

Home to School and College Transport Policy

2023 / 2024

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1. General Transport Policy

The general policy of the County Council is:

- Free home to school transport is provided for eligible children of statutory school age (5 to 16 years). See S. 2 regarding what makes a child eligible
- Free transport is provided for eligible children when a child starts school at age 4 years if they will be 5 years old before 1 September
- For students aged 16 -19 years (or 16 - 25 years for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan that names a post 16 learning establishment) the County Council operates a subsidised post16 travel scheme on existing local bus or train services, on education transport contract vehicles, or on any specialist transport that the County Council deems necessary to meet a student's needs.

The County Council can provide transport support outside of the general policy on a discretionary basis. Such requests will be assessed individually and must fall into the criteria outlined in section 5 of this document.

2. Entitlement to transport for children of statutory school age

2.1 Free transport is provided for children of statutory school age who attend the nearest catchment school or nearest available school for their age and educational needs, provided they meet the distance and age criteria below:

- a. Under 8 years of age and living more than 2 miles from school or
- b. 8 years of age and over and living more than 3 miles from school
- c. Pupils of primary school age (up to the end of year 6) who are entitled to free school meals due to a qualifying benefit or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, are eligible for free transport to their nearest catchment or nearest available school if living more than 2 miles away
- d. Pupils of secondary school age (Years 7-11) who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit are eligible for free transport to:
 - one of three appropriate schools closest to their home, where this is more than 2 and less than 6 miles away, or
 - the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief where this is more than 2 and less than 15 miles from their home (If Children's Services are unable to confirm that admission to the preferred school has been secured on religion/belief grounds, evidence of regular attendance at an appropriate place of worship will be required from a person in authority at that place of worship).

- 2.2 For pupils who have an Education, Health & Care Plan transport will be provided, subject to the distance criteria above, to the school named within their Plan as the nearest appropriate school that can meet their assessed needs.

Transport will not be provided to a school named within a Plan as a school of parental preference where a nearer appropriate school has been identified that can meet the child's assessed needs, as this is the responsibility of parents and guardians.

- 2.3 Free transport is also provided for pupils who are unable to walk to school because of mobility problems or a severe medical condition, unless the distance to the establishment attended is such that the applicant could reasonably be expected to make their own way using a wheelchair or other suitable alternative, accompanied as necessary.

Transport support will be provided for as long as the physical mobility disability or severe medical condition exists.

- 2.4 Transport may also be provided if there are associated health and safety issues related to a child's special educational needs or disability of such severity that it means they could not reasonably be expected to make the journey to and from school even if accompanied.

Please note:

- Home to School Transport will only be provided at the standard start and finish times of the school/learning establishment and does not cater for part day arrangements or for extended school opportunities or extended school provision.
- Transport will only be provided to the main site of the school/learning establishment.
- An 'appropriate' school is a school that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of a pupil, as determined by Norfolk County Council.
- If the County Council provides a place for a pupil at a Specialist Resource Base (SRB), this will be deemed as their nearest appropriate school for the purpose of assessing transport entitlement and the standard criteria in S.2 will apply. Transport will be provided at the beginning and end of the school day. No midday transfers between schools will be provided.
- If the County Council provides a place for a pupil at a Short Stay School for Norfolk (SSSfN) this will be deemed as their nearest appropriate school for the purpose of assessing transport entitlement and the standard criteria in S.2 will apply.
- If the County Council provides a place for a pupil at an alternative educational setting, other than a school, due to any special educational

need, this will be deemed as their nearest appropriate school for the purpose of assessing transport entitlement and the standard criteria in S.2 will apply.

Transport will be provided at the beginning and end of the school day. No midday transfers between schools/learning establishments will be provided.

- Transport for pupils in Year 11 will cease at 30 June.
- Ages are taken on 1st September in each school year.
- 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.
- The qualifying distances of 6 or 15 miles, as stated at 2.1 above, will be measured using the shortest route by road.
- The 2 and 3 mile qualifying distances will be measured by the shortest available walking route using roads and public rights of way.
- Public rights of way are determined as any route where access does not constitute trespassing, and includes routes such as bridleways, permissive paths and common land.
- All distances will be measured from the Post Office address point of the home to the nearest pedestrian school gate, using an up to date geographical information software system managed by the local authority to ensure a fair and consistent process for all applicants.
- Parents are responsible for getting their children to and from the nearest vehicle boarding point (see section 11).
- A pupil's home address is the address of their main residence. Where a child lives with separated parents who have shared responsibility, the home address is considered as the one that the child lives at for most of the calendar week. Where a child lives for an equal amount of time with each parent, the home address will be considered as that of the parent who receives child benefit in respect of the child concerned. Evidence of this will be required to support the application.
- Transport support will only be provided from one home address and it is parental responsibility to ensure that a child can get to and from school when residing at an alternative address. The only exception to this is where a court has directed that the child must spend 50% of their time with each parent and when the school is a qualifying school for both addresses under the School Transport Policy as stated above. Evidence of the court order will be required to support the application and Travel and Transport must be advised by the parent/guardian if a court order ceases to direct residence 50% with each parent.

