

SECTION 8.0: SCHOOL TRANSPORT UP TO THE AGE OF 16

AT THE TIME OF PUBLICATION (JUNE 2007) THE POLICY FOR SCHOOL TRAVEL & TRANSPORT IS UNDER REVIEW AND COULD WELL CHANGE.

Parents need to consider this when making applications for school places in 2008/2009 academic year.

The current situation is available from the Passenger Transport Group (Contact details available in Section 8.9)

Most schools in Worcestershire now have a School Travel Plan, an action plan to reduce car use to and from their school. The actions in Travel Plans are aimed at:

1. Increasing walking and cycling to and from school, thereby improving your children's health, pedestrian skills, cycling skills, social interaction, alertness and stamina, whilst at the same time reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions which are causing climate change, and helping children to choose alternatives to the car in later life.
2. Increasing bus use (which also reduces pollution if pupils would otherwise travel by car) and increases social interaction.
3. Another desirable outcome is reducing carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions, which are causing climate change, and helping children to choose alternatives to the car in later life.
4. Reduce congestion at peak times.

Those involved – pupils, parents, staff, governors, residents – are consulted. Surveys are used to highlight what would increase walking, cycling, bus use and car-sharing.

Where possible, actions are taken to improve safety along the school journey.

A grant is available on submission of a Travel Plan. It can be spent on capital items within school grounds which will encourage walking and cycling.

For more information, please call 01905 76 8354

8.1 Who is entitled to free transport?

Statutory school age children (5-16) and pre-statutory age children admitted to a mainstream school in accordance with the County Council's current Admissions Policy will be entitled to free transport if they:-

- are attending either the designated or nearest school for their home address
- live beyond the statutory walking distance from the school they attend
- live in Worcestershire.

Walking distance is defined in law as up to 3.218688 kilometres (2 miles) for children under 8 years of age and up to 4.828032 kilometres (3 miles) for older children. It is always assumed that a child will be accompanied as necessary. The distance is measured by the shortest available walking route along a road or made up footpath, as measured from the nearest pedestrian access to the school site to the nearest entrance to the external boundary of the child's home address.

- i) In general, children eligible for free transport may be required to walk or be taken by the parents up to one mile to or from a designated boarding or alighting point.
- ii) For the purpose of school transport, a **designated** school refers to the school which the Local Authority has allocated as being the appropriate school for a particular child's home address. It is usually the "catchment area" school for the child's home address. However, there are occasionally exceptions when the **designated** school is a school other than the "catchment area" school, e.g. when the catchment area school is full.
- iii) From September 2007 pupils aged between 8 and 10 years, in receipt of Free School Meals or Maximum Working Family Tax Credit, who live more than 2 miles but less than 3 miles from the designated school will also be entitled to free transport. (The entitlement for free transport under eligibility of low income will be re-assessed on an annual basis).
- iv) From September 2008 Pupils aged between 11 and 16 years, in receipt of Free School Meals or Maximum Working Family Tax Credit, will have entitlement to free transport assistance for a choice of the 3 nearest schools between 2 and 6 miles, (the 6-mile limit to be measured along road routes not walking distance). (The entitlement for free transport under eligibility of low income will be reassessed on an annual basis)

8.2 Is transport provided for nursery education?

Although each application will be considered on its own merits, as a general rule, free transport **will only be provided** for children of nursery age who have stated special transport needs and who are attending the nearest appropriate Special School or Unit, or (as part of the statementing procedure), a Special School Nursery Assessment Centre.

8.3 What happens if there is disagreement about walking routes?

In case of disagreement about walking routes, you should complete the standard review request form and return it to the Education Transport Officer, Passenger Transport Group, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester. WR5 2NP who if necessary will arrange for an assessment to be carried out.

8.4 What types of transport assistance are available?

The Passenger Transport Group decides on the most suitable transport arrangements, bearing in mind all relevant factors, including cost.

Depending on individual circumstances, transport is arranged usually by contract bus, service bus or rail, though sometimes other individual arrangements have to be made. Transport is provided at the beginning and end of the normal school day and is not provided for out of hours activities.

8.5 Will travel assistance be given to a school other than the nearest or designated one for the home address?

Not normally. When parents choose to send their children to a school other than the nearest or designated one, by parental preference, they are responsible for providing the transport, even when the preferred school has "specialist" status.

