

# Home to School Transport Policy Statement – September 2011



## Criteria for the Provision of Free Transport

The Authority will normally provide free transport between home and school if the school attended is the nearest suitable one as determined by the Authority, and one or more of the following criteria are met:

- a) the distance between home and that school, when measured by the shortest available walking route, is two miles or further for children attending primary school and three miles or further for children attending secondary school. These distances are referred to in the following paragraphs as the “statutory walking distances”.
  - b) the nature of the route, or alternative walking routes the pupil could reasonably be expected to take to the nearest appropriate school is deemed by the Authority to be exceptionally hazardous. This tends to apply in areas where school children, accompanied as necessary, would be faced with negotiating narrow, winding lanes with no pedestrian provision or refuges from traffic.
  - c) the child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs which specifically identifies that transport must be provided, having regard to their particular disabilities and normally with reference to the statutory walking distances. Passenger Assistants are normally provided only for those children who require continual care and supervision, i.e. those with severe disabilities and, occasionally, for a child with severe behavioural, social or communication difficulties.
  - d) for pupils of secondary school age, transport is provided to any of the nearest three secondary schools between 2 and 6 miles from the home address where a parent is successful in obtaining a place and the family is in receipt of free school meals, benefits which would otherwise entitle them to free school meals, or the highest level of Working Tax Credits.
  - e) for pupils of secondary school age, the school attended is the nearest appropriate voluntary aided denominational secondary school between 2 and 25 miles from the home address
- where parents have clearly indicated that they are applying to attend the school on the basis of their faith or philosophical convictions; and

- where families are in receipt of free school meals or other benefits that would otherwise entitle them to free school meals, or to the highest level of Working Tax Credits.
- f) Transport may also be provided in situations where parents, due to their philosophical beliefs require a secondary school for their child with no particular religious affiliation and meet the low income criteria as in (e) above, and where their nearest qualifying schools would otherwise be faith schools.

In criteria (d), (e) and (f) it is important to note that the upper distance limits are measured by shortest driving route, and do not represent a safe walking route.

Where transport is provided on the basis of a family demonstrating a low income in (d), (e) and (f) above, the assessment of entitlement to transport will remain current for the school year to which it applies. Families will be asked to confirm their income and benefit entitlement before free transport is provided and this will be reviewed annually to determine ongoing entitlement.

## Appropriate Schools & Parental Preference

In the context of home to school transport the term ‘appropriate school’ refers to a school’s ability to provide the National Curriculum to a child of the appropriate age, or to meet any formally identified Special Educational Needs.

Where pupils attend, as a result of parental preference, a school other than the nearest appropriate one as determined by the Authority or a qualifying school identified in (d), (e) or (f) above, parents must accept full responsibility for the cost and arrangement of their child’s daily travel to and from school.

## Home Address

The home address in relation to entitlement to transport is the place where the child spends the majority of their time with a person who has parental responsibility and/or is the main carer as defined in the Children Act 1989. In normal circumstances this is the address as used in the School Admissions process. The authority is not responsible for providing transport to childcare facilities, after-school

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appointments, work experience placements or locations other than home.

## **Type of Transport**

Where children qualify for transport between home and school, the Authority will determine the type and nature of the transport to be provided. The cost to the Authority of making suitable transport arrangements must not be unreasonable, and the Authority will look to utilise existing transport arrangements including public bus and rail services where practicable. It is not normally possible for parents to travel with their children on any contracted home to school transport services.

We will always attempt to provide access to our services at a stopping place within one mile of a child's home via a safe walking route. Pupils with physical disabilities or in unsafe locations may be offered a home pick-up if appropriate. We aim where possible to operate to maximum journey times of 45 minutes within Weston-super-Mare and 60 minutes on rural routes. Parents are reminded that they remain responsible for their child's journey to the bus stop and should consider accompanying them should they feel it necessary.

The Authority is committed to the promotion of sustainable transport and will supply information and guidance to parents to enable them to make informed choices about their means of getting to school. This includes publication of an annual Sustainable School Travel Strategy. Many schools also have a School Travel Plan and can advise on safe ways of accessing school and alternatives to driving.