- We will check full address data for a sample of applicants each year, to ensure this is the pupil's main residence.
- Where transport has been provided in error, transport will continue for up to 6 weeks, up to the next natural term / half term break after the error is discovered, in order to allow parents time to make alternative arrangements.
- If at any time there is a change to the infrastructure which may affect a child's entitlement to transport (e.g. a new housing development, a change to the network of walking routes or to the school infrastructure) school transport entitlement will be re-assessed. Following this re-assessment, if a child is no longer entitled to free transport then transport will continue for at least 6 weeks up to the next natural term / half term break in order to allow parents time to make alternative arrangements.
- If a child is receiving free school transport on low income grounds (entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit), this entitlement will be re-assessed annually to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria for free school transport. If they don't (e.g. if they are no longer entitled to free school meals) then free school transport will cease and it will be the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure they can get to and from school.
- Transport is not provided for children attending induction, taster or transitional days or sessions before joining the school/establishment.
- Whilst an application is being processed, parents will be responsible for ensuring that their child gets to and from school and the County Council will not refund any costs incurred. Processing an application may take up to 10 working days following receipt of a completed form, with any necessary supporting documents. This time limit cannot be guaranteed for those applying for spare seats under the County Council's discretionary travel scheme or for applications for the new academic year. Passes and transport details are sent by 2nd class post.

See also section 5.2 for information on possible transport support in specific family circumstances where a child would not qualify for transport under the general policy but parents are struggling to ensure attendance at school.

3. Entitlement to transport for Post 16 students

Subsidised transport is available on existing local bus or train services or education transport contract vehicles to students who are eligible for Post 16 transport support. The County Council will endeavour to publicise travel options provided by operators which may be more cost-effective but cannot guarantee that such information will be comprehensive – it is the responsibility of the applicant to check such information.

Transport services generally operate from defined points or as a “main road” type of service. It is the family’s responsibility to make provision to reach the nearest pick-up point.

To qualify a student must:

- Live in Norfolk
- Live at least three miles from the sixth form, college or other learning establishment as measured by the shortest walking route using roads and public rights of way, unless:
 - i) a student has mobility problems or a severe medical condition which would prevent them walking the distance required
 - ii) a student has associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs which mean that they could not reasonably be expected to walk the distance required even if accompanied
 - iii) the County Council has assessed against the criteria set in Appendix 2 that there is no available walking route under 3 miles
- Be under 19 years old at 1st September (or 25 years for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan that names a post 16 learning establishment). Transport will be provided up to the end of the course year in which the student reaches the age of 19 or 25
- Be attending a full-time course i.e. a minimum of 540 hours per year of supervised study (approximately 14 hrs/week)
- Be studying a course of further education, not an HND, HNC or degree course
- Be attending a state-funded:
 - a. school sixth form
 - b. sixth form college
 - c. further education college
 - d. specialist college (for courses available in that specialism only)
 - e. training provider (funded by the Education Funding Agency) offering a specialist course
- Travel on a core route determined by the County Council. Transport will not be agreed to any alternative college, sixth form college, sixth form or other learning establishment, even if the qualification or course is not available at the designated core route establishment

Information on core routes is available by calling 0344 800 8020, or [visit Post16 transport](#).

Students can live and travel from outside the core route area but will only receive travel support from Norfolk County Council once they are on a core route. However, if they live outside of the core route area, we cannot guarantee travel assistance and it is at the discretion

of the council whether we can support, for example, it may be dependent on if we have seats available on a contracted school bus.

For specialist courses delivered at Easton College (i.e. land-based or animal care) transport support will be given to any student who qualifies under the general criteria from anywhere in Norfolk.

For post 16 specialist courses delivered only at the University Technical College Norfolk transport support will be given to any student who qualifies under the general criteria from anywhere in Norfolk.

Please note:

- Transport support will not be agreed to any alternative establishment even if the course is not available at one of the student's core route establishments, unless the County Council determines that both of the core route establishments cannot meet a student's specific needs.
- If a student wishes to attend a non-core route establishment, subsidised transport support will be provided once the student is on the core route to that establishment. Families will need to make their own arrangements and fund any transport needed to enable the student to get to the core route.
- Transport support will be provided for standard academic terms only and at the start and end of a standard college/sixth form day and will not include any evening or weekend provision. The start and finish times are agreed between the County Council and the learning establishments in advance and the transport is arranged to meet these times only. Access to courses outside of these times will have to be discussed directly with the establishments attended.
- Transport support is based on a student travelling to the main college/sixth form site. Transport to any satellite sites is the responsibility of the learning establishment concerned and students/parents should contact the learning establishment direct to discuss access arrangements.
- A financial contribution is payable towards transport costs, with concessions available for low income families receiving a qualifying benefit. See section 9 for further information. Further financial support may be available from the establishment as part of the Government Bursary Funding.
- No financial contribution towards transport will be required for students who have an Education, Health and Care Plan and who are in years 15 and above. Free transport will continue for these students up the end of the year in which they become 25 years old, as long as they continue to have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- No travel assistance is provided for work placements or workplace apprenticeships.

