

HOME TO SCHOOL

TRANSPORT POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is an obligation on local authorities under Section 42 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to transport pupils, who are distance entitled to transport, from their home to school and return.

Fife Council will administer, and regularly review, the transport of children and young people between home and school at the start and end of the school day, providing equitable, safe, efficient and cost-effective transport for entitled pupils, always ensuring information is accessible to parents/carers so that they are aware of the entitlement.

Promoting the independence and well-being of pupils through a range of travel options is a core aspect of curriculum for excellence and is supported by the Council. All pupils should be encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle, including walking a reasonable distance, accompanied where necessary and where possible, to school.

This policy aims to provide the key information about the provision of home to school travel assistance for eligible pupils, including those pupils who qualify for assistance because of specific additional support needs, disability, mobility difficulties and any other exceptional circumstances.

2. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Current legislation under Section 42 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires Education Authorities to provide home to school transport assistance for: -

- pupils aged up to 8 years old who live more than 2 miles or more from their catchment area school by the shortest available walking route,
- pupils aged 8 years old or over who live more than 3 miles or more from their catchment area school by the shortest available walking route.

Home to school transport assistance is only required to be provided to the catchment area school. Where a pupil attends an alternative school because of a successful placing request, transport does not require to be and is not provided by the Council

Section 1 of the [Scottish Government School Transport Guidance 2021](#) highlights the duties on parents and local authorities: -

Duties on Parents

- Section 30 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”) places a duty on parents to provide an efficient education for their child, suitable to the child’s age, ability and aptitude, either by sending him/her to a public school or by other means.
- The majority of parents send their children to a school managed by their local authority and identified by the authority as their catchment school.
- Parents remain responsible for their child’s journey to and from school or, where the authority is providing school transport (either through a dedicated

service or local bus service), between home and the designated pick-up/drop-off point.

Duties on Local Authorities

- Section 51 of the 1980 Act requires local authorities to make such arrangements as they consider necessary for the provision of school transport for pupils residing, and attending schools, in their area. Local authorities have a wide level of discretion in this regard and the arrangements they establish can include the provision of free school transport for some or all of the journey, making bicycles or other suitable means of transport available to pupils on such terms and conditions as they may arrange (or for paying allowances in lieu), and paying some or all travelling costs.
- When considering whether to make arrangements for the provision of school transport, local authorities are further required to have regard to 1. the safety of the pupil, and 2. ensuring that access to transport which meets the child's needs is provided. This may mean an alternative vehicle, such as a minibus or taxi is provided, however there is no requirement to modify vehicles such as school buses to meet a person's needs.

3. MAINSTREAM TRANSPORT

Fife Council's provision is more favourable than that noted in the legislation, as the current policy provides home to school transport assistance for: -

- primary school pupils that attend their catchment area school who live 1 mile or more, by the shortest available walking route, from this school
- secondary school pupils that attend their catchment area school who live 2 miles or more, by the shortest available walking route, from this school

3.1 CATCHMENT AREAS

Each home address in Fife has 2 catchment area primary and secondary schools (1 denominational and 1 non-denominational). Catchment school information is available online via the catchment checker tool - [Catchment Checker | Fife Council](#).

Parents and carers choose their child's catchment school i.e. denominational or non-denominational when starting in P1 or S1, or when they enrol at a Fife School for the first time. Transport assistance will be provided if the distance criterion is met. If a parent/carers requires to move the pupil from 1 catchment school to another catchment school at any stage, then transport assistance will continue to be provided if the distance criterion to the new school is met.

3.2 MEASUREMENT OF DISTANCES/AVAILABLE WALKING ROUTES

Fife Council has a responsibility to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for distance entitled pupils to be transported to and from school. However, the Council also has a responsibility to consider walk route availability for those pupils living less than the agreed entitlement distances, and to have regard to their safety.

