



HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY - SEPTEMBER 2019 EDUCATION TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DISABILITIES AGED 4 -16 YEARS (STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE)

It is very important that parents think about transport when they choose the school they would like their child to attend. The majority of children are not eligible for free transport and this will usually have to be organised and paid for by parents or carers. Where Gloucestershire County Council is not able to provide any help with transport, parents must ensure that they can meet the costs of transporting their child/ren to and from school throughout their education.

Gloucestershire County Council is only able to provide transport for those children living within Gloucestershire and attending a maintained school or academy, or an independent special school **where the placement is secured by the County Council through the Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) process.** Transport is not provided to students studying away from their normal school.

The County Council remains committed to ensuring that all students are able to access education and will continue to meet all its statutory duties which are outlined in the Education Act 1996, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance and Home to School Travel for Pupils Requiring Special Arrangements Guidance.

Students living in Gloucestershire who have a learning difficulty and/or disability are given additional consideration for the provision of transport because their individual needs may make transport essential and they may have to attend a special school, centre or college which is not local to their home area. Students with a learning difficulty and/or disability attending mainstream schools should also refer to the Home to School Transport Policy for Children aged 4-16 Years for the 2019/20 academic year:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schooltransport> Transport assistance will be provided to statutory school aged students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the circumstances set out in this policy.

1. Eligibility criteria

The County Council will provide help to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:

- who attend the nearest school to the home address or the school in their designated transport area assessed by the County Council as being able to meet his/her individual educational needs;

and

- whose home to school walking distance is two miles or more for a child aged under eight, or
three miles or more for a child aged eight or over

Distances are measured from the home entrance to the nearest school/catchment school gate along the shortest available pedestrian route that a child can walk with reasonable safety.

Transport can be considered for students living within the statutory distance specified but in order to complete an individual assessment, the County Council will require full details of the child's learning difficulties and/or disability and the effect this has on their home to school travel arrangements. Evidence may also be required from the relevant health and/or education professionals working with the student.

If there is a choice of suitable provision and, due to parental preference, a child is not attending the nearest appropriate school which could meet their needs (as deemed by relevant education professionals), they will not be entitled to transport assistance.

Transport assistance to a school outside of the county boundary is usually provided if it is closer to the student's home address than any school within Gloucestershire.

2. Entitlement on grounds of low-income

Parents in receipt of working tax credit **at the maximum level** (i.e., not reduced by income) or whose children qualify for free school meals are deemed to be 'low income' and entitled to an additional level of transport assistance. To check if you are entitled to Free School Meals, please see the following link which shows the full list of benefits you would need to be in receipt of in order to receive Free School Meals. Parents will be required to submit an application for Free School Meals **if their child is not already receiving them** in order that eligibility can be confirmed with the checking service provided by the Government. An application can be made by using the Family Portal found on the Gloucestershire County Council website

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-transport-and-free-school-meals/apply-for-free-school-meals/>

Alternatively, parents can provide paper evidence of their benefits, in which case **all** pages of the current Tax Credit Notice will be required. Assistance with transport on grounds of low income will be subject to an annual review whereby transport may be withdrawn if the financial situation has changed.

i) The County Council will provide help to low income families with a child aged between 8-11 years attending a primary school where the student:

- attends their nearest primary school (**see note 1 on page 1**)

and

- their home to school walking distance is over **two** miles

Qualifying parents will need to reapply for transport under this criterion when their child turns eight years old and they are no longer entitled to transport when the statutory walking distance increases from two to three miles.

ii) The County Council will provide help to low income families with a child aged between 11-16 years attending a **secondary school** where the student:

either:

- attends one of their three nearest secondary schools;

and

- their home to school distance is between two¹ and six² miles

or

- attends the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than two¹ miles, but not more than fifteen² miles from that school.

1 The two mile limit is measured along the nearest available walking route

2 The upper limits of six and fifteen miles are measured along road routes

3. Students unable to walk to school 'In Reasonable Safety' because of the nature of the route

An unavailable route is defined as where 'the nature of the route is such that the child cannot be reasonably expected to walk, accompanied if necessary, in reasonable safety'. Such routes are assessed thoroughly against set criteria (including nature of footways and crossings, traffic flow and visibility).

Where students are attending their **nearest** school and the shortest route they will have to walk from home to school is declared unavailable by trained assessors, and there is no reasonable alternative route (under the statutory distance), the County Council will provide assistance with transport.

Unavailable routes are regularly reviewed and the County Council reserves the right to withdraw transport assistance from any student in the future should the nature of the route change or be deemed available.

4. Review of Entitlement

Due to differences in policy, separate applications for transport assistance must be made when students move through their education from primary to secondary school.

Transport will be reviewed following a family move, change in placement or a change to a student's condition, medication or equipment. Where a change in circumstances means that a student no longer meets the eligibility criteria (above), transport assistance will be withdrawn.