- Transport is not provided for students attending induction, taster or transitional days or sessions before joining the college/sixth form.
- The 3 mile qualifying distance will be measured by the shortest available route using roads and public rights of way, measured from the Post Office address point of the home to the nearest pedestrian gate of the establishment, using an up to date geographical information software system managed by the local authority to ensure a fair and consistent process for all applicants.
- Public rights of way are determined as any route where access does not constitute trespassing, and include routes such as bridleways, permissive paths and common land.
- Norfolk County Council does not provide transport support for Post 16 students attending denominational establishments on faith grounds.
- Parents are required to ensure the student can get to and from the nearest vehicle boarding point (see section 11).
- Transport support will only be provided from one home address and it is parental responsibility to ensure that a child can get to and from sixth form/college when residing at an alternative address.
- Students are asked to make applications no later than the end of July. Applications made after this date may not be processed in time for the first day of term in September. Any travel assistance offered is for one academic year only and students will need to re-apply for transport assistance annually. If paying daily, confirmation that a student is continuing to attend must be received termly.
- The County Council has the right to terminate transport arrangements immediately if any payment due is not made within the appropriate timescales.
- Whilst an application is being processed, the student/family will be responsible for their own transport arrangements. The County Council will not refund any costs incurred. Processing an application may take up to 10 working days following receipt of a completed form, with any necessary supporting documents. These time limits cannot be guaranteed for applications for the new academic year. 10 working days must then be allowed after the date of payment for the dispatch of a travel pass or confirmation of travel arrangements. Passes and transport details will be sent by 2nd class post.

For full details [visit Post16 transport](#).

4. How transport is provided

Transport will be provided in the most economically advantageous way for the County Council. This means that most journeys will be provided using local bus or train services, or contracted school buses.

The County Council will assist with journeys within the approved limits but does not guarantee to secure specific services to and from school, sixth form or college for the duration of attendance there. The final decision rests with the Council.

The County Council will make every effort to ensure that the services operate satisfactorily but will not provide reimbursement for any days when the transport does not operate or for days when a student does not use the service.

Transport may also be provided in smaller vehicles if it has been assessed that the pupil/student has any difficulty or disability that prevents them from travelling safely using bus or train services, for example

- any significant mobility difficulties (e.g. physical inability to board a bus)
- any significant sensory or communication difficulties
- if the pupil/student is “at risk” to themselves or others in using public transport or school buses independently.

All pupils/students will be expected to undertake travel independence training to enable them to progress to using public transport or school buses unless they are assessed, by the County Council, as being unlikely to benefit from such training.

The County Council operates the TITAN travel training programme and details of the programme can be obtained from school SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs) or from the travel training team on 01603 223391 or email titan.norfolk@norfolk.gov.uk. The County Council will withdraw any special transport provision if students or families choose not to take part in the travel training programme or to comply with reasonable arrangements recommended by TITAN representatives.

For students with special educational needs who are progressing to Post16 education a review of transport needs will be undertaken in Year 11. All transport requirements will be referred to the TITAN travel training team and part of the assessment of transport needs will include the potential for the student to travel on public services or contract buses following travel independence training. The County Council's TITAN travel trainers will work with young people referred onto the scheme to help familiarise them with their new journeys as part of their transfer to Post16 education.

Any young person assessed as being suitable for travel training is expected to willingly participate. The County Council will withdraw specialist transport if students or families choose not to take part in the travel training programme or assessment.

See Appendix 1 for more information on transport journeys.

5. Other transport assistance outside the general policy

Pupils who do not qualify under the County Council's general policy for free transport may receive assistance with transport under certain circumstances such as:

5.1 When a school reorganisation takes place

The County Council will consider whether transport provision should be made available to pupils affected by any schools' reorganisation including:

- School closures
- Opening of new schools
- Changes made by Norfolk County Council to school catchment areas
- Any other major re-organisation of education provision within schools.

Where transport provision is offered this will only apply to pupils directly affected by these changes at the time they are made.

Arrangements will differ depending on the specific situation at the time. All parents of those pupils deemed by the County Council to be directly affected will be notified of the proposed arrangements prior to the changes being implemented. The level and duration of any transport assistance will be determined by the County Council.

5.2 Specific family circumstances

5.2.1. Transport support may be given on a temporary basis (for a period of up to 6 weeks, to the end of the next term or half-term) if the child is subject to an emergency move of home beyond the family's control.

Support will generally only be considered if all of the following criteria are met:

- the pupil was attending their nearest appropriate school for their previous address;
- the family is in receipt of maximum working tax credit or a benefit which would entitle a pupil to free school meals, or third-party evidence of extreme financial hardship is provided; and
- all other means of ensuring attendance have been exhausted.

5.2.2 Transport support may be given if the child is too young or vulnerable to walk to school unaccompanied and parents are unable to accompany them due to their physical mobility difficulty or other severe medical condition.

If there are two or more adults living in the family home they must all be able to demonstrate that they are not able to get the child to school, including in the explanation what other means of ensuring attendance they have explored.

5.2.3 If a child in Year 11 is subject to an emergency move of home beyond the family's control, transport support may be given to the end of Year 11 if Children's Services Admissions confirm that there is no nearer provision than the school currently attended that is able to accommodate the child.

5.2.4 Third-party professional evidence must be provided in all cases and any associated costs must be met by the applicant.

Whilst an application is undergoing the assessment stage, parents will be responsible for ensuring that their child gets to school. The County Council will not backdate decisions and will not refund any costs incurred prior to the point of the decision being given to the parent. Depending upon the complexity of the situation, the assessment may take up to 20 working days following

receipt of all supporting evidence. All efforts are made to complete assessments as quickly as possible and most applications are assessed within 10 working days.

5.3 Unavailable walking routes

The criteria for the assessment of walking routes is at Appendix 2.

If a route to school is assessed against these criteria as being unavailable for walking, the County Council will provide free transport for children attending their nearest catchment or nearest appropriate school/establishment.