The Walked Routes to School Assessment Policy, which can be accessed online via [School Transport Fife Council](#), outlines the Council's policy on determining available walk routes and the methodology adopted in carrying out assessments. In most cases, assessments will be carried out on walk routes up to 1 mile from a pupil's catchment area primary school, or 2 miles from their catchment secondary school. However, the policy can equally be applied in those situations where a pupil already qualifies for distance entitled transport but the walk route to their transport boarding point requires to be assessed.

School travel entitlement maps are available online at [School Transport Fife Council](#). Any queries should be emailed to education.transport@fife.gov.uk.

3.3 SCHOOL BUS ALLOCATION & TRAVEL PASSES

The Roads & Transportation Service receives details of new P1's and S1's from the Education Service on an annual basis and assesses school transport entitlement. All pupils entitled to transport assistance will receive a travel pass, by post, to their home address, during the school summer holidays.

Primary Schools can make any applications for transport assistance for new primary pupils, or changes to existing pupil information, via the Primary School Transport Request Form available online at [School Transport Fife Council](#). Secondary schools can send a weekly spreadsheet to Roads & Transportation Service, where they can make the necessary requests or amendments.

Travel passes are allocated based on a pupil's registered home address and the availability of seats on each bus. Passes are colour coded to manage seating capacity and avoid issues with overcrowding. Consideration of changing a pupil's travel pass will be given only where the request is submitted and supported by school staff e.g. Guidance Teacher.

Any pupils entitled to transport assistance based on distance entitlement, who do not live close to a bus route, may be eligible to travel by taxi or minibus for all or part of the journey. Transport will not be provided on private roads and parent/carers will be expected to drop off/pick up their child to/from the nearest suitable pick up/collection point to meet their mainstream transport.

School bus timetables are available online via [Travel Fife School Bus Timetables](#).

3.3.1 National Entitlement Cards (NEC)

All young people and children aged 5 – 21 years can apply for a National Entitlement Card or Young Scot NEC with the valid free travel entitlement, which provides free bus travel throughout Scotland. The following link provides all of the information that parents/carers need to apply: - [Homepage - YPTS \(freebus.scot\)](#).

In Fife most school buses with more than 16 passenger seats are registered as local service buses. This allows pupils that are not eligible for school transport assistance to access the bus network and use their NEC, subject to there being spare capacity on the bus. Without a travel pass or NEC, a fare will be required to be paid. The Council provides bus operators with an indicative fare scale which applies to school buses. Maximum fares apply for set distances and operators cannot charge beyond the maximum set by the Council.

3.3.2 Concessionary Places

Where transport is provided to entitled pupils via a closed contract (i.e. taxi/minibus journeys not available to non-entitled pupils or the public), the Council may consider granting a concessionary seat to a non-entitled pupil if there is a spare seat and there would be no additional mileage or cost. Requests for concessionary places must be made in writing and emailed to schooltravel.enquiries@fife.gov.uk on an annual basis and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Concessionary places can be withdrawn at any time, with short notice, if an entitled pupil requires the seat. Parents/carers are encouraged to have contingency plans in place to cover these eventualities.

Concessionary places are not available on school buses which are registered local services. A non-entitled pupil would be expected to use their NEC card or pay a fare.

3.4 EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

3.4.1 Catchment Area School is Full

The Council will provide transport assistance to a non-catchment school when a pupil's chosen catchment area school is full; where the alternative school is the one closest to the pupil's home address and where the distance criterion is met. This transport assistance is only provided until the pupil is offered a place in their catchment school. If the parent/carer chooses not to move their child at this point then the pupil continuing to attend the alternative school will be treated as a placing request and the entitlement to transport assistance will be withdrawn.

3.4.2 Changes to Catchment Area made by Fife Council

Fife Council may, on occasion, deem it necessary to change the catchment area for a particular school or cluster of schools, which can only be done following the necessary statutory consultation process.

