

ASSISTANCE WITH HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The county council's policy for assistance with home to school transport is summarised below. This is intended to act as a guide for parents and is not a definitive statement of policy. A copy of the full policy may be downloaded from our website.

This guide applies to pupils living in Lancashire, who are under sixteen years of age at the beginning of the school year and attending primary and secondary schools including church schools, academies and free schools. Separate information is available for students in further education and school sixth forms, who are in exceptional circumstances and for other students attending school sixth forms and colleges.

A parent's right to express a preference for a place at a particular school does not necessarily mean that assistance with home to school transport will be provided by the county council and **if transport costs are an important factor in your decision to accept a school place, you are strongly advised to seek further information from the Area Education Office**

- (a) Assistance with home to school transport is given where a pupil attends the **nearest suitable school at which a place is available** provided that the shortest suitable walking route accompanied by an adult, as necessary, from home to that school is two miles or more for pupils aged 4 but under 8 years of age or three miles or more for pupils aged 8 and over.

The county council determines the nearest suitable school (usually the geographically nearest school able to provide education suitable to the age of the pupil at which a place is available) and the shortest available route in individual cases.

The qualifying walking distance to determine eligibility is two miles for those primary aged pupils attending their nearest suitable school if they are eligible for free school meals or their parents are receiving the maximum amount of working tax credit.

The LA will consider providing transport for children who attend their nearest school that is within walking distance of home if it is unreasonable to expect that child to walk to school for reason of SEND, disability or mobility issues.

Pupils attending secondary schools, who are eligible for free school meals, or their parents are receiving the maximum amount of working tax credit, will receive assistance with travel costs if they attend one of their three nearest schools, provided that the distance to the school attended is between two and six miles. In addition, pupils whose parents meet the low income criteria may also receive travelling expenses if they choose to attend a particular school on the grounds of religion or belief (and can provide evidence to substantiate this conviction) if that school is the nearest school, which meets the parental belief or religion, and the distance to that school is between two and 15 miles from their home.

- (b) Denominational reasons for expressing a preference for a school are no longer taken into account in assessing applications for assistance with transport unless, for secondary school aged pupils, you are on a low income. The Authority no longer offers partially subsidised transport assistance for children attending their nearest faith school which is not their nearest school.
- (c) Where parents change address within Lancashire whilst pupils are in their final year of primary education (Year 6) or the final two years of secondary education (Years 10 and 11), assistance with transport is given provided the home to school distance criterion is met, the travelling time is not excessive and they previously attended their nearest school and provided the family meet the low income criteria.

The financial circumstances of the family or family associations with a particular school are not normally considered in assessing eligibility for transport assistance; except under (a) above. A preference for a single sex, selective or for a mixed school is not regarded on its own as a valid claim for travelling expenses.

The type of transport provided is at the county council's discretion. Normally pupils are issued with a travel pass allowing free travel on a bus or train. In exceptional circumstances, a taxi may be provided. Pupils who qualify for free transport and whose parents prefer them to travel by bicycle, can claim an allowance. In exceptional circumstances, a vehicle mileage allowance may be paid. Details for these allowances are available from the Area Education Office.

Transport is provided from a point reasonably near to the pupil's home, normally the nearest bus stop, to a point reasonably near the school. Parents are encouraged to check the bus stop or pick up point that their child has been allocated to and ensure that their child knows how to use transport to and from school safely.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The county council considers cases where there are special circumstances (for example medical difficulties, unsuitable journeys) on their merits and enquiries should be made to the Area Education Office.

APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE WITH TRANSPORT

Where a pupil has not received assistance with transport before, and is not transferring to secondary school, an application form may be completed through our website **www.lancashire.gov.uk** and search for 'Free Travel to and from School' on the website search engine.



After completion, the form should be sent to the Area Education Office where a decision is made on whether or not assistance can be provided.

