

HOME TO SCHOOL ASSISTANCE WITH TRAVEL POLICY – EDUCATION TRANSPORT FOR CHILDREN AGED 4-16 YEARS (Reception through to the end of Year 11)

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 - many schools have their own travel plans, with special routes to make walking or cycling safer and have special facilities such as cycle shelters. Where Gloucestershire County Council is not able to provide any travel assistance, 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 travel assistance for those children living within Gloucestershire and attending a maintained school or academy – transport is not provided to independent schools. Travel assistance is not provided to pupils studying away from their normal school.

The County Council remains committed to ensuring that all children 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, the Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance and Home to School Travel for Pupils Requiring Special Arrangements Guidance.

A. Home to School Travel Assistance Policy

Assistance with travel will be provided to statutory school aged pupils in the circumstances set out in this policy.

1. Children Living Outside the ‘Statutory Walking Distance’

i) The County Council will provide help to those **primary school** aged pupils:

- who attend the **nearest** primary school to their home address (**ref. Note 1 on page 2**);
and
- whose home to school walking distance is **two** miles or more for a child aged under eight, including the academic year in which they turn eight years of age and **three** miles or more for a child aged eight or over.

Please note - Qualifying parents will need to reapply for transport under this criterion when their child turns eight years old. Furthermore, 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 those **secondary school** aged pupils who attend either:

- the nearest secondary school to their home address (**ref. Note 1 on page 2**);
or
- the nearest secondary school agreed by the County Council to serve their home address (i.e., resident in the designated transport area for the school) (**ref. Note 1 on page 2**);
and
- whose home to school walking distance is **three** miles or more.

Distances are measured from the home entrance to the nearest school gate along the shortest pedestrian route (which would include walking along maintained walkways.)

Once the nearest school has been established, we assess the 'statutory walking distance'. The measurement of the statutory walking distance is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. Travel assistance will not be provided if the home to school distance is less than the two/three mile limit unless the route has been assessed as unavailable, as outlined in section 3 below.

In order to clarify the assistance offered to pupils attending secondary schools, the County Council has undertaken a mapping exercise across Gloucestershire to record the nearest secondary catchment school (where available) linked to residential properties. This information has been used to create the designated transport areas for schools, and parents are advised to use the Gloucestershire mapping tool on the Council's website for an initial check on transport eligibility. Any further advice can be obtained from the Travel Assistance and FSM Team (contact details can be found at the end of this document.)

The County Council can only provide travel assistance from the pupil's permanent home address and transport will not be approved to/from more than one location. Transport will only be provided at the start and end of each normal school day. Parents will be responsible for transport at any other time, such as for medical appointments or after-school activities.

Important notes:

1. When determining eligibility for assistance with travel, the home to school distance is measured by **walking routes** to determine the nearest school and whether a pupil lives within the statutory distances detailed above, in line with home to school transport legislation. Please note that this is different to the distance measurements that most schools and academies use for admission purposes – where places are prioritised according to a direct line distance. Parents are advised to contact the Travel Assistance and FSM Team on 01452 425390 for further advice if they live in an area where there may be uncertainty when determining the nearest school for home to school transport purposes.

2. Assistance with travel may be offered, subject to the distance criteria detailed above, if a family has been refused a place at their nearest school and therefore had to attend their next nearest school with a space available in the relevant year group. A copy of the In Year refusal letter for the child's nearest school must be attached to the home to school travel assistance application. Whilst it is appreciated that families may then wish younger siblings to attend the same school in the future, assistance with transport will not automatically be offered to them unless they have also been refused a place at their nearest, and nearer schools. To find out where your nearest school is, please use the link on the Gloucestershire County Council website.

<https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/find-a-school/>

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 Citizen Portal found on the Gloucestershire County Council website via the same link <https://www.goucestershire.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 Credits Awards Notice (TC602) will be required.

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 pupil:

- attends their nearest primary school (*ref. Note 1 on page 2*);
and
 - their home to school walking distance is over **two** 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 pupil **either**:
- attends one of their three nearest secondary schools (*ref. Note 1 on page 2*);
and
 - their home to school distance is between **two**¹ and **six**² miles
or
 - attends the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than **two**¹ miles, but not more than **fifteen**² miles from that school.

3. Children Unable to Walk “In Reasonable Safety” to School due to 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 recommended by ROSPA (including nature of footways and crossings, traffic flow and visibility).

Where pupils 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 travel.

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

4. Changing Schools & In Year Applications

Due to differences in policy, separate applications for travel assistance must be made when pupils move through their education from primary to secondary school. Travel will also be reviewed following an address change or change in school.

5. Siblings

Although assistance may have been offered exceptionally to an older sibling attending a school that is not their nearest (for example due to a school closure or a fair access admission decision etc.), the normal policy detailed above will apply to younger siblings entering school in future years. Parents should not assume that if one child receives assistance with home to school transport, that their siblings will also receive this in the future.

