

Home to School Travel policy for compulsory school age children 2024/25

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Introduction

Bath and North East Somerset Council are committed to improving people's lives. We do this while ensuring we are also making the best use of Council resources. You can find details of our [Corporate Strategy](#) on our website.

Parents and carers have a legal duty and a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend. In certain circumstances based on statutory guidance, the Council has a duty to provide school Travel Support and this document sets out these circumstances.

Parents are encouraged to support their children to walk or cycle when the route is safe. There are health benefits for children who walk or cycle to school, but local communities also benefit through improved road safety, reduced traffic congestion and associated noise and air pollution.

One of our service aims is to promote the independence of our children wherever possible. For those children who do qualify for school Travel Support, the Council reserves the right to decide on the type of Travel Support offered and where best to collect the child/young person from. The categories of children who are eligible for Travel Support are defined below. These apply to children of compulsory school age (5-16).

The nature of Travel Support will be determined by the Local Authority and will be one that is consistent with the Local Authority's duty to ensure it makes the most effective use of resource. It will normally be provided at the standard school hours, at the beginning and end of the school day.

Parents are strongly advised to consider how they will get their children to and from school. Most children do not receive travel assistance.

Mainstream Travel policies

The eligibility criteria outlined below shows criteria for all travel support options. Details of Bath and North East Somerset Council's mainstream and post 16 Travel Policies can be found on the [school transport](#) webpage.

Glossary of terms

Terms we use in this document and what they mean:

Accompaniment: The Local Authority are not responsible for the accompaniment of students to and from school. When assessing whether any child can reasonably be expected to walk to school, to a centralised pick-up point and when assessing route safety, the LA will consider whether a child can reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied.

The general expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a responsible adult where necessary.

Child: refers to child or young person throughout.

Compulsory school age: A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday, or on the fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they reach the age of 16.

Home address: The home address is where the child resides and spends most of their time and is the address registered with a GP surgery. Occasionally a child will have more than one address and there is a legal court order stating 50/50 dual residency for a child. If both addresses are within B&NES and following evidence being provided, Travel Support may be considered from each address to determine eligibility.

Mainstream School: Means a maintained, free school or an academy that is not a special school.

Nearest school: the school attended is the nearest appropriate one (i.e., APR, area/catchment school) as designated by the LA or if the school attended is the closest school to the home address and closer than the designated school (APR, area/catchment school).

Parents: The term “parents” relates to any person who is responsible for the child to include foster parents, carers and other guardians of children and young people.

Passenger Transport Team: The Council team which commissions, allocates and manages the home to school transport contracts.

School: In this policy, we refer to school as a setting a child attends that provides education and has been agreed by the Local Authority.

Suitable’ school: A suitable school is one that provides education appropriate to the child’s age, ability and aptitude.

The Council / LA: Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Travel Support: The term we are using to describe the support available to help children/young people attend school.

Eligibility

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made to facilitate a child's attendance at school, where it is deemed necessary. The categories of eligibility are outlined below and can be found in the Department for Education's [Home to school travel and transport guidance January 2024](#).

Statutory walking distance eligibility (mainstream criteria)

The LA will provide free transport between home and school if the school attended is the nearest appropriate one, as designated by the LA, and the distance between home and that school, when measured by the nearest available walking route, using the Local Authorities mapping transport software, is:

- **2 miles** or more for children (aged 5 to 7) and
- **3 miles** or more for children (aged 8 to 16).

These distances are referred to as "statutory walking distances".

The LA will also provide transport if the school attended is the closest school to the home address and closer than the designated school (APR, area/catchment school) and the statutory walking distance are met.

Note: Assistance with travel, if agreed, is provided only at the beginning and end of the normal school day and from the home address.

If a child is attending a school on "parental preference" grounds i.e. the school applied for is not the catchment/nearest school (or one of the three nearest eligible schools in the case of the low income family transport scheme), their child may not be given free travel assistance to any school. They must then accept full responsibility for the cost and arrangements of the child's travel to and from school for the duration of their primary or secondary phase education.

Unsafe route eligibility (mainstream criteria)

The LA will provide transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest **suitable school** because the nature of the route is deemed by the Council unsafe to walk even if accompanied by their parent. See [Safe Routes to School policy](#).

