

Home to school transport policy

1. Roles and responsibilities of parents

- 1.1 Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly. This includes arranging travel to and from school, meeting the costs of this and accompanying their child as necessary.
- 1.2 It is the responsibility of the parent or carer to accompany a child (or arrange suitable supervision) as necessary when walking to and from school, including to and from a provided transport pick-up and set-down point, unless such arrangements form part of the provision arranged by the local authority. Passenger assistants will only be supplied on provided transport arrangements where they are necessary to meet a child's individual needs.
- 1.3 In some cases, the Council has a legal obligation to provide suitable free school transport. This will be provided in the most cost-effective and appropriate way for children's needs. This policy sets out the categories of eligible children, the provision offered, circumstances when assistance is not provided and how to appeal against a decision.

2. Statutory provision of transport by the local authority

- 2.1 Travel assistance from home to school will be provided for pupils who meet all the following criteria:
 - Live in Herefordshire
 - Are of compulsory school age (i.e. 5 to 16 years), and extended in Herefordshire to include 4 year olds
 - Attend their nearest suitable primary or secondary school, located in England, or their nearest suitable primary or secondary school, if located in Wales
 - Live over 2 miles from school if below the age of 8, and over 3 miles from school if aged between 8 and 16
- 2.2 In addition, there are some additional entitlements for pupils from families with low incomes (see Section 5).
- 2.3 The Department for Education (DfE) defines the 'nearest school' as the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs that the child may have.
- 2.4 Where a pupil attends a school that is not the nearest available school, as a result of parental preference, transport will not normally be provided.
- 2.5 For distances below those described above, transport will not be provided, as the route is considered to be within the statutory walking distance. These distances are measured by the shortest available walking route (from home address to nearest school gate) using our geographical information system,

taking account of the road network and any made up public footpaths, along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk reasonably safely.

3. Pupils unable to attend their nearest school due to over-subscription

- 3.1 Where a pupil is unable to obtain a place at their qualifying school because it is over-subscribed, travel assistance will be provided to the next nearest school that has an available place, provided that it is more than the statutory walking distance from the home address.

4. Children living at more than one address

- 4.1 Transport entitlement is assessed using the usual home address for each child; that is where they live for the majority of time. If time is split equally between two addresses, then the address of the parent in receipt of child benefit will be used.

5. Families on low incomes

- 5.1 Children from low income groups (defined as being entitled to free school meals or a family in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit) have the following additional entitlements to transport free of charge:

- For secondary-aged children aged 11-16, the entitlement to free transport is increased to any one of three nearest schools, where these are between 2 and 6 miles from home.
- Primary aged children of 8 and above (years 4 to 6) attending their nearest suitable school that is more than 2 miles from home are entitled to free transport.
- Where a parent or carer expresses a preference for a school based on religion or belief, then a child aged 11-16 is eligible for free transport to the nearest suitable school if they live between 2 and 15 miles of the school.

- 5.2 Eligibility for transport support provided under the low income criteria above will be reviewed on an annual basis.

6. Children unable to walk to school by reason of their special educational needs (SEN), disability, or mobility problem (including temporary medical conditions)

- 6.1 Where a child attends their nearest suitable school, which is within statutory walking distance, but is unable to walk there (accompanied as necessary), they will be eligible for transport assistance.

- 6.2 Applications in this category will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will require evidence from a medical professional and assessment of need. Evidence of factors such as receipt of certain disability benefits may also be requested to assess the level of need.

7. Children unable to walk to school in safety because the route is classed as hazardous

- 7.1 Where a child is attending their nearest school, which is within statutory walking distance, but the nature of the route is such that a child cannot be expected to walk (accompanied as necessary) in reasonable safety because it contains exceptional hazards, they will be eligible for transport assistance.
- 7.2 In order for a route to qualify in this category, it must have been assessed and classified as an unsafe walking route by Herefordshire Council. Assessments take into consideration factors such as the age of the child, vision for pedestrians and motorists, the volume and speed of traffic, street lighting, potential risks on the route, width of the road and the existence of footways.
- 7.3 Assessments do not take account of issues of personal security, as it is the responsibility of a parent or carer to accompany their child as necessary when walking to and from school.
- 7.4 Such routes will be reassessed by the local authority periodically.

8. Discretionary provision of transport assistance

- 8.1 In addition to the statutory duty to provide transport assistance to the eligible pupils outlined above, the local authority will exercise its discretion to provide transport to pupils as follows.