Whilst a route is undergoing the assessment stage, parents will be responsible for ensuring that their child gets to and from school.

Unavailable walking routes will be reviewed on a regular basis and if any changes to a route mean that it is then assessed as available according to the criteria, free transport will be withdrawn and it will become the parent's responsibility to get their child to and from school.

Similarly, if an alternative route to school is identified which is available according to the criteria and also within the qualifying distance, free transport will be withdrawn and it will become the parent's responsibility to get their child to and from school.

In both instances the County Council will give at least six weeks' notice of the withdrawal of free transport, up to the next natural term / half-term break, to allow time for parents to make alternative arrangements.

Appeals against walking route decisions can be made by following the appeals procedure detailed in section 13 of this document.

5.4 School full situations

If the nearest catchment or nearest appropriate school is full at the time of application to the County Council for a school place, transport will be provided to an alternative school, as defined by the County Council, in accordance with the general policy (*note eligibility criteria in section 2*). This is normally the next nearest school. This arrangement will continue until the end of the pupil's current phase of schooling e.g. primary, secondary.

As an exception to policy, younger siblings of children accommodated in a primary phase school under a school full situation will be entitled to free transport to the same school, in accordance with the general policy, on condition that there are places available on the transport and that there is no additional cost to providing the transport. This exception to policy will stop once the eligible child leaves the school and does not apply to school full situations at a high school.

5.5 Authorised school transfers

The County Council will only consider providing transport support for pupils transferring schools before the natural end of their current phase of schooling where the transfer is managed by the County Council e.g. pupils at risk of

exclusion. Any transport provided in this situation will be subject to the general policy.

Any pupil moving schools due to the alleged failure of the school attended to address parental concerns, e.g. bullying, will not be considered for transport support from the County Council. The County Council expects all schools to appropriately manage any reported issues and incidents. Any parent who is not satisfied with the school intervention should take this up with the governing body of the school concerned via the school complaints procedure.

The only exception to this will be where the current school confirms in writing that there is no further action that can be taken to resolve the situation and external agencies have been involved fully in this process. The next nearest school will then be deemed the nearest appropriate school and transport support will be provided subject to the criteria in section 2.

5.6 Allocation of spare seats for pupils/students

Pupils/students who are not eligible for free transport may be able to purchase spare seats on contracted vehicles transporting eligible pupils, although this will depend on the type of vehicle operating the service and may not be available on all contracted services (due to legislative restrictions).

If there are more applications for spare seats than there are places available, the allocation of seats will be made in the following order:

- Pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan.
- Pupils looked after by the Local Authority.
- Young carers (evidence of their caring responsibility will need to be provided by a third party).
- Pupils living within the qualifying walking distance (priority based on number of years they have previously received transport and then distance from the school, with the pupil living furthest away given highest priority). Pupils new to the discretionary travel scheme, including siblings, will not take priority over the categories below.
- Pupils attending a school of parental preference (priority based on number of years they have previously received transport and then distance from the school, with the pupil living nearest to the school given the highest priority). It is not necessary for such pupils to be resident in Norfolk but priority will be given to those who are. Pupils new to the discretionary travel scheme, including siblings, will not take priority over the next category below.
- Post16 students not entitled under the general policy.

Ten working days must be allowed after the date of payment for receipt of a travel pass or confirmation of travel arrangements.

Applications for spare seats will only be considered once we have allocated all eligible children to transport and are confident that spare seats are available.

This decision is unlikely to be before the start of the school term in September 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, which is a contribution towards the whole cost of transport. The annual charge varies depending on circumstances and is paid in three instalments. Find information about all current charges on [School Transport](#).

If during the school year the seat is needed for an eligible pupil, the discretionary place can be withdrawn at a week's notice. If the place is withdrawn before the next half-term holiday, a pro-rata refund will be made of half the contribution paid. No refund will be given if the seat is withdrawn after the half-term holiday but before the end of the full term.

6. Transport Grants for Cycling

The County Council wishes to support cycling to school as a 'healthy and green' alternative to motorised vehicle travel and a cycling allowance of £200 per year is available, reduced to pro-rata amounts for applications made after October half-term.

The grant of £200 per year is available for any pupil or student who is eligible for travel assistance under Sections 2 & 3. This grant is payable instead of a travel pass or any other transport provision.

Each application for this grant is individually assessed with distance and age being taken into consideration before it is agreed that a cycle allowance can be awarded. However parents are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their child can safely cycle to and from school.

Acceptance of the cycle grant is a commitment for a full academic year, therefore anyone applying for this grant must consider how they will travel when they feel that adverse weather conditions make cycling difficult. The County Council will not provide alternative transport in such circumstances.

Once the grant has been paid parents are responsible for the cycle and any insurance, as Norfolk County Council will not accept responsibility for loss, damage or theft.

New applications for a cycle allowance are not accepted for the current academic year after the last day of the spring term, i.e. at Easter.

7. Fuel Allowances

In some cases the County Council will agree for parents to provide their own transport to and from school/college instead of the County Council making the necessary transport arrangements. These arrangements are only agreed if contracted or public transport is not available and if it is the most cost-effective option, apart from for those children who receive transport due to their special educational need where a Personalised Travel Scheme payment can be made as part of the Local Offer.

The level of allowance is based on the mileage for two return journeys each day and on the condition that the driver is acting as a volunteer. The distance between home and school will be measured by the County Council as the shortest distance by road, using an up-to-date geographical information

system managed by the local authority. A fuel allowance will not be paid based on the road route that the parent actually takes.