Low Income Families Transport Scheme (Extended right to travel) eligibility

Provide transport where pupils are eligible for benefit related free school meals or their parent/carer is in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit (with no reduction due to income) **and** if.

- Transport will be provided for children of primary age between the age of 8 and 11 who live more than two miles from the nearest school; or,
- The school is between 2 and 6 miles (aged 11-16 and they are attending one of their 3 nearest suitable schools)
- The school is more than 2 but not more than 15 miles from their home

address and their parents have chosen the school on the grounds of their religion or belief if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home and the child is aged 11 to 16.

Note: Tax credits— cease to exist on 5 April 2025. This means parents will not be able to apply under the low income family transport scheme on the grounds that the parent receives the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit (with no reduction due to income).

The distance is measured in the same way as the statutory walking. This is not automatically assessed, and parent/carers must make an application.

Transport on Medical Grounds and Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances home to school transport may be provided on medical grounds, to enable pupils to attend their designated area school even though they may live within the statutory walking distance from the school. This is often done for a short, agreed period, and eligibility will always be reviewed. The Health Authority or your General Practitioner will need to supply details of the child's medical needs.

The Local Authority may also use its discretion to agree transport for individual cases which may include living in temporary emergency (time-limited) accommodation or where the parent/carer has a temporary medical issue. This special consideration is a temporary solution and will be regularly reviewed to ensure the Local Authority's resources are used efficiently. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Transport may be considered where a temporary, part-time timetable is agreed due to medical needs or a reintegration programme. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Faith or Denominational reasons

From September 2014 the Council agreed a phased withdrawal of home to school transport services for new starters attending denominational schools from September 2014 who would not qualify under other home to school policy subsets, (e.g., as a low income family) except in the case of children with siblings currently at the school and who qualify under the denominational transport scheme. This option would not affect students who started the school before September 2014, only new pupils joining after September 2014.

Some children might still, in a few cases, be entitled to transport where a child attends a specific school for denominational reasons and has a sibling currently at the school and who qualify under the denominational transport scheme.

- In the case of attending a school affiliated to your family's faith, your child has been baptised or confirmed in that faith. We may ask for a baptismal certificate or similar evidence.
- The child must be attending the nearest appropriate school of the denominational type.
- The school is outside the 'statutory walking distance' for your child's age.

Please note that although we may provide a transport service to denominational

schools in a small number of cases, there are usually passenger fees for this service, unless you qualify for a reduction of the fees due to other reasons, such as low income, or having had a sibling at the same school at any time up to August 2014.

More details about the sibling scheme for denominational school transport

Children attending a particular school for religious or denominational reasons may qualify for a subsidised transport service, if they have a sibling who attended the same school before August 2014. Siblings are defined as any of the following:

- Brother or sister or half brother or sister
- Adopted brother or sister
- Step brother or sister
- The child of the parent or carer's partner (if that child also lives at the same address)

Fare Paying Passenger Transport

We organise school transport and hire vehicles based on the needs of children who are eligible for the service. Sometimes, your child may continue to make the same school journey each day, but no longer qualify for the service - for example, because they reach the age of 16, or your family circumstances change.

However, if we are already running a service to your area for other children who are eligible, it may still be possible for your child to take a seat on our hired vehicle, as a **fare paying passenger**. Please email our [Passenger Transport team](#), stating your child's name and the school they will be attending, to request a fare-paying application. If you apply and a seat is available, they will let you know the fare, and you will need to pay in advance.

Note: We cannot guarantee non-eligible children will be able to use one of our services as a fare paying passenger for the whole of the school year. We may have to cancel their seat at short notice, (normally a month), if we are able to hire a smaller vehicle, stop the service altogether, or a new child who is eligible for free transport needs the seat.

Applying for Home to School Travel

You can find the online application form on the [School Transport](#) section of B&NES Council website.

To apply for Travel Support during the academic year, please fill out the online application form. After submitting your application, the Admissions & Transport Team will review your eligibility and arrange the most suitable Travel Support for your child within 15 working days, if applicable.

If there are any changes in circumstances, such as moving home, that may affect your child's eligibility for Travel Support, please inform the Local Authority as soon as possible. Once notified, the Council will re-check eligibility and arrange the most suitable Travel Support, if necessary, within 15 working days.

