



## Arlington County School Zone Guidelines

A school zone includes the roads adjacent to a school (or schools) that have a high concentration of school-generated traffic. School zones are marked with special signs to alert drivers of students in the area, and the speed limits are lower than surrounding roads. These school zone guidelines are applicable to public and private schools with over 100 students from elementary school to high school.

### Purpose

This document provides basic guidelines for (1) identifying school zone boundaries, (2) determining the school zone speed limit type, and (3) specifying typical signs, crosswalks, pavement markings, and other aspects of the school zone to enhance safety and visibility.

The County’s [Vision Zero Action Plan](#) recommends to “refine [Arlington’s] school zone guidelines to establish consistent signage, signage placement, speed limit reductions, and pavement markings in school areas” to improve safety for school children. In the past, school zones were established following the guidelines of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Virginia Code, and the Arlington County Code. The development of Arlington County School Zone Guidelines ensures that all school zones within the County are designated and implemented consistently and fully.

Arlington County Division of Transportation conducted traffic engineering investigations and collaborated with Arlington Public Schools and the Arlington County Police Department to develop these guidelines.

### School Zone Boundary

A school zone includes roadways that are within 600 feet of a school access point or critical school crossing, per [Arlington County Code](#).

- A school access point is considered any point along the school property line at which a person could enter school property by foot, bike, vehicle, or other means of transport.
- A critical school crossing is a pedestrian/bicycle crossing, typically within 1,000 feet of a school property that is heavily used by students accessing the school and confirmed by school staff.

Arlington County staff continually collaborate with the staff at each school to confirm the school zones based on their understanding of school access and their daily experiences with the school community.



## Speed Limits

School Zone speed limits in Arlington are 20 mph or, in a few cases, 25mph, depending on the type of roadway and the speed limit posted along that roadway. The [Virginia Code](#) and [Arlington County Code](#) regulate the speed limits. **There are two types of school zone speed limits in Arlington: dynamic school zones and static school slow zones.**

### Dynamic School Zones

Arterial streets are larger roadways with higher speed limits (25-45 mph) and medium to high volumes of traffic. Arterial streets within 600 feet of a school access point or critical crossing warrant **dynamic school zone speed limits**. These dynamic speed limits are delineated using speed limit signs that are attached to flashing beacons and include the words “when flashing.” The dynamic school zone signage reduces the regular speed limit while the beacons are flashing.

The [Virginia State Code](#), allows school beacons to be active for 30 minutes before school, 30 minutes after school and “during such other times as the presence of children on such school property or going to and from school reasonably requires a special warning to motorists.” Transportation staff work with school staff to determine whether any other time periods meet the "other times" criteria at each school.

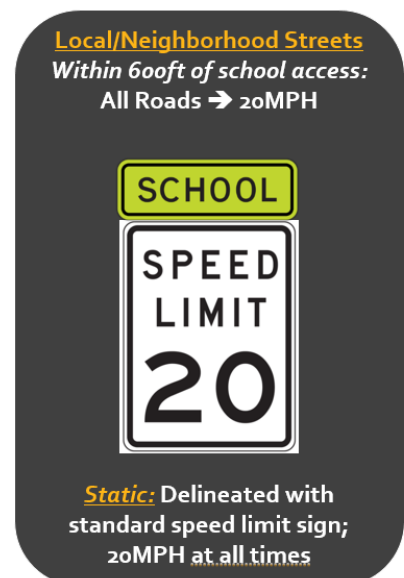
In school zones that cover multiple schools, the beacons will begin flashing 30 minutes before the earliest arrival time and remain flashing until after the latest arrival time. Beacons will turn on before the earliest dismissal time and remain on until 30 minutes after the latest dismissal time.

### Static School Slow Zones

Local/neighborhood streets are smaller one-lane streets, typically in neighborhoods, and have low level speed limits (25 mph) and low traffic volumes. Local/neighborhood streets within 600 feet of a school access point or critical crossing warrant **static school zone speed limits**. These static speed limit signs delineate permanent, 20 mph speed limits at all times of day, every day of the year.

These 20 mph school slow zones are specified in the [Arlington County Code](#) as “Streets within a designated school zone which is not more than 600 feet from the limits of the school property or crossing in the vicinity of the school within the school crossing zone as defined in Virginia State Code 46.2-873 as determined by an engineering review and indicated by appropriately placed signs displaying the maximum speed limit.”

Any flashing beacons on local/neighborhood streets that were installed prior 2022, when the school slow zone policy was updated, were removed or relocated.



## Typical Signage, Pavement Markings, and Safety Tools

The following engineering treatments are used in school zones as described in the tables below.

### Signage



#### Speed Limit Signs with Flashing Beacons

The start of a dynamic school zone is marked with a speed limit sign with the words “when flashing” and flashing beacons. Beacons are typically active for 30 minutes before school and 30 minutes after school (see section above for details).



#### Speed Limit Signs

The start of a static 20 mph school zone is marked with a speed limit sign. Static school zone signs are also placed along a road after significant intersections to ensure turning vehicles are aware of the school zone.



#### End School Zone Signs

The end of the zone is either marked with an “End School Zone” sign or a standard speed limit sign indicating the posted speed limit applicable for non-school hours.



#### School Crossing Signs

All crosswalks within the school zone have school crossing signs and high visibility markings. Crosswalks may also warrant advanced crossing signs (school crossing sign with an “AHEAD” plaque).

## Pavement Markings



### **SCHOOL or SCHOOL ZONE Markings**

Arterial streets that have elongated (often combined) school zones may include “SCHOOL” or “SCHOOL ZONE” pavement markings.



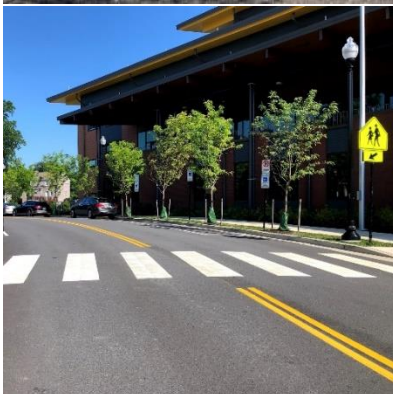
### **20 MPH Markings**

Local/neighborhood streets typically have “20 MPH” pavement markings where transitioning from an arterial road to a local road OR adjacent to a school.



### **SLOW SCHOOL XING Markings**

“SLOW SCHOOL XING” advanced crosswalk markings are typically placed at uncontrolled crossings over arterial streets within or adjacent to a school zone.



### **High Visibility Crosswalk Markings**

Crosswalks (a marked crossing with receiving ramps on each side) within school zones are to be marked with high visibility crosswalk pavement markings.

## Other Safety Tools



### Tactical Speed Humps in Static School Slow Zones

Tactical speed humps are currently being piloted as an additional safety treatment for 20mph static school slow zones, specifically in areas where speed data shows 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds to be 5mph or over the posted 20 mph speed limit.



### Speed Safety Cameras in Dynamic School Zones

Per the [Virginia code](#) and [Arlington County code](#), speed safety cameras are permitted for use in school zones. Speed safety cameras in Arlington are placed only within dynamic school zones (arterial streets). In general, warning signs are posted approximately 1,000 ft. ahead of a speed safety camera location. Speed safety camera locations are determined using safety data and evaluated regularly.



### Crossing Guards

The Arlington County Police Department manages the crossing guard program in collaboration with Arlington Public schools. The organizations work together to identify candidate crossing guard locations (which considers input from the schools and community members) and then use data to prioritize locations with the highest need to match the availability of the crossing guards on staff.