Permanent exclusions or managed moves

- 8.2 Where a child changes school as a result of a permanent exclusion or managed move, then transport assistance will be provided if the school is beyond the statutory walking distance and the local authority agrees with the preference.

House moves

- 8.3 Where a pupil in receipt of free transport moves house and continues to attend the same school, but that school is no longer the nearest, then transport assistance will no longer be provided.

Exceptional Circumstances

- 8.4 Transport assistance may be provided in exceptional circumstances to pupils not otherwise eligible, where such provision is in the best interests of the pupil. Such circumstances may include temporary absences from the home address due to circumstances beyond the control of parents, or other exceptional family circumstances where the pupil might be at risk of educational disruption.
- 8.5 Evidence to support such applications will be required from relevant professionals. Each application will be considered on its own merits.

9. Use of vacant seats on school buses for pupils not eligible for transport assistance (paid-for places)

- 9.1 Where spare seats are available on vehicles contracted by the local authority to provide transport to school, these may be allocated to children not entitled to free transport. A flat rate charge is made for these seats and they are allocated according to the following priority order:
- Year 11 pupils
 - Siblings of pupils currently receiving assisted transport on that service
 - Looked after children
 - Pupils nearest to the school
- 9.2 The situation will be reviewed each term. Places could be withdrawn at any time if they are required by pupils with an entitlement for transport assistance.

10. Transport provision

- 10.1 Where the authority provides transport assistance, this will usually be in the form of a bus pass to use a local bus service or travel on a dedicated contract bus, coach or minibus. For certain journeys, a train pass may be provided. In some circumstances, parents may be offered a mileage allowance or personal travel budget to convey their own child to school. In some instances, where no other transport is available, a taxi may be provided.
- 10.2 Transport arrangements will be made that are considered reasonable and appropriate by the local authority. Equally, such arrangements will be made in the most cost-effective way for the authority.
- 10.3 There are no set limits for what is a reasonable journey time. This will depend on the age and needs of pupils. However, we aim to ensure that no pupil will have a journey of more than 75 minutes (secondary) or 45 minutes (primary).
- 10.4 The Council provides transport for one return journey from home to the school at the official beginning and end of the school day. Transport is not provided to meet a pupil's individual timetable, including breakfast or after-school clubs or extra-curricular activities. Transport is not provided for work experience placements, work-based learning or travel between establishments (school to school).
- 10.5 Transport is not usually provided from door-to-door. Children may be required to walk (accompanied by an appropriate adult as necessary) to and from designated pick-up or set-down points. The distance to such a point will not normally exceed 1 mile for a primary-aged pupil and 1.5 miles for a secondary-aged pupil.
- 10.6 Generally, the driver of school transport vehicles will be the only adult present during journeys. Parents must ensure their children are instructed about good behaviour when travelling and to use seat belts at all times where fitted. A passenger assistant will only be provided where a risk assessment specifically for a particular service suggests that this is necessary.

11. Poor behaviour and withdrawal of transport

- 11.1 In the interests of safety for everyone using school transport, it is important that pupils behave well while travelling.
- 11.2 Head teachers are empowered to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside of the school premises, when it is reasonable to do so. This includes addressing any behavioural issues on school transport.
- 11.3 The Council has a duty of care to ensure all children travel in reasonable safety and comfort. Any behaviour affecting other passengers, the public or the driver that endangers (whether intentionally or unintentionally) themselves or others may lead to the entitlement to travel being withdrawn, either temporarily or permanently. In such circumstances, the parent will need to arrange and pay for their own transport in order to meet their duty to ensure that their child continues to attend school.