Pupils transferring to secondary school are normally sent a letter in June inviting them to complete an application form if the area office feels they may be entitled to assistance. If you have not received your letter by 30 June and you think you may be entitled, please ring the School Traveline on **0300 123 6738**.

Where a pupil currently has a gold pass, this will not be renewed. The pass will be valid to the end of the month and year on this pass.

Where a pupil currently has a travel pass which is not a gold pass, this will automatically be re-issued to you each year providing your child is not transferring into Y7 or Y12, subject to your circumstances remaining the same. These passes will be sent out to parents around 22 July each year. There are a couple of exceptions to this process:

- If your child is receiving free transport on the grounds that your child is in receipt of free school meals, your pass will be sent out before the end of July. If you no longer qualify, you will be advised about this before that date.
- If your child is receiving free transport on the grounds that you are receiving the maximum amount of working tax credit (MWTC), you will be contacted later in July each year to confirm your continuing eligibility.
- Parents are required to advise the council should their circumstances change, specifically changes of address/school.

Please note that pupils travelling to and from school/bus stops, by taxi, will not be issued with passes. Parents will be contacted and advised of the transport operator.

WHEN TO APPLY

Pupils commencing in Reception, Year 7 or new to area applications

For children starting year 7 in September, a letter will automatically be posted out to parents of children whom the council has determined are eligible to receive assistance inviting them to apply.

Applicants should expect to receive their passes on the following dates:

- Approved Applications received by 30 June - passes sent out on or just after 1 August
- Approved Applications received by 31 July - passes sent out on or just after 12 August
- Approved Applications received during August - passes sent out within 20 working days of receipt

The council cannot guarantee that they will be able to issue passes for the start of the new term if the applications are received after 10 August.

For approved applications received outside of these dates, passes will normally be sent out within 10 working days of receipt.

BEHAVIOUR

Anti-social behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated.

Pupils involved in anti-social behaviour whilst using Home to School Transport risk having their transport assistance withdrawn and being banned from travelling on school services.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Travel passes issued to secondary school pupils include a photograph of the passholder. Parents are required to provide a passport type photograph of Year 7 (first year). Travel passes cannot be issued for secondary school pupils without photographs.

RIGHT TO REVIEW

Parents may request a review of the local authority's decision to refuse transport assistance or against the detailed arrangements made, if there are mitigating circumstances. Particulars of the review procedure are available from the Area Education Office or by accessing our website:

www.lancashire.gov.uk

QUALITY OF SERVICE

The county council is committed to providing a high-quality service at all times. If you would like to compliment, comment, or complain about our service, then please contact your local Area Education Office.

NOT ENTITLED TO FREE TRANSPORT

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. If space isn't available you need to plan how your child will get to school.

On services where space is available, you can pay a daily fare to the driver or if you want to save money, you can purchase a season ticket.

Annual season tickets are available and offer a 20% discount on daily return fares*.

Please contact the School Transport enquiry line on **0300 123 6738** for more information or you can apply online at **www.lancashire.gov.uk/schools** following the links for the school transport.

*In addition, these can be paid by debit/credit card and by interest free instalment payments.

AREA EDUCATION OFFICES

Further information or advice on the contents of this leaflet may be obtained from the Area Education Office.

NORTH

(Serving Lancaster, Morecambe, Wyre and Fylde Districts)

Pupil Access Team North

Email: **School.TransportNorth@lancashire.gov.uk**

Telephone: **(01524) 581148**

SOUTH

(Serving Preston, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Chorley Districts)

Pupil Access Team South

Email: **School.TransportSouth@lancashire.gov.uk**

Telephone: **(01772) 532109**

EAST

(Serving Ribbles Valley, Hyndburn, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Districts)

Pupil Access Team East

Email: **School.TransportEast@lancashire.gov.uk**

Telephone: **(01254) 220747**

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL AREAS:

PO Box 100

County Hall

Preston

PR1 0LD

If your enquiry relates to Special Education Needs and Disability [SEND] home to school transport, please ring the SEND helpline on **(01772) 533900**.