

School Transport Communications, 2023-24

Background

Manage parent's expectations about school transport provision, primarily the provision/non-provision to non-statutory pupils. Reach out to parents – advising them to think about school transport and how their child will get to school, before applying for a school.

Primary issues

Unless a child is eligible for transport assistance, the responsibility to ensure that children get to school is a parental responsibility. Any transport provided on a non-statutory basis is not guaranteed and may be withdrawn at any time.

The teams regularly deal with situations where there are more non-statutory pupils than there are seats available on the existing service provision.

Target audience

Mainly parents and carers of children starting secondary school in September 2024.

Key messages

- Lancashire parents! When applying for school places, don't forget to plan how you will get your child to school. It is your responsibility to ensure your child gets to school.
- Your child may be eligible for free transport to school, depending on whether they are attending their closest school with places available and how far the walk is. There is also support for families on low incomes.
- If you are entitled to school transport it will be from the address you registered on your school admissions application.
- Check your eligibility for free transport to school at: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/school-transport/free-travel-to-and-from-school/?page=1>

- If your child is not entitled to free transport they may still be able to travel on contracted school buses provided by the county council, if there is space available. Parents should not expect that a spare seat will be available for the whole time their child is at their chosen school. If space isn't available, you need to plan how your child will get to school. The council will not put extra services on for non-statutory pupils and you should think about other options such as public transport, car sharing, cycling and walking.
- For further advice and support on school transport contact your local education office at: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/area-education-offices/>.
- If your child has an education, health and care (EHC) plan please go to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) page to apply for SEND transport assistance: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/school-transport/free-travel-to-and-from-school/?page=12>
- Be aware that service routes regularly change and services which carry no statutory pupils risk being withdrawn.

Website

School transport: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/school-transport/>

Secondary admissions reference to free home to school transport: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/apply-for-a-school-place/starting-secondary-school/?page=8>

Primary admissions reference to free home to school transport: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/apply-for-a-school-place/starting-primary-school/?page=15>

Communications Action Plan

Promote school transport key messages to Lancashire families as widely as possible, as early in the admissions application process as possible.

The Pupil Access team will review tailored communications for parents who are allocated a non-preference school and are faced with transport difficulties they had not anticipated. These cases are usually dealt with on a case-by-case basis over the phone and/or email following admission announcements (see timelines below for announcement dates).

Channel	Activity	Cost	Lead	Status
Website	Review and update pages to make messages clearer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School transport: https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/school-transport/ ▪ Secondary admissions reference to free home to school transport: https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/apply-for-a-school-place/starting-secondary-school/?page=8 ▪ Primary admissions reference to free home to school transport: https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/children-education-families/schools/apply-for-a-school-place/starting-primary-school/?page=15 	£0	Rachel K/ Debbie/Andrew	
School Admissions poster reference to school transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Admissions posters for schools. As space is limited on the poster the new designs say: Apply now and check your eligibility for school transport at: www.lancashire.gov.uk/schools. 	TBC	Design	
Press Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft press releases covering key messages to parents at key points in the admissions process 	£0	Media team – lead TBC	Drafts to be agreed as part of wider admissions communications.
Facebook ads	Trial some targeted Facebook ads targeted to Lancashire.	Pam to advise on suggested	Pam B/Design	Pam B to draft Lancashire

	Discussed two approaches but decided on Lancashire-wide approach.	allocation. Suggested trial of £150. Need budget code to book ads against.		wide ad brief to test from Sept 2023
Social Media and questions parents/carers may ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social media schedule covering key messages to parents. ▪ Parent/carers questions. Draft responses ahead of September for common questions that come up and signpost to online information. 	£0	Pam B	Drafting schedule and working with teams to define common questions.
C-First (councillors)	Draft briefing note for councillors to share on C-First.	£0		Pam to draft briefing note.
Longer term actions/ discussion points				
School website updates (longer-term) and advice the team give	<p>Discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Info for school websites to drive traffic to our website so parents can self-serve. ▪ Need to review DofE guidance. Statutory guidance SEN and mainstream. Won't change entitlements. ▪ We won't answer questions about commercial services. Only cover council run services and TravelLine. ▪ We give advice at open evenings. The service have to be invited to attend. 		TBC	

Timetable for Lancashire Secondary Admissions 2024/25

The arrangements for the transfer of pupils to secondary schools in September 2024 will, as far as possible, conform to the following timetable.

Friday 1 September 2023	Apply from this date at www.lancashire.gov.uk/schools (Please remember to press the 'submit' button every time you leave the online system)
Tuesday 31 October 2023	National closing date for secondary applications (statutory).
During this period all applications are processed and all preferences are considered against the published admissions policy. Where there are more applications than places available, decisions are made as to which children should be offered the available places. We will liaise and exchange information with all other admission authorities including neighbouring local authorities. The allocation and offer of a secondary school place is finalised.	
Friday 1 March 2024	Offers issued to parents*
Friday 15 March 2024	Deadline for requesting a place on the waiting list(s)
Week commencing 18 March 2024	Commence ranking of the waiting list
Tuesday 16 April 2024	Appeal deadline for Lancashire schools. Deadline for lodging appeals for Lancashire school's /1 st round of hearings.
Tuesday 18 June 2024	Appeals for Lancashire schools submitted by the deadline heard by an independent appeal panel

*** If you are not happy with an initial offer the appeals period starts from your receipt of the offer. Appeal information will be issued later as this allows some time for waiting lists to operate.**

**Appeals which we receive after the deadline will be slotted into the schedule where possible. We cannot guarantee this however, and late appeals may have to be heard after the agreed date at a second round of hearings. The schedule is subject to change depending upon the availability of appeal panel members, clerks, venue, etc.

If you are resident in Lancashire, you can apply online for your preferred primary or secondary schools (even if any of these are outside of the County).

Timetable for Lancashire Primary Admissions 2024/25

The arrangements for the admission of pupils to primary schools in September 2024 will, as far as possible, conform to the following timetable.

Friday 1 September 2023	Apply from this date at www.lancashire.gov.uk/schools (Please remember to press the 'submit' button every time you leave the online system)
Monday 15 January 2024	National closing date for primary applications (statutory).
During this period all applications are processed and all preferences are considered against the published admissions policy. Where there are more applications than places available, decisions are made as to which children should be offered the available places. We will liaise and exchange information with all other admission authorities including neighbouring local authorities. The allocation and offer of a primary school place is finalised.	
Tuesday 16 April 2024	Offers issued to parents*
Friday 26 April 2024	Deadline for requesting a place on the waiting list(s)
w/c 29 April 2024	Commence ranking of the waiting list
Thursday 16 May 2024	Appeal deadline for Lancashire schools. Deadline for lodging appeals for Lancashire schools 1 st round of hearings.
Wednesday 17 July 2024	Appeals for Lancashire schools submitted by the deadline heard by an independent appeal panel

*** If you are not happy with an initial offer, the appeals period starts from your receipt of the offer. Appeal information will be issued later as this allows some time for waiting lists to operate.**

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