6. Types of Travel Provision

The County Council will decide upon the most cost effective and appropriate travel assistance for each pupil based upon where they live. Bus passes are the most common provision where this facility is

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*

available and may entail pupils having to use more than one bus to reach school. Smart cards are being introduced on home routes, replacing bus passes. Once a smart card has been issued to pupils, this bus pass is valid for the entirety of the child's current eligibility. Bus companies and pick up points will be allocated according to routes and loading and will often include a section of the journey that a pupil will need to make on foot. Alternative methods of hired transport will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Alternatively, the County Council may help with travel costs for parents to make their own arrangements in cases where hired or public transport is difficult.

7. Code of Conduct

All pupils must agree to a code of conduct detailed at the end of this document before assistance is provided. The County Council reserves the right to impose a ban, or withdraw transport, where unacceptable behaviour risks the safety of others or themselves. The code of conduct is a live document and you should refresh yourself with it each academic year by visiting <https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/media/14670/code-of-conduct-for-pupils-who-use-home-to-school-transport-april-2017.pdf>

B. Application/Assessment Process

Parents/carers of pupils starting primary or secondary school in September who require assistance with travel should submit their application to the County Council **as soon as they accept the school place in March**, and by the end of May at the latest, to ensure that travel assistance will be arranged in time for the first day of the new school year. In order to qualify for home to school travel assistance, students must meet the requirements of the published policy. In addition, travel assistance will only be considered if parents/carers have submitted preferences for all of their closer schools as a higher preference than the allocated school. These preferences must have been made by the National closing date.

Parents/carers of pupils that are entitled to assistance will normally receive information relating to the arranged transport provision within 10 school days. However, this is likely to take longer during the period between school places being allocated in March/April and the start of the new school year in view of the high number of transport applications received. If the application is approved, details will be passed to the Integrated Transport Unit where the transport arrangements will be made, and parents/carers will be notified of the arrangements before the start of the academic year.

Parents/carers will be notified in writing if they are not entitled to assistance. If parents/carers feel they have exceptional circumstances for consideration, they may request a Senior Officer Review and will need to provide specific evidence to prove any exceptional circumstances. Senior Officer Review applications are considered by a panel of senior managers who will determine whether transport should be offered on a discretionary basis. The Senior Officer Review panel will not 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.

C. Students Aged 16-19

The majority of learners are able to make their own way to school or college. In year 12 they will be able to apply for a bursary (* conditions may apply) which can be used to assist with transport costs. Where this is not possible due to the distance involved and the absence of suitable public transport alternatives, learners have the option of purchasing a pass to use on a school bus contracted by the council where this is available under the Spare Seat Scheme. For other dedicated school services, fares are set by the operator on services that are not controlled by the council, and prices may vary for those routes. A list of these operators, and full details of the spare seat scheme, can be downloaded from <https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/transport/school-transport/spare-seat-scheme/>

Where learners are attending their post 16 provision at a college, please contact them for further information on any available transport provision. Post 16 students are expected to get themselves to further

education. Home to school travel assistance does not apply beyond statutory school age. Details of financial help that may be available can be found here www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

D. Code of Conduct for Pupils who use Home to School Transport

We want you and all other passengers to stay safe and travel in comfort. You must agree to the following code of conduct before we issue your bus pass. Your school and parents (or carers) will be alerted if you do not keep to the code, and we may have to withdraw your transport assistance.

1. Your bus pass

- Carry your bus pass or smart card with you whenever you travel to and from school.
- Ensure that you show your smart card or bus pass to the driver. If you have a smart card, you must use it on the ticket machine to board where one is provided. If it cannot be produced or validated, the driver may refuse travel.
- Only use your pass to travel on the route that has been approved.
- Do not use anyone else's pass or allow another person to use yours. It is your responsibility to protect your own bus pass, and it will be your responsibility to compensate the bus operator for any trips claimed fraudulently under your name.
- You may only possess one bus pass at any time. If you find a lost bus pass that you have since replaced, you must destroy the older pass.
- Our bus operators reserve the right to refuse any passenger who attempts to board their service using a defaced or damaged card.
- If you lose your pass, you can obtain a replacement one for a fee by either:
 - Calling the County Council's Customer Contact Centre on 01452 425387.
 - Selecting "Order a replacement pass" from the Gloucestershire County Council website. <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/school-transport/apply-for-a-new-or-lost-school-bus-pass/>

2. Your pick-up point

- You are responsible for getting to your bus's pick-up point.
- Arrive at the pick-up point before your bus is due. The bus will run to a timetable and will not wait if you are late.
- If a bus is late, be prepared to wait at the pick-up point for 20 minutes but no longer. Agree with your parents what to do if the bus does not arrive or if you fail to catch it. (e.g., return home or go to a friend's house to organise alternative transport).
- You may only board the bus from the pick-up point you have been assigned. If there are extenuating circumstances, please contact the Integrated Transport Unit to agree an alternative.
- In times of inclement weather transport may be unable to operate; please ensure you have a contingency plan for these occasions.

3. Keeping safe when getting on and off the bus

- Queue sensibly, well away from the edge of the road.
- Allow passengers to leave the bus before you board.
- Get on and off the bus in an orderly way so you do not hurt yourself or other passengers.
- If you need to cross the road once you have left the bus, wait for the bus to drive away so you can see other vehicles and their drivers can see you.