- Primary school pupils that are already enrolled and wish to stay at their existing primary school, who are in receipt of transport assistance, will retain

the entitlement until the end of their primary school education or the pupil moves address. Pupils that choose to move to the new catchment school will be reassessed for entitlement under the policy.

- Secondary school pupils that are already enrolled and wish to stay at their existing secondary school, who are in receipt of transport assistance, will retain the entitlement until the end of their secondary school education or the pupil moves address. Pupils that choose to move to the new catchment school will be reassessed for entitlement under the policy.
- Where both the primary and secondary catchment area changes at the same time as a pupil moves into S1, the pupil will only be eligible for transport assistance to the new catchment area secondary school where the distance criterion is met.

3.4.3 Separated Parents & Transport to Alternative Addresses

Where a pupil resides between 2 parental/primary carers' addresses, due to parents/carers living separately, transport assistance will be provided for both addresses if both addresses are within the pupil's catchment area and both meet the distance criteria set by the Council. Transport assistance will not be provided to an address that does not meet the distance criteria or is outwith the catchment.

Transport assistance will not be provided to an alternative address e.g. childminder, other family member or friend.

3.4.4 Pupils Who Change Home Address Permanently

Where a pupil moves address permanently from one school catchment area to another, and chooses to remain at their original school, the parent/carer will be responsible for meeting all transport arrangements and any associated travel costs.

3.4.5 School Pupils Attending College

Pupils under the age of 16, who attend college full time but are still on the roll of their school, would be expected to apply for and use a National Entitlement Card or Young Scot NEC with the valid free travel entitlement, for use on the local bus network.

3.4.6 Disabled Parents/Carers

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people. Where parents/carers would be required to accompany their children along an assessed walking route, but their disability prevents them from being able to do so, the Council may exercise its discretion to provide travel assistance for the pupil. In a 2 parent/carer household both parents would have to have a disability that would prevent them both from accompanying their child.

3.5 TEMPORARY & SHORT TERM TRANSPORT REQUESTS

Temporary or emergency transport assistance may be provided by the Council for a specific, time limited period where an exceptional circumstance arises. This will be subject to regular review.

If an application is to be made, the school/educational establishment is required to complete and submit a [Transport Request Form](#) for consideration. It is the school/educational establishment's responsibility to provide as much information as possible, to allow the application to be processed as quickly as possible. Please refer to the Guidelines for Completing the Transport Request Form (link available to the guidelines is available at the start of the Transport Request Form).

3.5.1 Pupils in Temporary Residential Circumstances

The Council may consider an application for transport assistance where a pupil is accommodated under a temporary/emergency arrangement, where the pupil is relocated to alternative accommodation due to circumstances out with their/their family's control.

3.5.2 Pupils with Temporary Medical Problems

Travel assistance may be considered where a pupil lives within the walking distance criterion, and is attending their designated catchment area school, but is unable to walk to school due to a temporary medical condition. Parents/carers will be required to provide full details of the medical condition, the likely period that the travel assistance will be needed, and the type of transport requested, e.g. bus travel, taxi provision.

3.5.3 Pupils Who Change School Due to a Host School Transfer

Travel assistance may be considered in exceptional circumstances where a pupil's catchment area school acknowledges that a change of school is required to ensure that the pupil can continue with their education. The walking distance criterion would be considered in all cases.

The relevant Manager of the sending school should be consulted at the planning stage of any such requests and the final decisions will be made by them.

3.6 CASES WHERE TRAVEL ASSISTANCE WILL NOT BE PROVIDED

Home to School Transport will only be provided to meet the standard start and finish time of the school/education establishments. It will not cater for extended school opportunities or provision.

Transport assistance will NOT be provided:

- to and from temporary addresses, including family, friends and childminders, where these arrangements are made by the family.