However, some exceptions may be considered for example:-

- (a) a pupil for whom no place can be made available at the nearest or designated school for the home address and the nominated alternative school is situated beyond the defined walking distance (see paragraph 8.1 above).

8.6 What transport assistance is available to Aided Church Schools? (We do not provide assistance to Controlled church schools)

New Admissions

Denominational Transport Arrangements will be provided if:

- (a) a parent or pupil adheres to the religion and denomination for which the school provides daily collective worship; **and**
- (b) the transport application is supported by proof of baptism in the faith or by the Parish Priest or local Vicar confirming that the parent(s) adhere to the religion and denomination in question; **and**
- (c) the pupil lives beyond the defined walking distance (see 8.1 above) and is attending the nearest or nominated denominational school (as identified by the relevant Diocesan Authority);
- (d) From 2008 the distance will be extended up to 15 miles, for pupils in receipt of Free School Meals or on Maximum Working Family Tax Credits.

N.B. When considering applications for transport assistance on denominational grounds, the Authority will have regard (amongst other things) to any wish of a parent for their child to be provided with education at a school or institution in which the religious education provided is that of the religion and denomination to which the parent or pupil adheres. Other factors, such as the child's age and the nature of the route will also be taken into account.

It is unlikely that the Authority would consider free transport necessary where children live within the statutory walking distance **of the designated or nearest non-denominational school** and where the application is solely because parents wish their children to attend a denominational school. **However, the Authority will offer some assistance towards the transport costs in such cases.**

The form of assistance offered would be at the Authority's own discretion, but generally it would be assistance with the provision of the following:-

- a bus or train pass; or
- a travel permit to travel on one of the Authority's contract services; or
- in some cases, generally when no other form of transport exists, an own transport allowance at the Authority's agreed rate, may be offered.

In practice, the Authority will provide the necessary passes/permits because it receives a substantial reduction in many cases, to the standard fares that would otherwise be payable by the general public.

It will, however, be a condition that all parents must make a contribution towards the overall transport costs. This figure is decided annually. Parents will need to contact Worcestershire Passenger Transport Group (01905 765765) to find out the figure for the Academic Year 2008/2009. The payment can be made annually or termly.

In the event of more than one child (ages 5–16) in the same family requiring transport assistance on denominational grounds, assuming that they are not receiving free transport, a maximum contribution is determined and will be payable for the Academic Year 2008/2009. The payment can be made annually or termly.

The Authority will not provide individual taxi transport on denominational grounds.

8.7 Can children who do not qualify for free transport take up spare seats on school buses?

Each term the Passenger Transport Group identify any spare seats on school buses. Spare seats are offered at a termly cost (this is reduced if parents are in receipt of certain benefits) for the Academic Year 2008/2009. Such arrangements, however, are available on a very limited basis and there is no guarantee that a seat will be available at the start of the following term if one has already been offered. Furthermore any spare seats, which may be offered, may need to be withdrawn at only one week's notice, should they be required for students entitled to free transport. Both rates of payment are subject to review.

8.8 Will transport be provided for medical reasons?

The County Council may provide free transport for medical reasons, if necessary, on the recommendation of the Senior Clinical Medical Officer.

8.9 How do I apply for transport assistance?

Further information and application forms are available from schools, the County Council website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/schooltransport or the HUB Contact Centre (01905 765765). Completed forms should be forwarded to Worcestershire County Council, Passenger Transport Group, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester. WR5 2NP, preferably before the end of June 2008.

8.10 What happens if I am not happy with the assessment of my application?

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Parents have the right to a review of decision that free transport is not provided.

All appeals should be made on the standard appeal form. **There are 3** categories of appeal.

- The distance has been measured incorrectly – this will then be re-checked.
- That the walking route is not available – this will be re-assessed.
- That there are exceptional circumstances – an independent senior officer in the Children's Services Department will review the case.

Appeals Policy

1. All applications are individually assessed by staff/officers in the Environmental Services Directorate against the County Council approved Home to School Transport Policy.
2. Applicants are advised, in writing, of the outcome of their application.
3. Unsuccessful applicants may ask for a review of the case by a senior officer in the Children's Services Directorate.
4. When asking for a review, applicants must state the reason giving full details of the case. The request must be put in writing to the Education Travel Officer, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester. WR5 2NP.

Should a review find in a parents favour free travel should be backdated to the start of the academic year in which the appeal is made.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your request has been handled you may wish to take it through the County Council's complaints procedure.