

Application for Home to School Transport for children aged 5 – 16 years

Norfolk County Council Information Sheet September 2023 – July 2024

A - The general policy

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend school and to make any necessary transport arrangements. However, the County Council must provide free transport for children of compulsory school age (5-16) who attend their nearest catchment or nearest school, provided they meet the distance and age criteria below:

- They are under 8 years of age and living more than 2 miles from school;
- They are 8 years of age or over and living more than 3 miles from school;
- They are aged between 8 and 11, and living more than 2 miles from their catchment or nearest school, **and** they are entitled to free school meals* or their parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (when reduction due to income is 0.00);
- They are of high school age, are entitled to free school meals* or their parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (when reduction due to income is £0.00) **and**
 - they are attending one of 3 appropriate schools closest to their home and that school is between 2 and 6 miles away; or
 - they are attending the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief (approved by Children's Services Admissions) where this is between 2 and 15 miles from their home.

Please note:

- *Ages are taken on 1 September in each school year.*
- The qualifying distances of 2 and 3 miles stated above are determined by the shortest walking route to the school, measured by the County Council to the nearest pedestrian school gate.
- The qualifying distances of 6 and 15 miles stated above will be measured by the County Council using the shortest route by road.
- The nearest school is determined by the shortest route by road for schools over the statutory walking distance, or by the shortest route using roads and public rights of way for schools within the statutory walking distance.
- *Children are entitled to free school meals if their family receives Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related), Guaranteed Pension Credit, Universal Credit or Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and their annual income, as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs, does not exceed £16,190.
- If applying on grounds of low income, proof of receiving Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance

(Income Related), Guaranteed Pension Credit, Universal Credit **or** a copy of your **full** Tax Credit Award Notice **must** be submitted with the application.

Transport Grants for Cycling

As the County Council wishes to support cycling to school as a healthy and green alternative, a cycling allowance of £200 per year is also available, reduced to pro-rata amounts for applications made after October half-term. This is payable to you in place of a travel pass. Anyone applying for this allowance must consider how they will travel to school when they feel that weather conditions may make cycling undesirable. The County Council will not provide alternative transport in such circumstances. Please confirm on the application form if you wish to apply for this option.

What if my child is starting school for the first time?

If your child will be five before 1 September 2024 and you live more than the qualifying distance from the nearest or nearest catchment school, free transport will be provided from September 2023. Midday journeys are not provided for those attending part-time.

What if my child does not qualify for free transport?

If you do not meet the criteria above, help may still be available under the [Discretionary Travel Scheme](#) – see Section B below.

The Discretionary Travel Scheme covers those children who live within the qualifying distances stated above and those attending a school of parental preference not covered by the low-income criteria above.

More information, including alternative travel options you might find useful, is provided below, on our website www.norfolk.gov.uk/schooltransport, by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 0344 800 8020 or by email: information@norfolk.gov.uk.

What help is provided if my child can get free transport?

Help with travel to and from school is normally provided by issuing a travel pass to use on local bus or rail services, or on a contracted vehicle. We may also provide taxis or pay grants to parents using their own transport, but only where a bus/train or contracted vehicle is not available.

Boarding and drop-off points are provided as near as possible to home, usually less than a mile away (for children of primary school age) or less than 1.5 miles away if they are older. Parents are required to ensure their child gets to and from the nearest boarding point.

Parental responsibility

Parents are responsible for their children before they board the vehicle and after they alight at the end of the day. This includes ensuring they have a pass to travel.

Children of **primary school age** (Years R–6) and children with special needs should be collected from school transport by an appropriate adult, for example a parent/guardian, and parents should ensure that they or someone else can be at the drop-off point. If there is no adult present at the drop-off point, the child will not be left, which may mean that the school transport continues its route with the child on board whilst the parent/guardian is contacted.

Are any specific family circumstances considered?

If your child does not qualify for free transport under the County Council's general policy but you feel your circumstances are **exceptionally difficult**, you can put forward your case to the County Council. Please telephone the Customer Service Centre on 0344 800 8020 who will arrange for your case to be reviewed by the appropriate officer.

If you think your child qualifies for free school transport, fill in parts A & D of the application form now and return as soon as possible.

If you don't think your child qualifies for free transport, please read on.

To view the full Home to School and College Transport Policy:

www.norfolk.gov.uk/schooltransport

B – The Discretionary Travel Scheme

The County Council has a duty to provide enough capacity to get those children who qualify for free transport (eligible children) to school. Much of the capacity is provided on local bus services, but on some 'closed' contract services there will be a small number of spare seats which we can make available to pupils who do not qualify for free transport.

We need to have allocated all eligible children to transport before we will know if there are spare seats available. If there are spare seats, applicants to the discretionary travel scheme will then be considered. However this decision is unlikely to be before the start of the school term and parents applying for a spare seat should have their own arrangements in place in case a seat is not available.

There is a charge for using a spare seat. This charge is a **contribution** towards the whole cost of transport and you should be aware that the **place can be withdrawn at a week's notice if the seat is needed for an eligible pupil**. If the place is withdrawn before half term a pro-rata refund will be made of half the contribution paid.

The annual charge varies depending on circumstances. It is paid in three instalments. The charges for the school year September 2023 to July 2024 are:

Children attending their local school and living within the qualifying distance:

Primary £ 93 per term

Secondary £ 125 per term

Children not attending their local school:

Primary £ 125 per term

Secondary £ 160 per term

Paying for a discretionary seat

If a seat can be offered then we will request payment later.

A travel pass would be issued up to the Christmas holiday, and then again from Christmas to the Easter holiday and again from Easter to the end of the school year as the additional instalments are paid. A reminder will be sent if an email address is provided.

If a seat is offered after half-term we will request a pro-rata payment of half the termly cost.

There are no payment exemptions.

Notes and conditions of the Discretionary Travel Scheme

We can only offer spare seats on journeys contracted by Norfolk County Council. On public transport services you should pay the daily fare or buy a season ticket from the operator.

If you are applying to us under the Discretionary Travel Scheme it is very unlikely that you will know before the start of term in September if we can offer you a spare seat, as the offer will not be made until we are sure all eligible pupils have applied. We will confirm as soon as possible if one is available, but this may be well into September.

We also cannot guarantee that a spare seat will be available for the whole year. During the year we may have to withdraw the seat from your child for an eligible pupil. **Please make sure you have other back-up transport arrangements available at the beginning of term and during the year. It is important that the use of a spare seat is not the only means of getting your child to and from school.**

If we have to withdraw the use of a spare seat we will give you at least one week's notice. If the place is withdrawn before half term a pro-rata refund will be made of half the contribution paid. No other refunds will be made.

The Council accepts no responsibility for any transport difficulties or costs resulting from this.

Parents are responsible for making arrangements to, and paying for, any travel to and from the nearest pick-up point.

Transport is linked to specific schools, but it may be possible to offer a seat to a child who attends another school near the route. In these cases the Council cannot accept responsibility for transporting the child when the transport does not operate because the school it serves is closed. The Council will not accept any responsibility for the safety of the child while he or she is not on the vehicle.

We will make every effort to ensure that the services operate satisfactorily, but we will not give a refund for any days when the transport does not operate or for days when a child does not use the service.

If you need this information sheet in large print, audio, alternative format or a different language, please contact the Norfolk County Council Customer Service Centre on 0344 800 8020 (Textphone: 0344 800 8011) and we will do our best to help.