12. Provision of transport for pupils with Special Education Needs

- 12.1 Each individual pupil's special educational needs, as detailed in a formal Statement or Education or Health & Care Plan, will be taken into account at the time of assessment for transport.
- 12.2 Where the distance to the appropriate school is less than the statutory walking distances and/or when a child has no statement of SEN or EHCP, travel assistance will be considered, taking into account the individual circumstances and the travel needs of children with significant sensory, physical, medical or behavioural difficulties that prevent them from getting to school even when accompanied by a parent or carer. In such instances, travel assistance will be considered using supporting written evidence, within the preceding 12 months, from a range of sources that describes the child as having:
 - Long term severely restricted independent mobility, due to a physical disability.
 - Long term severely restricted mobility due to a medical condition resulting in persistent pain or extreme fatigue.
 - A sensory impairment resulting in severely restricted mobility.
 - Severe behavioural emotional and / or social difficulties in comparison with other children of their age. This may be linked with cognitive ability or be as a result of a specific development disorder.
- 12.3 Once a pupil is assessed as being eligible for transport assistance, a risk assessment will be undertaken to determine the most appropriate requirements for that individual pupil on the journey to and from school. This assessment will take account of measures to ensure the safety and comfort of that pupil and any other pupils or staff travelling on the vehicle. Following the assessment, appropriate safety equipment may be required on the vehicle. If a harness or restraint is likely to be necessary, this requirement will be discussed with parents or carers, who will be asked to agree to this.

- 12.4 If a parent or carer does not agree with any aspect of transport assistance provided by the authority, then this should be taken up with the Integrated Transport Team. If a parent or carer chooses to withdraw a pupil from transport because they do not agree with any aspect, then they will become responsible for getting the pupil to school themselves and at their own expense, until the matter has been investigated.
- 12.5 Transport will be arranged in the most cost-effective way and may involve travel by local bus, contract bus or taxi. Door to door transport will only be provided where this is necessary to meet the assessed needs of the child. Therefore, pupils (accompanied by parent or carer) may be required to get to a designated pick-up point.

13. Independent Travel Training

- 13.1 Independent Travel Training can help support independence by developing personal, social and life skills by looking at the needs and capabilities of a young person. Where a young person is considered sufficiently capable, we will offer independent travel training for them to develop the skills to be able to travel more independently. Where they attain the necessary confidence and ability, we will expect them to travel independently to and from school.
- 13.2 The training will be given by an approved trainer in partnership with schools and parents or carers.

14. Use of passenger assistants

- 14.1 Passenger assistants are provided on transport only where a child has a severe physical condition, a medical condition requiring immediate treatment, or severe behavioural difficulties meaning that the health and safety of the child, driver or anyone else travelling in the vehicle would be at risk. The use of an assistant will be reviewed regularly, since the need may change as the child grows older.
- 14.2 A passenger assistant's duty is to supervise students on a vehicle and to help with boarding and leaving the vehicle where the pupil has physical, sensory or medical difficulties. They are not able to collect pupils from home or take them into school if that would mean leaving other vulnerable children unattended.

15. Residential schools

- 15.1 Where a child attends a residential school and is entitled to transport assistance, this is provided at the start and end of each half-term or, at the start and end of each week depending on the boarding arrangements. Transport is also provided for official school closures. Transport will not be provided at other times or for parental visits for meetings.
- 15.2 Where a pupil attends a qualifying residential school, transport assistance will be arranged by the local authority in accordance with the placement terms agreed.

16. Review of transport provision for pupils with special educational needs

- 16.1 Travel assistance will be reviewed with parents and education and care professionals who know the child and are part of the statement or EHC Plan review. The Council may also review eligibility by a scheduled meeting or by telephone contact. Parents will be told of all decisions in writing. We need to ensure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the pupil's assessed needs.
- 16.2 In the event that there is a risk to health and safety of staff or pupils and others using the transport from the misbehaviour of a pupil, access to school transport may be suspended and in serious cases permanently withdrawn as set out in the main school transport policy. When considering suspension or withdrawal of provision regard will be given to the extent to which the child's disability has impacted on their behaviour and what steps can be taken to eliminate the effect of that disability on their behaviour.

How to apply for school transport

If you believe you qualify for transport assistance, or you would like to apply for a seat under the Vacant Seat Payment Scheme, please complete the application form for school travel assistance and return it to:

*School and College Transport,
PO Box 236,
Plough Lane,
Hereford HR4 0LE*

If your child has any medical conditions that need to be taken account of when assessing transport (Type One Diabetes for example) please supply any supporting information along with the completed application form.

Appealing against a decision made by the local authority regarding school transport assistance?

An appeal against a decision made by our team regarding eligibility for school transport assistance should be made in writing, by completing the [school travel assistance – request for review form](#), and sending to:

*Admissions and Transport Policy Manager,
Herefordshire Council,
PO Box 236,
Plough Lane,
Hereford HR4 0LE*

Any appeal will be considered and a decision made within fifteen working days. If your appeal is not successful you will still have the right to pursue matters through the local authority's formal complaints procedure.