Bulk transfer applications (including dual residency)

We will check eligibility for school transport as part of the school place application process for bulk transfers to start Reception at primary school, Year 3 at a junior school or Year 7 at secondary school in September. We will contact the parent who submitted the application as part of the 'Apply for It' scheme, telling them if we think their child is eligible for transport to school, and asking them to confirm by a certain date if they plan to use the service. Our message will contain details about how and when they need to respond.

Note: We need to know who will be using our service, so that we can plan the number of places needed, and make sure that we supply a vehicle of the right size. Therefore, if a parent does not respond by the deadline stated on our message, we will assume that they do not require transport and will make their own arrangements to fund and take their child to school.

Once we establish eligibility during the bulk transfer process, your child's entitlement to the service will 'roll over' from one academic year to the next, unless your circumstances change, or we inform you otherwise.

If your child lives at more than one address

We need to check eligibility for school transport separately for every address that your child travels to school from. **We will only automatically check eligibility and contact the parent who made the child's school place application.** If your child will be travelling to school from more than one address, we will need to know about it, so that we can also check their eligibility for this journey.

Note: If your child lives with you part-time, but their other parent or carer submitted their school place application, it means that we haven't assessed if they're eligible for transport from your home to school. You will need to make a separate application to us. If you don't do this, you will be responsible for getting your child to school on the days that they are living with you.

In-year and other applications

If you have not received an offer of school transport as part of a bulk transfer to a new school, you will need to apply for this service. This may include any of these circumstances:

- Moving schools in any year which is not the normal starting age for that school (normally Reception for primary schools, Year 3 at a Junior school and Year 7 for secondary schools)
- Moving schools in the middle of the school year
- Moving to a new address
- A change in your family's financial circumstances
- A change in the physical health or mobility of your child

- If we haven't already assessed your child's eligibility, because they live with you part-time, and their other parent or guardian completed their school place application

Review of Eligibility

The Local Authority has the right to re-evaluate the Travel Support requirements of a child or young person and may change the type of Travel Support provided or discontinue it if it is deemed the individual is no longer eligible. If the child/young person no longer qualifies for Travel Support, the Council will provide written notice to the parent/carers and the current Travel Support will cease at the end of the current term or after 4 weeks, whichever is longer.

Eligibility reviews will include discussions on Travel Support arrangements, and these are scheduled at, but not limited to, specific milestones, such as.

- the end of Year 2,
- Year 6 in preparation for secondary education,
- Year 11 for those moving to Post 16,
- in cases of change in address or school.

Decisions Made in Error

Where an application for transport support is approved in error, the Local Authority will withdraw the provision as follows:

- Where the transport support has not yet commenced, immediately on discovery of the error, or
- In all other cases, if transport has already started, a terms notice will be given when the error has been found.

Where transport is withdrawn, the family may apply to travel as a fare paying passenger (if this is available) or ask for an exception to be considered and if not agreed, lodge a formal appeal.

Examples of when transport would not be provided

Under this policy, notwithstanding exceptional circumstances, the Council typically does not provide Travel Support in the following situations:

- To attend a pre-school, nursery or playgroup. It is the responsibility of families to make their own arrangements.
- To enable parents to take siblings to different schools or to commute to work at specific times.
- To attend extracurricular activities.
- When a child has missed the contracted transport.
- For attending doctors, dental, or any other appointments.
- For participation in breakfast or after-school clubs/activities.
- For students excluded during the school day.
- For students attending work experience placements, taster or open days.
- For students who are unwell and need to be collected from school during the school day.
- For transition days when those leaving one phase of education have an opportunity to have a day's orientation in their new school.
- To or from childminders, friends, or other family members' addresses.
- At a different time, due to detention.
- To or from part-time provision off the school site organised by the school (e.g., vocational classes at a college, including movement between educational establishments/sites).

Types of Travel Provision

- Providing travel passes for public transport
- Offering a seat on existing school transport, coach, minibus or taxi.
- Agreed petrol reimbursement for parent/carers

The Local Authority reserves the right to determine the appropriate provision of transport that considers and meets the needs of an individual which together promotes the sustainable means of travel where possible.

Journey Times

The maximum journey times for travelling to and from school following Government Guidelines are as follows.