4. On the bus

- Stay in your seat once you are on the bus; you must wear a seatbelt if one is provided.
- Do not distract the driver unless there is an emergency.
- Do not stand in front of the driver, in the aisle or on the stairwell.
- Do not use emergency exits or doors unless the driver instructs you to or there is a genuine emergency.

- Do not eat, drink or smoke (including e-cigarettes) on the bus.
- Foul, abusive language and bullying will not be tolerated.
- Physical aggression of any kind will not be tolerated.
- You must not engage in behaviours that may cause direct harm to other passengers.
- You must not engage in behaviours that will make other passengers feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- You must not deliberately jeopardise your own safety or the safety of other passengers.
- You must not encourage, coerce, or equip other passengers to do anything that may jeopardise their own safety or that of other passengers.
- Do not carry real or replica weapons.
- Do not throw items.
- Do not destroy, deface, or deliberately soil any part of the bus. If damage is caused not only will the police be contacted, but you will be liable for the full costs of repair and any fees incurred in recovering such costs.
- If the bus breaks down or is involved in an accident, follow the driver's instructions.

Please be aware that many transport operators use CCTV for the safety and security of passengers and other road users. CCTV footage may be used as evidence to investigate incidents that may occur on school transport.

Sanctions for Unacceptable Behaviour

From time to time, it is necessary to impose sanctions on children and young people who fail to conform to an acceptable standard of behaviour.

A parent/carer must take responsibility for their children's behaviour on the way to and from school. It is their duty to ensure that their children understand why it is essential to behave properly in the transport provided. Young people over the age of 16 are responsible for their own behaviour and we expect them to adhere to the code of conduct independently. Children and young people must understand that poor behaviour, especially which puts at risk the safety of any other passenger, driver, or road user, will lead to a ban on use of the transport provided. In that case, the responsibility of transporting their child to school will transfer to the parent/carer without any financial support from the County Council.

In return, we will ensure that contracts are monitored to ensure compliance with the law and the contract offered. We will investigate any complaint received from any other party and be seen to act against anyone who contravenes the policies and agreements entered into. We recognise that the decision as to whether or not to carry a child or young person is for the operator, although we will encourage that operator not to take such a step before discussing any proposed action with the County Council and the head teacher of the school involved.

As part of its commitment to providing a safe environment for the transport of children and young people to and from school, we have determined a procedure for dealing with cases of poor behaviour reported to us, and have adopted the following list of sanctions that may be applied in certain circumstances. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it a definitive statement that in every case the sanction indicated will be applied regardless of other circumstances. Each case will be considered on its individual merits, in consultation with the school and operator. The sanction will be applied jointly by the Review Officer and Lead Officer, Integrated Transport Unit/Travel Assistance Team. Any appeal will be considered jointly by the Admissions & Travel Assistance Manager and Transport Operations Manager, whose decision will be final.

Guidelines for First Offences

TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR	EXAMPLES	SANCTION
Unhygienic Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consuming or spilling food or drink</i> • <i>Littering</i> 	1 Day Ban

Dangerous or Anti-Social Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Distracting the driver</i> • <i>Spitting</i> • <i>Misuse of the bell</i> • <i>Not wearing a seat (where seatbelts are available)</i> • <i>Leaving the seat when the vehicle is moving</i> 	1 Week Ban
Severe Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bullying other passengers</i> • <i>Misuse of emergency exit</i> • <i>Chronic and on-going poor behaviour</i> 	1 Month Ban
Critical Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assault of driver or another passenger</i> • <i>Possession of drugs</i> • <i>Any form of damage to the vehicle</i> • <i>Using or intending to use weaponry</i> 	1 Term Ban

Criminal Offences

Any criminal offences that result in a ban may also be reported to the police. The following behaviours are likely to result in criminal investigation.

- Damage to vehicle, e.g. graffiti, vandalism.
- Gaining fraudulent access to the vehicle (using an expired pass, another pupil's pass, etc.)
- Possession or use of drugs.
- Possession or use of offensive weapons (including replicas).
- Assault on driver, GCC pass holders or other fare paying passengers.

Notification

Operators will report any unacceptable behaviour to the County Council who will investigate the incident, including the recovery of any CCTV footage. The County Council will enforce an appropriate ban as outlined above, if warranted. Parents will be notified of this action by letter, or where an instant ban is justified, by telephone and later confirmed in writing. It is the responsibility of the parent /carer to transport the child to school whilst the ban is in place.

Contact:

Integrated Transport Unit:

Enquiries relating to transport arrangements, routes, replacement bus passes, and purchasing bus passes on school contract buses for pupils that are not entitled to assistance under home to school transport policies.

Tel: 01452 425387

Email: mainstream@goucestershire.gov.uk

Travel Assistance & Free School Meals Team:

Enquiries relating to entitlement to assistance with transport for pupils aged 4-16 and Free School Meals:

Tel: 01452 425390

Email: transportmainstream@goucestershire.gov.uk