The current allowance payable is based on 50p/mile, as recommended by HMRC when carrying a passenger.

Example: Where a school is 5 miles from home the calculation will be
2 return journeys = distance (5 miles) x 4 = 20 miles
20 miles x 50p = £10.00 per day

Post16 students are still required to pay a contribution towards transport costs and the appropriate level of contribution will be deducted from any fuel allowance the family are entitled to.

Personalised Travel Scheme payments are slightly different, as follows:

- The mileage rate is based on 50p/mile up to 10,000 miles in a year, after which it drops to 30p/mile, to reflect the longer distances that some parents have to make and to ensure the allowance received does not become taxable income
- There is an Additional Support Allowance (ASA) of £500 that NCC holds in reserve for each family, so that if you are ill or your car has broken down you can use this £500 to pay for e.g. a taxi to get the child to their placement.

A fuel allowance may also be payable to Post16 students who are driving themselves to sixth form/college but will only be paid where no contracted or public transport is available and when this is the most cost-effective option for the local authority. The rate in these cases is 45p/mile, as recommended by HMRC, and will only be paid for 1 return journey each day.

Example: Where a college is 5 miles from home the calculation will be
1 return journey = distance (5 miles) x 2 = 10 miles
10 miles x 45p = £4.50 per day
Over 180 college days, annual amount = £810
Less a parental contribution (e.g. £594) = £216

Payments are monthly in arrears and are made by BACS directly into the nominated bank account automatically. In a few cases we may set up payments where a claim form is required every month.

8. Moped Loan Scheme

The County Council operates a moped loan scheme for Post16 students who are not able to access public transport or other contracted school transport within a reasonable distance from their home for their journey. All applications are assessed individually and the County Council retains the right not to support cases where there is reason to believe that:

- This is not a suitable mode for a particular journey
- An applicant is not suitable for this mode of travel
- The journey in question is served by other transport arrangements.

The cost to the family of participating in this scheme is exactly the same as the student contribution applicable to any other form of transport under the

Post16 Transport Policy. If the financial contribution is not paid by the due dates, the moped will be confiscated with immediate effect.

9. Payment of contributions towards the cost of transport

Financial contributions towards transport for young people who are not entitled to free transport are determined annually. These rates, along with payment options, are published on the County Council website at [School Transport](#) and [Post16 transport](#).

Alternatively this information can be obtained from the County Council on 0344 800 8020.

All payments will be dealt with as promptly as possible but 10 working days must be allowed after the date of a payment for the receipt of a travel pass or confirmation of travel arrangements. Please note that passes and transport details will be sent by 2nd class post.

Refunds of the financial contribution will be issued as follows:

- If the travel pass is returned or the travel arrangements are cancelled before the start of term in September, we will give a full refund
- If travel passes are returned or the travel arrangements are cancelled during the year we will give a pro-rata refund based on the amount paid less the time the travel pass/arrangement has been used, to the nearest full half-term, less a £13 administration fee
- No refunds are given for those selecting the post16 six-instalment payment option
- For the period following May half-term, refunds will only be given if the travel pass is returned and received by the County Council, or the transport arrangements cancelled, by 31 May
- No refund will be given if the pass has been posted back but not received by the County Council, unless proof of posting can be supplied.

Refunds will not be given for any day the transport does not operate.

We do not offer any refunds on travel costs incurred while waiting for travel arrangements to be made or the travel pass to arrive. Any request for a refund for bus or train tickets will be at the discretion of the County Council, e.g. if there was a significant delay in issuing the pass or the pass issued was incorrect and/or unusable.

10. Travelling times

The County Council will seek to provide single journeys, assessed using the door-to-door time, that do not exceed

- 45 minutes at primary school age
- 75 minutes at secondary school age and above.

These times are a guideline only and the efficiency of the transport provision will be the over-riding, principle factor when organising transport.

In cases where single journey times are way in excess of the above guidelines but the child only travels that distance for part of the week, we will look at the average daily travelling time over a 5-day period and where it would be more than 1 hour 30 minutes for primary age pupils or more than 2 hours 30 minutes for secondary age pupils, bespoke transport arrangements will be considered to see if a shorter journey can be offered within available resources.

If the travelling time is within these guidelines but it is considered that the pupil/student cannot cope with the length of the journey, appropriate medical or other justifiable evidence from a third-party professional must be provided before any changes can be considered.

11. Transport boarding points

Boarding points for children of statutory school age are provided as near as possible to home. This is usually no more than 1 mile away from home for children of primary school age and no more than 1.5 miles for children of secondary school age. Parents are required to ensure their children get to and from the nearest boarding point.

Set-down points are provided as near as possible to school. For primary age pupils this will be within the school grounds or just outside the school gate; for high school students this will be no more than 1 mile from the school.

There is no maximum distance to a vehicle boarding point or set-down point for Post16 students.

Children should be at the boarding point 10 minutes before the stated departure time and should wait at the bus stop for 30 minutes after the stated departure time in case their school transport is delayed. If children are left to wait on their own it is a parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that their children know what to do if their transport does not turn up or if they are refused travel because they do not have a valid travel pass.

Children are the responsibility of parents before they board the vehicle and after they alight at the end of the day.