- The maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age is 45 minutes
- The maximum each way length of journey for a child of secondary school age is 75 minutes

Appeals process

We have a legal duty to provide a review and appeals procedure, if you disagree with our decision about your child's eligibility for school transport.

The appeals process has two stages:

Stage 1: Appeal to a senior officer

You have 20 working days from the receipt of our decision to make a written request for a review of the decision. This first stage involves the Group Manager or Head of Service responsible for school transport examining your evidence to see if our policy has been applied properly and fairly.

If they find that it has not been, and that you are entitled, then transport will be provided. If they find that our policy has been applied properly and fairly, then your Stage 1 appeal will be rejected, and they will respond within 20 working days explaining why this decision has been made.

Stage 2: Appeal to a senior officer panel

If you are unsuccessful at Stage 1, and you feel that your child is entitled due to your circumstances, then you can escalate your appeal to Stage 2. You have 20 working days from receipt of our Stage 1 response to submit a request for a Stage 2 appeal. This request will be referred to a senior officer panel (consisting of a senior officer from both the Transport service and the Education service), who will set up an appeal hearing within 40 working days.

We aim to ensure that the appeal process is conducted in a transparent and fair way, and that you feel you have been able to put your case and have been listened to.

Approximately 10 working days before the hearing, you should receive an invitation to attend the hearing. You'll be asked to send information and evidence in support of your appeal.

All papers will be treated as confidential, and hearings will be held in private. If you're unable to attend, the case will be heard in your absence.

After the hearing, the Panel will make their decision. They will consider the information and evidence submitted, both beforehand and at the hearing. They will consider whether providing transport for the child in question would be an effective and efficient use of Council resources, or whether this consideration is outweighed by the appeal you have made.

The Panel make their decision on the evidence and circumstances presented and concerning the individual child in question. If the appeal is upheld, you need to understand that there is no guarantee that siblings would also be eligible for free transport in the future.

The Panel's decision is final and binding on both parties for the academic year in which the appeal is brought. You will receive a notification of the Panel's decision and their reasons within five working days of the hearing. Further appeals may only be made in subsequent years if there is a substantial change in circumstances to

consider.

At both stages of the process, there is a right of complaint to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#). You can only make this sort of complaint if you consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules, or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal was handled. If you think the decision was flawed on public law grounds, you may apply for judicial review.

Behaviour on Transport

Children travelling on LA transport are expected to conform to the accepted code of behaviour which applies in the school. Any breach will be dealt with by the school.

A guide to behaving responsibly

Travelling on home to school transport should be a safe and pleasant experience. Bad behaviour on school transport affects the safety of everyone. Behaviour policies that apply in school also apply on transport.

- Please arrive in good time at the scheduled pick-up point and wait sensibly keeping clear of the road. Wait a reasonable time before going home if the transport is late (20 minutes on a fine day).
- Do not push or shove others while standing at the stop or boarding or alighting the bus.
- If you are picked up from home, ensure that you are ready 5 minutes earlier than stated. Keeping the driver waiting may cause problems for other passengers on the route and will usually result in the vehicle arriving late at school.

On the vehicle

The driver is responsible for the safety of the vehicle and passengers – if they issue an instruction, follow it.

- Wear your seatbelt if one is provided – this is a legal requirement.
- Do not eat or drink on the vehicle.
- Do not leave litter – always take your rubbish with you.
- Do not shout, distract the driver, throw things out of windows etc. Such actions can put everyone on your vehicle and other road users at risk.
- Vandalism will not be tolerated – parents will ultimately be responsible for any repairs/cleaning costs.
- Always respect other passengers and the driver. All passengers have the right to travel without fear of bullying or aggressive behaviour.

IMPORTANT

- On coach and bus transport you must always carry a valid bus pass.
- If you lose your bus pass, you must get a replacement as soon as possible.
- If you wish to travel on a different bus, you must first obtain authorisation from Passenger Transport.

Failure to keep to these rules will result in the following action

- Your school will be informed.
- Your parents will be informed.
- Where necessary the police will be informed.
- You or your parents may be asked to pay for any damage you have caused.
- You may not be allowed to use transport, and your parents will have to find a different way to get you to school.

Continual misbehaviour may lead to permanent exclusion from transport.

The Council is working with schools, transport operators and the police to help ensure your transport service is safe and trouble free. We rely on you to help achieve this.