Following an incident during the journey, it may be necessary to suspend transport until a risk assessment has been undertaken. This is necessary to ensure the student can be transported safely. In such circumstances parents/carers will remain responsible for arranging transport for their child to and from school until the matter has been fully reviewed.

Transport assistance that has been agreed in error or where it is discovered that the student lives within the prescribed distance will be withdrawn.

When an application has been refused and parents/carers feel they have exceptional circumstances for consideration, they may request a Senior Officer Review application form and will need to provide specific evidence to prove any exceptional circumstances meaning that their child would not be able to attend school without assistance from the County Council. The Senior Officer Review applications are considered by a panel of senior managers who will determine whether transport should be offered on a discretionary basis. Under no circumstances will the Senior Officer Review panel consider applications where the parent/carer disagrees with the policy itself. If a family wishes to challenge the Council's transport policy or its implementation, they should address their issues to their local County Councillor. If the panel is unable to grant assistance, parents/carers can request a formal appeal hearing, which is considered by a panel of County Councillors.

5. Transport Provision

The County Council will conduct a risk analysis and if necessary a full risk assessment to determine the most appropriate and cost effective form of transport for each individual student. This will include consideration of a young person's suitability for travel training to enable them to access school by bus, instead of utilising specialist transport e.g. taxi/minibus. Bus passes are the most common provision where this facility is available. Smart cards are being introduced on most routes, replacing bus passes, for which a pupil photograph may be required. Bus companies and pick up points will be allocated according to routes and loading. To ensure the safety of students and staff, CCTV will be used in vehicles. Alternative methods of hired transport will also be considered where necessary.

The County Council may help with travel costs in the form of a Personal Travel Allowance for parents to make their own arrangements where hired or public transport is difficult.

Where a student attends a residential school as a term-time boarder, travel support will usually be provided at the beginning and end of terms and half terms only (i.e. 12 journeys per academic year) and for weekly boarders, travel support will usually be provided at the beginning and end of the week only (e.g. Monday mornings and Friday afternoons).

Parents/carers will be responsible for providing transport for any other purposes, including visits home and medical appointments that take place during term time/the week.

The County Council does not provide transport for assessment days and therefore providing transport for these will remain the responsibility of the parent/carer.

The County Council can only provide transport assistance between the student's permanent home address and the school. Therefore, transport is not provided to/from alternative addresses, such as a sibling's school or a relative, even if the distances involved are similar.

The County Council does not provide transport for off-site educational visits, work experience placements, activity weeks or medical appointments and providing transport for these types of purposes will remain the responsibility of parents/carers or schools as appropriate.

The County Council does not provide transport to Alternative Education Provisions arranged by the school that the student is on role at. This is the responsibility of said school.

Transport is only provided at the beginning and end of normal school days. The County Council is unable to guarantee that pick up and drop off times will be compatible with parents/carers other arrangements, particularly in relation to siblings or employment.

No reimbursement of travel costs incurred prior to application will be made.

6. Application/Assessment Process

Parents/carers of students starting primary or secondary school in September 2019 who require assistance with transport should submit their application to the County Council as early as possible and by Friday 21st June 2019 at the latest, to ensure that transport will be arranged in time for the first day of the new school year.

We cannot guarantee to have transport provision in place for the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year where applications are incomplete, even if they are received by the deadline.

Forms are processed in the order that they are received. We aim to assess applications within 20 working days during the peak time (May – September 2019).

Applications received outside the peak time (October 2019 – April 2020) will usually be assessed within 5 working days.

If a student is eligible, transport can sometimes be in place after a further 5 working days, although this usually takes longer to ensure the individual needs of the student are met and the appropriate form of transport is procured.

If the application is approved:

We will write to the parents/carers to confirm the student is eligible to assistance and explain the transport arrangements (e.g. the form of transport and the company name/contact details). During the peak period there may be a delay between the application being approved and the transport arrangements being put in place.

If the application is refused:

Parents will be notified in writing if their application is unsuccessful. They may then request a Senior Officer Review application form to request a review of the refusal (**see note 4 on page 3**)

7. Students aged over 16

A separate policy applies for students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities aged over 16 who are accessing post 16 provision in schools/colleges. Any eligible students starting in Post 16 education for the first time in or after September 2019 will be offered either a bus pass (with travel training if required) or a Personal Travel Allowance to support parents to make their own arrangements to get their child to school/college. A new application must be made each year, even if they are remaining at a school/college where they previously received travel support.

Full details of assistance available for Post 16 travel support can be downloaded from the website: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/sentransport

A guide to home to school transport for parents/carers is available to download from our webpage.

8. Contact details

SEN Travel Enablement
Education
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TP0

Telephone: (01452) 425011

Email sen.transport@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Website: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/sentransport