- at times to suit the convenience of family arrangements, including work commitments and when other siblings in the family must be taken to other locations.
- for late arrival or departure, for example due to illness or medical appointments.
- to and from medical appointments.
- following detention.
- to access breakfast or after-school clubs, including out of school activities.
- to work experience, taster or open days.
- to a provision off the school site, organised by the school.
- to a provision off the school site, as part of a transition programme to a new education setting.
- for transfers between education establishments during the school day.
- for shorter than normal days e.g. during exam season.
- for a child whose level of attendance is a cause for concern, but for whom no eligibility criteria are met.
- for students on exchange visits.
- where the behaviour of a pupil on transport provided is not acceptable, or places other travellers at risk.

The above list is not exhaustive.

4. TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

4.1 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

All Local Authorities have a duty under Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, to make the arrangements they consider necessary for transport to and from school. The Act allows discretion on how this operates and includes provision of transport to pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN), guided by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

Section 2.3 of the Scottish Government School Transport Guidance 2021 highlights what is expected of Local Authorities where pupils have a Medical Condition or Additional Support Need: -

2.3 - Medical Conditions and Additional Support Needs

- Local authorities are expected to consider medical conditions and both visible and hidden disabilities affecting a child's ability to walk or travel by bus or, exceptionally, affecting a parent's ability to accompany a younger child on the walk to school.
- If a child or young person cannot attend their local school because of a short-term or long-term medical condition, the local authority may decide to provide free transport to where education is being provided. It will normally **consult the relevant health board when making its decision.**

- Local authorities and other agencies have duties under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) to identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of their pupils. An additional support need can arise for any reason and be of short- or long-term duration. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from the learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances or social and emotional factors. **Local authorities should consider if a pupil has been assessed as having additional support needs which would require consideration of the provision of transport.**
- Vehicles used for school transport also need to be accessible to all and thought should be given to how public transport, including school transport, fits with wider national aims. Some children and young people will require supported transport arrangements because of their additional support needs. Many children and young people with additional support needs will be able to make use of mainstream transport where it is provided, which ensures their inclusion and encourages independence.
- In determining individual transport needs, recommendations from school staff, the Educational Psychology Service, community and allied health professionals should be considered, along with information from parents or carers.
- Getting school transport right and making it accessible to all can be an enabler for many young people to reach their full potential and live fulfilling and independent lives. We should not underestimate the role that the school journey can play
- . in building confidence in young people to travel independently, which may help them access higher and further education and, ultimately, sustainable employment.

4.2 ELIGIBILITY FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS (ASN) TRANSPORT

Pupils with additional support needs will walk to school, travel on public transport or be taken by parents/carers. This encourages development of independent travel skills.

Some children and young people with additional support needs will require travel assistance due to the impact of their needs on their ability to travel independently. Whilst the distance criteria apply to all pupils, whether attending a mainstream school or additional support needs enhanced provision, in some circumstances it may be that a pupil who lives within the distances set by the Council may be considered for transport due to the nature and complexity of their needs.

Wherever possible and appropriate, pupils with additional support needs should have the same opportunities as their peers to travel to and from school independently, with their peers, or with their families. The team around the child is responsible for exploring all possible means of the pupil travelling to and from school, for example walking to school, travel on public transport, or being taken by parents/carers/friends, etc. A pupil may be eligible for consideration for funded

transport once all other options have been considered rigorously. Pupils and their families should be encouraged to develop independent travel skills, and this should be kept under continual review.

Transport assistance will only be considered once a formal application is submitted by the pupil's educational establishment, where the need for transport assistance is specifically identified as an unmet and necessary need by the team around the child through an ongoing review process. This ensures a more tailored and flexible approach to meeting the pupil's individual requirements, with the opportunity to reflect any changes in their needs over time. The type of assistance provided will be based on the assessment of the individual pupil's/family's needs, Section 4.3 below outlines the process of application and decision making.

Where additional support needs transport assistance is provided it will normally be in the form of a shared vehicle; individual transport will only be provided in exceptional circumstances where there is clear and agreed evidence that shared travel would not be appropriate. In all circumstances the Council will seek to provide the most appropriate and cost-effective means of transport.

