the programme last week.

Former world champion Hamilton said: "Its all about being in control so giving you that experience up front before you actually get to having your test and becoming road legal is key to reducing accidents."

The scheme, piloted in Surrey, will initially be offered to 5,000 local pupils, with the aim of rolling it out nationally by the end of next year.

Surrey County Council leader Andrew Povey said: "Road safety is an issue in Surrey.

"We've done some public survey work with the police and it does show that the top concern for people in Surrey is antisocial driving.

"That incorporates speeding, mobile phone usage, poor parking, tailgating."

He added: "School children are the drivers of the future so it is vital we educate them about the importance of responsible driving."

Offered to schools as an add-on to their existing curriculum, RoadSense will provide students with a half-day interactive experience.

The 30-minute driving session will also involve 'real life' risks and situations including music distractions and texting while behind the wheel of a car.

Hamilton said: "I think the Driving Academy is a great initiative. My brother comes down here. He's 17 and they're going to help him go through learning before he starts lessons.

"It's good fun and it's a cool school trip out. It's the coolest school trip you could possibly do."

Hamilton also said he hopes to teach children the lessons he learnt the hard way.

"They always say that when you're 17, you're bound to have your first shunt and I did due to carelessness, due to inexperience and due to not being responsible enough," he said.

"These kids can have these experiences here, which will help them be a lot more responsible when they're 17."

In 2007, Hamilton was fined £430 by French police when he was caught driving his Mercedes at 122mph down a motorway.

He told the *Surrey Advertiser*: "For me it was a learning experience and a mistake that I wish didn't happen but I learnt from it and it's all about those learning experiences."

Woking High pupil Charlotte Finnegan said: "I had a really good time not just because it was fun being able to drive two or three years before the legal age."

Fellow student Andrew Davey said: "When I start driving I definitely won't be using a mobile phone.

"The two passengers in the back were very scared when I was using a mobile phone because the car was swerving from side to side and I almost crashed about ten times."

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