Children of primary school age (Years R–6) and children with special needs should be collected from school transport at the end of the day by an appropriate adult, e.g. a parent/guardian, and parents should ensure that they or someone else is at the drop-off point. If there is no adult present to collect a child then 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.

12. Behaviour

All children should behave in an appropriate manner while waiting for school transport and while travelling on home to school/college transport.

Any unacceptable behaviour may result in a temporary withdrawal of transport arrangements, for up to two months, during which time it will be the

responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children get to and from their place of learning.

Children should comply with any instructions from drivers or passenger assistants, particularly in the event of a breakdown or a road incident. Non-compliance with instructions will be regarded as unacceptable behaviour.

Transport will only be reinstated for banned pupils when they have demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the County Council, that they are willing and able to behave appropriately.

In cases of gross or persistent misconduct a permanent ban from school transport may be imposed.

Please note that CCTV is now in operation on many vehicles.

Please see Appendix 3 for the full Behaviour Policy and Procedure.

13. Appeals Procedure

The County Council operates an appeals procedure for parents/carers who wish to challenge a decision about their child's eligibility for transport, the transport arrangements offered, distance measurements or the availability of a walking route. The appeals procedure is as follows:

13.1 Following the original decision, a parent/carer has 20 working days to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.

13.2 The written request should be sent to

Head of Passenger Transport
Travel & Transport, Norfolk County Council
County Hall, Norwich NR1 2DH

and should detail why the parent/guardian believes the decision should be reviewed, giving details of any personal and/or family circumstances they believe should be considered as part of the review.

13.3 The decision will be reviewed within 20 working days and parents/guardians will receive a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review.

13.4 If parents/guardians still believe that policy has not been applied correctly and they would like a further review of the decision, they have 20 working days to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two of the process, setting out any additional relevant information to their case.

13.5 The appeal (stage 2) will be reviewed within 40 working days by a panel of 3 senior officers from Children's Services, to which parents are invited to attend and speak, if they wish to do so.

13.6 The final decision of the County Council will be sent to the parent/guardian within 5 working days and will include contact information for the Local Government Ombudsman if a parent believes a further independent review of their case is necessary.

13.7 The Ombudsman will not usually consider cases unless they have been through the full appeals process of the County Council, and will only consider cases if complainants believe that the County Council has failed to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled.

13.8 For Post16 transport the appeals process should be followed as set out above but following the final decision of the County Council parents may complain to the Secretary of State if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal.

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## Appendix 1

### Journey Information

#### **A 1: Transport Procurement**

Transport will be procured in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations, the County Council's Contract Standing Orders, and the requirements of any relevant UK legislation.

All contracts for the provision of passenger transport services will be reviewed at least every five years to ensure best value for money and efficiency of the overall provision of transport. This means that transport is very likely to change during a child's time at school.

#### **A 2: Arrival and Departure Times**

Transport will be arranged to arrive up to 15 minutes before or after school and schools should make any necessary arrangements to supervise pupils for these periods.

Occasionally it may not be possible to arrange transport within these time limits and in these instances the County Council will liaise with schools to ensure that appropriate supervision arrangements are made.

#### **A 3: Seatbelts and vehicle loading**

In accordance with the seating capacity regulations, a seat for each pupil will be provided. On vehicles without seat belts or on local bus services the 3:2 seating rule may be used to accommodate small numbers of pupils above the seating capacity available.

Seatbelts and other forms of child restraint will be provided where they are required by law. Children are responsible for putting on their own seatbelt.

#### **A 4: Mixed Loading**

All age groups may be mixed on the same vehicle, however primary age pupils will be transported separately from secondary age pupils wherever possible, subject to there being no additional cost.

#### **A 5: Drivers and Passenger Assistants**

Drivers and passenger assistants are employed in accordance with the Conditions of Contract and vetted in accordance with Home Office guidelines.

Passenger assistants, in addition to the driver, are provided as follows:

- on vehicles carrying pupils with special needs if a risk assessment of the journey or a specific child indicates that one is required
- on vehicles where the driver cannot gain access to the passenger compartment without leaving the vehicle or where the driver does not have control of the vehicle doors from his driving position

- on vehicles carrying 30 or more pupils, all under 9 years old, travelling on journeys of at least 30 minutes duration
- on other vehicles where a specific need is identified.

## **A 6: Travel Passes**

Travel passes are the property of Norfolk County Council and are subject to the conditions set in this Home to School and College Transport Policy and those of transport operators. The County Council must be notified by the parent/guardian if a student leaves school, sixth form or college before the expiry date of the travel pass so that it can be cancelled.

Travel passes are Smartcards and are valid for one journey to school/college and one journey home each day during standard academic terms only. Pupils should present their Smartcard each time they board the vehicle, by placing it on the electronic ticket machine.

High school and Post16 students without a valid travel pass will be refused travel or asked to pay the appropriate fare if the service accepts fare-paying passengers.

Primary age pupils on a contracted service will be allowed to travel for five days without a travel pass to give them time to get a new one.

Lost and damaged passes (i.e. ones that no longer work on the electronic ticket machine) should be replaced. There is a charge of £13 for a replacement pass to cover the administration costs. Temporary passes which are valid for 2 weeks are available from high schools, to allow time for the payment and issue of a replacement pass.

Fraudulent use of a travel pass will result in it being confiscated and, for pupils travelling under the County Council's Discretionary or Post16 Travel Schemes, transport will be permanently withdrawn.