## **Vacant Seats Payment Scheme**

Pupils who are not entitled to transport under the Council's policies may be able to take up a vacant seat on a contracted vehicle operating on behalf of the Authority if one is available, on payment of a termly charge determined by the Authority. Where pupils are entitled to Free School Meals or parents are in receipt of benefits which would otherwise qualify them for Free School Meals, no charge is made. It is important to note that vacant seats are awarded on a first come-first served basis, and may not always be available. A vacant seat can be withdrawn at two weeks notice if:

- i. the seat is required for an entitled pupil; or
- ii. on reviewing the requirement for transport the Authority discontinues the service or reduces the capacity of the vehicle.

Parents are requested to pay the charge one term in advance and a discount is offered for full annual payment in advance. Permission to travel will be withdrawn, and future applications to travel may not be considered should parents fail to pay the prescribed charge on request.

As all entitled pupils must be accommodated before vacant seats are made available, applications for vacant seat travel for September 2012 will not open until July 2012. Seats will not be offered until parents have confirmed a school place is available for their child. Please contact Home to School Transport for further details of the scheme and the appropriate application form.

## **Discretionary Transport on Medical Grounds**

Special daily home to school transport may be provided on medical grounds on the advice of a Health Authority, to enable pupils to attend their nearest appropriate school even though they may live within the statutory walking distance from the school. Transport may also be available where parents are disabled and unable to accompany younger children who would normally walk to school. You will be asked to provide further information if you believe this provision applies to your child.

## **Behaviour on School Transport**

We recognise that poor behaviour on school transport can deter others from using the service, and can endanger the safety of other passengers and road users. The Authority works closely with schools to address incidents of unacceptable behaviour, and in addition to any action taken by schools may consider either temporary or permanent exclusion of pupils from school transport should they demonstrate a consistent inability to behave appropriately. All pupils using home to school transport services will be sent a copy of the Authority's code of conduct for passengers and parents.

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## Transport During the School Day

The Home to School Transport team is not responsible for providing transport during the school day, such as school trips or movement between educational establishments. Such journeys will usually be organised directly by schools or colleges. We are also unable to provide additional journeys to or from school at times other than the start and end of the standard school day.

## General Considerations

Parents should ensure that they understand the current policy as it affects their child before making any decision on choice of school that is based on an assumption that the Authority will provide transport.

## Transport Appeals

Appeals against a refusal to provide transport or requests to consider provision of home to school transport outside the circumstances outlined above should be submitted in writing to the School Admissions and Transport Manager at the address below.

## Contacting Us

Postal address:  
Home to School Transport  
School Admissions and Transport Team  
Town Hall  
Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ

Tel: 01934 634715      Fax: **01275 884 168**  
Email: [cyps-hometoschooltransport@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:cyps-hometoschooltransport@n-somerset.gov.uk)

We are based at the Castlewood offices in Clevedon.

## Other Useful Contacts

School Admissions Team      01275 884078  
*Advice and guidance on nearest schools, secondary school areas and how to apply for school places in North Somerset.*

Sustainable Travel & Road Safety Team  
*Advice on the following areas:*  
Road Safety      01934 426910  
School Travel Plans      01934 426240  
Cycling      01934 426404

Traveline South West      0871 200 2233  
*Provides public transport advice and information across the South West region.*

Webber Bus      0871 900 8935  
*Operators of local bus routes 83 and 85 serving Bleadon, St Georges and Worle.*

Axe Vale Coaches      01934 750321  
Bakers Dolphin Coaches Ltd      01278 458663  
*Operators of a number of commercial coach routes serving non-entitled pupils at Churchill School.*

Coombs Travel      01934 428555  
*Operator of local bus route 985 serving Clevedon Secondary School.*

First Somerset & Avon Tickets      0117 3736417  
*For all enquiries about local bus services and student season tickets.*

National Rail Enquiries      08457 484950  
*Information, timetables and fares for all rail services.*