HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

TRANSPORT POLICY AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What free school transport means

The Council's Education Department identifies the need for the provision of free school transport. The Councils Passenger Transport team engage operators to provide school transport services. The catchment area for each school is recorded and held within the Education Department. Where children attend and live more than the specified walking distance from their catchment school the Council will assist with school travel by making available free school transport in accordance with its duty under the 1980 Education Transport Act.

Pupils who attend an alternative school by parental choice (known as a placing request) have no entitlement to free transport. Where a child attends a school as the result of a successful placing request it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to organise transport to the school.

The Council's Responsibilities

- Providing free home to school transport for entitled pupils
- Designing transport services appropriate to pupils needs
- Placing contracts with bus and taxi firms to provide services
- Ensuring the safety of pupils during the time spent on school transport journeys
- Informing pupils and parents of transport arrangements and any changes to them
- Assessing a pupils additional needs i.e. the use of an Escort
- Regularly inspect the transport provided i.e. delivered in accordance with the contract

The Council has a common law duty of care for the safety and well being of pupils throughout the school day including the time spent on school transport.

Once a pupil has boarded the bus the Council assumes responsibility their safety. However, this responsibility is only accepted if pupils behave responsibly as shown in this booklet.

Free School Transport Entitlement

Free school transport is awarded to pupils who live more than:

- 2 miles away from their catchment primary school
- 3 miles away from their catchment high school

Pupils may still be required to walk to a school transport pick up point. Primary school pupils will not be required to walk more than two miles and high school pupils will not be required to walk more than three miles from their home to the pick up point.

Exceptional Request

Consideration will be given in exceptional circumstances for school transportation where the child attends their catchment school but would not normally be entitled to transport. Where parents believe that there may be grounds for an exceptional transport request then a request form should be completed and submitted to the Passenger Transport Section. Applications will be referred for further assessment.

Exceptional transport requests can be made when:

- Your child has been recommended on health grounds by a designated medical officer
- Your child has requirements based on educational grounds/additional education needs as assessed by an Educational Psychologist
- Your child has to walk a route which, after an assessment by a road safety professional, is considered to be unsafe for children accompanied by an adult

Privilege Lifts

If you live near a school transport route, your child may be able to apply for a privilege lift seat. Vacant seats on contracted transport services may be allocated to pupils who are not normally entitled to travel. Seats are not guaranteed and may be withdrawn at any time if required for an entitled pupil.

Transport Provision

The Passenger Transport Team is responsible for the design and management of school transport services. Transport will not necessarily be provided door-to-door. Routes are designed as far as practicable to avoid excessive journey times for the furthest pupils and to be cost-effective. There are various services used for taking pupils to and from school:

- School contract buses hired from private companies on which travel passes are issued for pupils only
- Taxis, private hire cars and minibuses on which travel passes are issued for pupils only
- Public bus services on which travel passes (tickets) are issued for children to use for travel to and from the school

Different sized vehicles are used, ranging from taxis and minibuses to coaches and double-deck buses. School transport services are normally timed to arrive 5 minutes prior to the start of school and leave 5 minutes after the close of school. However, primary schools in towns often share transport services with their associated high schools and there may be a requirement to bring children in earlier or take them home later. In these circumstances no child will be left on school premises for more than 30 minutes before the start of school or 30 minutes after the close of school. No child will have a total waiting time of more than 45 minutes per day unless transport is shared or vehicles need to do a “double run”.

Parents Responsibilities

It is critical that pupils only travel on the bus that they are allocated to. Schools, Transport operators and the Transport Team have boarding list for pupils in order to easily identify what pupils are travelling on individual contracts. In the event of adverse weather or road traffic accidents, we can then notify the correct parents and carers of any delays.

- It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to get children safely to and from transport pickup and set down points, and ensure there is someone at home to receive them. If you are concerned about your child, you should accompany them to the stop and wait with them until the bus arrives. Similarly, you should ensure that children are met when the bus returns from school
- If your child is unaccompanied make sure that they are aware of and follow the safest walking route, crossing at the most appropriate places and know how to behave responsibly whilst waiting to be picked up.
- If crossing the road it is your responsibility to teach your child how to cross safely taking in to account the road conditions.
- Make sure that you have discussed with your child what to do if the bus does not arrive or if they fail to catch the bus for any reason
- Ensure that you encourage your child to behave properly and safely whilst using school transport
- If free transport entitlement is withdrawn for behavioural reasons, parents are responsible for making and paying for alternative travel arrangements

Pupils Responsibilities

- Leave home in good time to avoid the need to rush
- Only board the contract that you have been allocated
- Follow the safety advice provided by parents when walking on pavements and roads; especially when crossing roads (Please wait until the transport has moved away and you have a clear view of any traffic before attempting to cross the road)
- Dress warmly in case there is an unexpected wait and wear something bright so that motorists can see you
- Use the pavement if there is one – where there is no pavement walk in single file facing on-coming traffic
- Stand well clear of the edge of the road while waiting for school transport
- Give the driver a clear hand signal that you want the vehicle to stop
- Travel only on the bus on which you have been allocated travel
- Let other passengers off before boarding a bus
- Behave appropriately and safely when boarding, travelling and alighting from school transport
- Remain seated for the journey and fasten the seat belt if there is one
- Do not ride on the platform next to the driver, talk to or otherwise distract the driver while the bus is moving
- Follow the driver's instructions
- Never throw anything within the bus
- Do not play with emergency doors or bells
- Wait until the bus has stopped before getting off
- Smoking or vaping is not permitted
- Misbehaviour on buses or taxis could result in you losing your free school transport entitlement.