## **A 7: Other Users**

Other persons may be given permission to travel on contracted transport e.g. staff, parents helping at the school, short term exchange students\*. Such persons should obtain permission from the County Council and will only be authorised to travel providing:

- there are spare seats available,
- there are no additional costs involved, and
- a relevant DBS check has been undertaken, where applicable.

School staff using the services are expected to supervise the pupils whilst travelling.

\*Exchange students travelling for more than one half term must apply through the normal application process

## Appendix 2

### Criteria for home to school walking route assessments

#### Introduction

All roads and footpaths can be considered as being potentially hazardous for pedestrians, whether in a rural or urban setting. Free transport cannot be provided for this reason alone. For pupils living within the qualifying distances of their nearest catchment or nearest appropriate school, the County Council will look at the physical nature of the route and the age of the child before it will consider providing free transport.

For the council to provide free transport, the route must have special factors that make it particularly hazardous and therefore unavailable to walk or cycle along in reasonable safety, even where a child is accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult.

The Council follows the guidance set by **Road Safety GB** when assessing walking routes to school and for a route to be assessed as '**non-hazardous**' the following conditions need to be present:

#### **Both**

A continuous adequate footway on roads which carry normal to heavy traffic (more than 400 vehicles per hour)

or

'step offs' on roads which have light traffic flow (240 - 400 vehicles per hour) but adequate sight lines to provide sufficient advance warning to drivers and pedestrians

or

on roads with very light traffic flow (less than 240 vehicles per hour) no 'step offs' but sufficiently good sight lines to provide adequate advance warning to drivers and pedestrians and the ability of a vehicle to pass a pedestrian.

#### **And**

If there is a need to cross roads there must be:

sufficient gaps in the traffic flow and sight lines to allow enough opportunities to cross safely

or

crossing facilities (e.g. zebra, pelican crossings), pedestrian phase at traffic lights (including necessary refuges), School Crossing Patrol, pedestrian refuges.

#### **Road Crossing Assessments**

The difficulty of crossing at a site can be assessed by considering the number of gaps in the traffic flow that are acceptable to pedestrians. An acceptable gap to cross from kerb to kerb varies with each person but most people will be

able to cross two lanes of normal urban traffic in 4 to 6 seconds. Others may need larger gaps of around 10 to 12 seconds.

Where the two-way (or one-way of a dual carriageway) traffic flow is below 240 vehicles per hour the road is assessed as safe to cross. This is based on the original County Road Safety Officers Association criteria and is equivalent to one vehicle every 15 seconds and allows a reasonable gap time to cross a 7-metre wide road at a walking speed of 3 foot per second.

Where the traffic flow is more than 240 vehicles per hour a gap analysis will be undertaken – this is where we record the number of gaps in each 5 minute period that are longer than the road crossing time (using 3 feet per second as the walking speed).

All traffic counts and road crossing assessments are taken in the hour before school starts in the morning and in the hour after school ends.

### **Other factors**

The history of road accidents involving pedestrians along the route will also be considered.

It is assumed that all road users will behave reasonably and responsibly. Drivers are expected to comply with the speed limits. Where they do not, the local police should be asked to take appropriate action.

The presence or absence of street lighting on a route is not considered to be a factor.

### **Public rights of way**

Public rights of way are determined as any route where access does not constitute trespassing, and include routes such as bridleways, public byways, permissive paths and common land. These routes are generally considered as available walking routes, however a route could be considered unavailable as a walking route, even to a child accompanied by an adult, if an element of the route poses a significant level of risk that cannot be reduced by any reasonable adjustments, e.g. if there is a deep fast-flowing river adjacent to an exposed footpath, where it would be impossible to get out of the river should an incident occur.

### **What does not make a route unavailable?**

All assessments look at the relationship between pedestrians and traffic and at the physical nature of the route only – personal safety issues of children travelling alone are not considered as local authorities are not legally obliged to provide free transport just because parents perceive the route to be unsafe on the grounds of personal safety and security – in these cases it for the parent to decide if they should accompany their child on the route or not.

The following are examples of factors that are not considered as part of a route assessment:

- it is isolated and there is perceived to be a moral danger;

- the route is muddy or soft underfoot;
- it will be dark at the time of walking;
- there is a need to cross a railway line at a designated crossing point;
- there are short lengths of road where there is no verge;
- there are short lengths of road within the village/urban environment where there is no verge or footpath;
- there are other variable conditions e.g. inclement weather or possible flooding.

In all cases it is expected that pupils, students and members of the public behave reasonably and lawfully. Parents are expected to provide protective clothing or other equipment as necessary.

### **What happens if a route is considered unavailable?**

If a route is considered unavailable free transport will be provided until there is a significant change, e.g. if a footpath is created, when the route would be reassessed. Free transport is not provided if there is an alternative walking route to school, also within the qualifying distance, which is assessed as being available.

### **What if a route is available but I can't accompany my child?**

Free transport may be provided if the route is only available if the child is accompanied (normally for primary-age children only) and parents can satisfy the council that no adult is available to accompany the child or that accompanying the child is not possible on the route, e.g. they have a younger child in a pram or pushchair and the route cannot then be walked in reasonable safety. However, we would expect all reasonable alternatives to have been explored by parents/carers before confirming that transport can be provided.