All agreed transport assistance arrangements should be reviewed at least annually to assess changes of needs and it should not be assumed that transport will be provided indefinitely, as a pupil's needs and eligibility are anticipated to change over time.

Transport will only be provided between the pupil's home address and their educational establishment. Pick-ups and drop-offs from other addresses are unlikely to be granted under the policy.

Parents/carers are responsible for escorting the pupil to and from the vehicle at the designated collection/drop-off point. Where a parent/carer consistently fails to deliver/receive a pupil at their pick-up/drop-off point at the agreed time, the provision of transport will be reviewed and may be withdrawn.

4.3 APPLYING FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS TRANSPORT

Home to school transport on the grounds of additional support needs must be reviewed as part of the Team Around the Child Planning and Review meeting and at a minimum re-requested annually. Schools will receive current pupil details from the Education Directorate Operations Team, which they will be required to review and update ensuring that any changes to the pupil's needs are reflected in the application.

The need for a transport application should only result from a Team Around the Child Planning meeting. Consideration should be given to the core transport provision as the means of the pupil travelling to school, as outlined in 4.2, to best ensure their inclusion and encourage independence.

The school/educational establishment is responsible for pupils developing life skills. The ability to prepare for and undertake journeys is part of this and, where possible, independent travel should be encouraged. This could result in the pupil becoming

fully independent or a move away from fully supported travel, depending on the pupil's abilities.

If an application is to be made, the school/educational establishment is required to complete and submit a **Transport Request Form** for consideration. This is a request for transport to be provided not confirmation that it will be provided. It is important that schools support families to understand that requests can be declined based on the policy. It is the school/educational establishments responsibility to provide as much information as possible to allow the application to be processed as quickly as possible. Please refer to the Guidelines prior to completing the Transport Request Form (link to the guidelines is available at the start of the Transport Request Form).

Requests for additional support needs transport are assessed within the Education Service and when/if approved the details are passed to Roads and Transportation Service to arrange the appropriate transport based on the information provided. Once the annual transport is arranged, details are sent by post from Roads and Transportation Service to the pupils' home address during the school summer holidays, the pupils' schools will also receive by email a PDF copy of the transport details including the contract information.

Where a new application is submitted and approved out with the annual summer exercise, Roads and Transportation Service will send the details of the new transport request to the Education Directorate Operations Team and the school/education establishment who in turn will advise the pupil's parent/carer of the travel arrangements.

4.4 LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN/CARE EXPERIENCED

Applications for looked after and accommodated children and young people living with foster carers or in kinship care, attending a non-catchment area school, should be completed by the pupil's Social Worker. The application form, and guide to completing, can be accessed online via School Transport Fife Council.

4.5 PROVISION OF TRAVEL ESCORTS

A Travel Escort is provided if, during the transport needs assessment process or later, it is considered that the health and safety of the pupil/driver or anyone else travelling in the vehicle would be at risk if not provided. The need for such provision should be reviewed as part of the Team Around the Child Planning and Review meeting.

5. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 PARENTS & CARERS

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that a child of statutory school age receives appropriate full-time education.

Parents/carers are responsible for understanding the provisions included within the home to school transport policy and for assessing the risks associated with their own child's journey to school.

More information for parents and carers, including a more detailed list of roles and responsibilities, can be found via the following link: - [School Transport Fife Council](#).

5.2 SCHOOLS

School staff are best placed to manage relationships with parents/carers and should be the first point of contact for all queries relating to school transport. Schools should ensure that a traffic management system is in place for their premises and included in their traffic management plan.