Driver's Responsibilities

- Operation of the vehicle including deciding whether road conditions are safe, and the vehicle itself is fit for purpose
- Supervision of pupils on the vehicle during the journey to and from school
- Reporting any incidents of bad behaviour to the Passenger Transport Team and the school who will undertake disciplinary measures as may be necessary
- A bus driver has the legal responsibility to remove any passenger over 16 who is a danger to others and can confiscate a bus pass from any passenger misbehaving
- In the event of an incident the driver will make the pupils safe and contact the Passenger Transport Team

Schools Responsibilities

- Providing supervision for pupils from transport arrival in the morning to departure in the afternoon
- Supervision of boarding areas at schools
- Issuing travel passes at the beginning of the new academic year and throughout the session
- Address concerns of inappropriate behaviour on board school transport

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my child need to apply for School Transport every year?

Applications only need to be made for new P1 and S1 pupils, if you move home, you should notify the school of your new address, this will then be passed on to the transport team.

What do I do if my child loses his/her school bus pass?

They should immediately obtain a temporary pass from the school – this will allow pupils to travel until a permanent replacement can be obtained. The school will notify the transport team that a new pass is required. A £5 payment can then be made through parent pay for the replacement pass. Anyone for whom this cost is prohibitive, should speak directly to the school.

What do I do if a school bus fails to arrive on time?

Your child should be at the bus pick up point at least **5 minutes before** the scheduled pick up time. We advise your child to wait at a pick-up point for up to **15 minutes** after the bus was due to arrive. After 15 minutes it can be assumed that their bus will not run that day.

My child goes to a grandparent each day after school more than 3 miles from home, can they get a bus pass?

Your child is not entitled to free transport home in this instance, but it is worth asking the Passenger Transport Team if there is the possibility of a privileged lift, if available.

My child/children spend their time between two parent's addresses?

Transport entitlement is normally provided from/to one home address only, which will be the pupil's address as recorded by the school. However, in cases where parents live apart, free transport may be provided from/to both parents' addresses, or from/to one parent's address if the pupil's usual address is within the statutory walking distance of the school, subject to:

- Both addresses being in the same catchment area, or transport being available from an address out with the catchment area at no additional cost to the Council;
- Days of travel from/to each address being agreed in advance.

In all other respects, the normal entitlement criteria would apply.

The driver has been smoking in the vehicle prior to collecting my child, who should I inform?

Please provide details to the Passenger Transport Team as soon as possible, they will deal with this.

I leave for work early in the morning and cannot walk my child to the bus pick up point, can you change the pickup point please?

We do realise how difficult it can be for parents who work to accompany their child to a pick up point or collect them again, but we are unable to accommodate every personal request.

What do I do if my child wants to use a different bus?

It is not always possible to transfer to another school bus service. There may appear to be capacity when the bus passes some stops at the beginning of a route however in most cases, buses are full to capacity. If there is a requirement to change then you should contact the school in the first instance stating the reasons. The school will then consider the request and if it is decided that a pupil should move between contracts, the Transport Team will be notified. Your child should not try to use a different bus before he/she receives approval and a new pass from us.

We are unable to move pupils who fall within the specified walking distances unless there is a safety or medical reason that prevents an accompanied child walking to the boarding point.

What happens if there is an incident of concern on board a school bus?

Pupils will be given regular reminders of the expectations relating to their behaviour on board School transport. Any behaviours which result in the discomfort to other passengers, or puts the safe order of the journey at risk will be reported to the school.

Repeat incidents may result in travel entitlements being suspended or ended permanently. All behaviour related complaints will be investigated thoroughly, the school will write to parents/carers in advance to notify them of any intention to withdraw travel entitlements.

What happens if there is a cancellation of transport in the morning?

If School transport is cancelled, parents/carers of affected services will receive a group call advising them of the cancellation, the duration of any cancellations and where possible, what alternatives have been put in place.

The Transport Team will remain in contact with school throughout periods of disruption so that information can be communicated directly with parents/carers

You should ensure your child knows what to do if the bus fails to turn up. You should ensure that there are suitable care arrangements in the event of school transport not running without notice as there will be no replacement transport. However, if parents get pupils to school we will endeavour to ensure that afternoon transport runs except if cancelled by bad weather.

What Information is available about school transport in an emergency or bad weather?

During periods of adverse weather or in emergency situations, operators will contact the transport team directly to make them aware of the situation. The transport team will liaise with schools and the council's communications team to ensure that any relevant information is relayed to parents/carers.

In some cases the disruption will take place first thing in the morning, in this case, parents/carers should follow the guidance on what to do if a bus fails to turn up on time.

In periods of expected adverse weather, parents/carers will be kept up to date of service disruptions via the council's website and social media channels.

Should the school transport for your child not operate in the morning because of adverse weather conditions but you decide to take your child to school yourself then you are expected to collect your child either at the end of the school day or at the time of early closure. Please do not bring your children to school when buses do not run unless you are certain of being able to collect them at the end of the school day - even if the weather worsens.

It is Council policy that schools remain open except in the severest of weather conditions, therefore children who live within a short walking distance of school will be retained throughout the school day.

Can my child use their under 22 free travel pass on school transport?

In most cases, school transport is operated by dedicated school buses or taxis which only carry school pupils so there is no mechanism to use the under 22 free travel pass. There are some registered bus services that carry school pupils, the under 22 free travel card can be used on these services. For further information on the scheme please visit:

Apply for an under 22s bus pass - mygov.scot

Does my child qualify for additional needs transport?

In the case of pupils with Additional Support Needs, assessment of the pupil's need for transport will be carried out by the Education department. The transport team will then be notified of any specific travel arrangements.

Enquiries or matters relating to school transport please contact: -

The Passenger Transport Team
Scottish Borders Council
Council Headquarters
Newtown St Boswells
Melrose, TD6 0SA
Telephone: 0300 100 1800