### **Free transport is not provided if the child cannot be accompanied due to parents' work commitments.**

When children from the same family attend different local schools in the area, e.g. infant and junior schools, and they do not qualify for free transport, then it is expected that parents will make any local arrangements they consider necessary for their children to be accompanied to and from different schools or to use any available transport services. Free transport will not therefore be provided.

In all assessments, the officer carrying out the assessment will be experienced in doing so and in using their professional judgement when applying these guidelines.



## Appendix 3

### **Behaviour Policy and Procedure**

This procedure should be adopted for all school journeys operated under the Contract, but it does not affect the statutory powers of drivers and conductors given to them under the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981.

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#### **Supervision**

1. The Conditions of Contract for the Provision of Passenger Transport states:  
'The contractor shall for the purpose of safeguarding the pupils against accidents or injuries, ensure that they are supervised both during the journey and when boarding and alighting from the vehicle.'
2. In order to maintain good behaviour, supervision should normally require no more than a verbal instruction from the driver whose authority is vested in his legal responsibility for the vehicle. Where a passenger assistant is employed on the vehicle it will be the passenger assistant's responsibility, in the first instance, to issue any verbal instructions as a result of misbehaviour.
3. In the event of misbehaviour contractors' employees should not remove pupils from the vehicle or refuse to allow them to board except when the vehicle is at the school that the pupils attend. As a result of unacceptable behaviour and regardless of the provocations, on no account are the Contractor's employees to use actual or threatened physical force. If drivers' or passenger assistants' instructions are ignored and bad behaviour persists, or if the seriousness of the misbehaviour warrants it, the appropriate disciplinary actions outlined below should be taken.

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#### **Disciplinary Procedure**

4. There are three stages to the procedure:
  - 4.1 Initial Warning – a verbal instruction or warning
  - 4.2 Written Warning
  - 4.3 Exclusion from transport

Travel & Transport have discretion to override earlier stages in the procedure if the seriousness of the incident warrants this.

Where reference is made to the Headteacher, this can also refer to a member of staff with delegated responsibility for pupil behaviour on school transport.

#### **5. Initial Warning**

For minor incidents of misbehaviour the driver or passenger assistant should identify the culprit(s) and report the incident to the Headteacher for any action considered necessary, which will often prevent escalation to stages 4.2 and 4.3 of this procedure. The driver must also report these instances to his/her employer to record for future reference. Where primary age or special needs pupils are concerned, the Contractor will also inform the Council.

## **6. Written Warning**

For repeated unacceptable behaviour or any single serious incident:

6.1 The driver or passenger assistant (if any) will report the details and name(s) of the culprit(s) as soon as possible to the Headteacher and Contractor;

6.2 The Contractor will send a written report, including any recorded details of the Initial Warning, to Travel & Transport, who will inform the Headteacher;

6.3 Travel & Transport, after consultation with the Headteacher, will write to the parents, with copies to the Headteacher and Contractor, seeking the help of the parents and warning them that any further incidents of unacceptable behaviour could result in the exclusion of their child from the vehicle.

## **7. Exclusion from transport**

In general, exclusion from transport is used following completion of the Written Warning stage. When further incidents of bad behaviour occur:

7.1 The Driver is to report the details and name(s) of the culprit(s) as soon as possible to the Headteacher and Contractor;

7.2 The Contractor must advise Travel & Transport of the details by telephone and then confirm it in writing, referring to the previous Written Warning;

7.3 Travel & Transport, after consultation with the Headteacher, will write to the parents notifying them that their child will be excluded from the transport for a specified period (normally up to five school days on the first exclusion) giving them five days' notice to make alternative arrangements. This letter will be copied to the Headteacher and the Contractor.

## **8. Immediate exclusion from transport**

Exceptionally there may be an incident of such a serious nature that it is necessary to exclude a pupil from transport without warning, for example:

- violent behaviour
- wanton damage to the vehicle
- gross verbal abuse
- actions which compromise the safety of the vehicle

In such cases:

8.1 The Contractor must immediately telephone details to Travel & Transport. After consultation with the Headteacher, Travel & Transport

will issue a verbal instruction for the commencement and duration of the exclusion to the Contractor, the pupil and the parent(s);

8.2 Contractors and Headteachers must not act independently; only the Council should authorise the exclusion of a pupil from transport;

8.3 The exclusion should commence as soon as possible after the incident, preferably from the next journey but not partway through an existing journey, unless the pupil has been arrested by the Police. The details of the exclusion will be confirmed in writing to the parents with copies to the Contractor and Headteacher.

## **9. The role of schools in addressing poor behaviour on transport**

The Department for Education expects each school to promote appropriate standards of behaviour by pupils on their journey to and from school through rewarding any positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behaviour.

Headteachers are required to determine what measures should be taken to promote self-discipline among pupils; and encourage positive behaviour and respect for others, including the prevention of bullying. The Act makes it clear that Headteachers must make and publish rules, and decide on penalties for unacceptable behaviour.

The Act also empowers Headteachers to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when pupils are not under the legal control of the school, but when it is reasonable to do so. In the Department's view, this would include behaviour on school buses, or otherwise on the route to and from school, whether or not the pupils are in school uniform.

## **10. Vandalism**

Parents/guardians may be invoiced to recover the cost of repair due to vandalism.

## **11. Smoking**

For incidents of smoking on transport there will be a mandatory minimum travel ban of one week. This includes smoking e-cigs or similar devices.

## **12. Mobile Phones**

The use of mobile phones or other electronic devices for taking photographs or filming is prohibited on all vehicles.