In addition, schools should: -

- ensure pupils are ready for the transport on time, and where required pupils are supported to/from the transport vehicle.
- promote compliance with the behaviour code of conduct.
- assist with any problems on transport e.g. misbehaviour, vandalism, etc.
- where possible have a member of staff designated to deal with school transport issues.
- advise the appropriate department/person of any changes in circumstances that may affect transport requirements immediately e.g. where transport is to be cancelled due to absence, holidays, etc.
- work in partnership with parent/carers to encourage independent travel.
- check travel pass entitlement prior to issuing a temporary travel pass.
- advise pupils of any timetable changes.
- report to the appropriate department any regular breakdowns, delays or lateness affecting their school transport services. Any non-operation of services or serious incidents involving loss of life, injury to passengers, accidents, serious damage to vehicles or emergency services' involvement must be notified immediately.

6. OTHER INFORMATION

6.1 MAXIMUM JOURNEY TIME

Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a primary school pupil is considered to range between 45 and 60 minutes and for a secondary pupil is up to 75 minutes each way. However, a pupil with additional support needs and/or a disability might require a shorter maximum journey time, dependant on their needs. Journey times may exceed these limits due to various circumstances, e.g. attending a denominational school, traffic, weather, change of address/school, etc.

6.2 PUPIL BEHAVIOUR WHEN ACCESSING SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The responsibility for ensuring safe and acceptable behaviour remains with the parents/carers of pupils travelling on a school transport vehicle. Misbehaviour or

action which could put the safety of others at risk may result in the removal of the provision of transport by the Council, on a temporary or permanent basis. In some cases, schools can employ a number of sanctions ranging from detention to exclusion to deal with persistent misbehaviour on school transport. School buses fitted with CCTV can be allocated to specific routes and footage can be used to assist any investigations. Operators may charge parents/carers for any repair costs in the event of damage caused by vandalism. Where a criminal act is suspected the police will be notified.

6.3 SCHOOL TRANSPORT SAFETY

Fife Council is responsible for the general safety and welfare of pupils during the time they are conveyed and when alighting/boarding the vehicle at their school. The Council will ensure: -

- a seat is provided for all entitled pupils.
- all bus and taxi operators are subject to detailed Conditions of Contract and are responsible for ensuring all drivers have undergone the necessary criminal record checks.
- vehicles are checked regularly for roadworthiness and independent checks conducted when required.

The seatbelt policy is followed at all times as per the annual seatbelt statement, which can be found via the following link [School Transport Fife Council](#).

6.4 WITHDRAWAL OF TRANSPORT/CORRECTION OF ERRORS

Travel assistance may be withdrawn in the following circumstances: -

- where provision has been arranged due to an error made by the Council.
- where the distance from home to school is re-measured and found to be within the relevant walking distance or where a suitable walking route has now been identified.
- where improvements have been made to a route resulting in the route becoming available for the pupil to walk, accompanied by an adult where necessary.

In these circumstances the provision will not normally be withdrawn with less than 4 weeks' notice.

Where travel assistance has been provided in error, based on false or misleading information provided by a parent/carer, which results in the pupil not being entitled to the transport, then the council reserves the right to cease the transport immediately. Any disputes based on the Council's decision should be made formally via the Council's Complaints Procedure. If the dispute is relating to an available route used to determine a walking distance, the parent/carer should include details of the specific parts of the route that they are challenging.

7. APPLICATION REVIEWS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Decisions as to the eligibility for travel assistance, the mode of assistance and other practical matters, are taken by authorised Council staff. Where a parent/carer has a query or is dissatisfied by any aspect regarding eligibility/entitlement of travel assistance, this should initially be brought to the attention of the pupil's school.

If a parent/carer is unhappy with a decision that has been made they should, in the first instance, raise their concerns with the officer or Service that has made the decision. If the matter is not resolved, then the parent/carer will be advised how to escalate their application.

Any queries/complaints relating to the operation of the transport service to/from school should initially be raised with the pupil's school, who will in turn contact Roads & Transportation Service.

In all instances, where a parent/carer is unhappy or concerned that an application has not been conducted fairly or satisfactorily, it may be escalated via the Council's complaints procedure using the following link [Fife Council Complaints Procedure](#).