

Home to School / College Transport Policy

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Policy Framework

Legal framework

The Education Act 1996 (as amended) sets out the law for the attendance of pupils at school and the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out related provision for school/learner transport in Wales. The Measure covers, amongst other things, duties on local authorities to assess learner travel needs and to make transport arrangements for defined groups of learners.

Overview

Powys County Council aims to provide safe, reliable, value for money transport to convey qualifying pupils/learners to and from school/college. These principles apply to all home to school/college transport provided by the Authority.

The Authority aims to ensure that it does not discriminate unfairly, either directly or indirectly, in the operation and interpretation of the policy.

The Authority encourages the use of school transport by eligible pupils/learners where appropriate.

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children travel to and from school safely (where they do not qualify for school transport) and to and from pick up points both in the morning and the afternoon.

Local consultation

Local consultation meetings will take place where it is proposed that a catchment area of a school should change. At these meetings a range of information will be provided, including the cost of existing arrangements and proposed options for change. This consultation may result in an amendment to the agreed policy being proposed in some cases. Any amendment would need to be approved by the relevant Council Committee.

Transitional arrangements

The following transitional arrangements will apply where a change to the catchment area is agreed to enable a pupil to complete his/her education in the school:

- to the end of the primary phase for a pupil aged 4-10
- to the end of Key Stage 4 (statutory school age) for a pupil aged 11-15
- to the end of Key Stage 5 for those learners aged 16 plus

Part One

Standard Qualifications and Definitions

Standard qualification – primary aged pupils

To qualify for school transport, primary school pupils must ordinarily reside 2 miles or more from the nearest allocated school or centre, measured by the shortest available

route. The distance will be measured from the closest access point on the public highway to the pupil's ordinary place of residence which is nearest to the school and measured to the nearest school gate. Transport is not normally provided from home but from an approved pick up point.

Feeder transport is provided for qualifying primary aged pupils whose nearest public highway point is 1 mile or more from the nearest pick up point on a main school transport route.

Where parents exercise a preference for a school other than the nearest allocated school they must make their own arrangements for transport and are responsible for all transport costs.

Standard qualification – secondary 11-16 year old pupils

To qualify for school transport, secondary school 11-16 year old pupils must ordinarily reside 3 miles or more from the nearest allocated secondary school or centre, measured by the shortest route. The distance will be measured from the closest access point on the public highway to the pupil's ordinary place of residence which is nearest to the school and measured to the nearest school gate. Transport is not normally provided from home but from an approved pick up point.

Feeder transport is provided for qualifying secondary school 11-16 year old pupils whose nearest public highway point is 2 miles or more from the nearest pick up point on a main school transport route.

Where parents exercise a preference for a school other than the nearest allocated school they must make their own arrangements for transport and are responsible for all transport costs.

Transport for 16-19 year olds

Transport is made available for full-time students who live 3 miles or more from the nearest allocated secondary school or further education college site within the County boundary offering post-16 provision. Transport is not normally provided from home but from an approved pick up point.

Feeder transport is provided for qualifying students as measured by the nearest available route who live 3 miles or more from the nearest pick up point on a main school transport route.

The Authority considers that all its secondary schools offer a relevant and adequate range of provision post-16 and no separate transport arrangements will be made because of the wish to access specific courses at alternative secondary schools.

The nearest further education college site is defined as the nearest allocated site within the County boundary to the student's home address which offers a suitable course.

Where public transport is available this will be used as first choice and a permit will be issued. Where no public transport is available then the Authority will arrange transport for eligible students.

Transport will only be provided for full-time courses, as determined by the college being attended.

No special transport arrangements will be made for part-time students but they may be able to access seats on public transport on payment of the appropriate fee.

Provision for special schools, specialist centres attached to mainstream schools and pupil referral units / complementary education bases

For special schools, specialist centres attached to mainstream schools and pupils attending the Authority's pupil referral units / complementary education bases, transport is provided on a daily basis if a pupil meets the standard qualification distance in respect of primary aged and secondary 11-16 year old pupils.

For pupils who are resident at a special school/centre within the county, transport is provided to school on Monday mornings and to return home on Friday afternoons. Provision is also made to transport residential pupils to special schools outside the County where these are agreed as appropriate placements for the pupil. For residential schools within neighbouring Authorities, transport is provided to school on Monday mornings and to return home on Friday afternoons. Where children are admitted to special schools in distant authorities, transport is provided from home to school at the beginning and end of term and during half-term holidays.

In circumstances where the LEA or Headteacher, in discussion with the Chair of Governors, temporarily closes a residential school, school transport will be provided for the pupil to return home. Where parents exercise their choice to take the pupil out of school during term time then it is the parents' responsibility to provide transport for the pupil to return home.

Where the specialist centre is the nearest school, a pupil will not receive home to school transport unless they meet the standard qualifying distance.

Where pupils are placed in specialist centres at schools which are further away from their home than their nearest allocated mainstream school, a pupil will not receive home to school transport unless they meet the standard qualifying distance.

Special arrangements for pupils with medical needs, disability or learning difficulty

The Learner Wales (Travel) Measure states that, in considering whether travel arrangements are suitable, the local authority must have regard in particular to any disability or learning difficulty of the child.

In response to this measure, pupils who live within the standard qualification distance will qualify for free transport if they meet the criteria of medical needs, disability or learning difficulty such as would render them incapable of walking the standard qualifying distance (2 miles for primary aged pupils and 3 miles for secondary aged pupils). This discretion will be managed by the Authority's Statementing Officer, on receipt of the appropriate assessments and reports. In relation to special schools, a pupil's transport needs will, in the main, be assessed as part of the annual statement review process.

Temporary medical need will be determined by the Authority's Statementing Officer as above and reviewed on a three monthly basis.

Provision of escorts on transport

- **Mainstream schools/centres**
Escorts may be provided on some vehicles to supervise pupils to and from mainstream schools/centres. The need for escorts on vehicles will be assessed by the Authority on an as and when needed basis, in accordance with statementing and ALN procedures.
- **Special schools**
Escorts will be provided on vehicles to supervise pupils on their journey to and from special schools. In most cases the need will be established during the statementing/review process and will be in accordance with the needs of the pupil. The requirements will be confirmed by the Authority's Statementing Officer.

Journey times

The Authority will aim to ensure that, except in exceptional circumstances, a pupil being transported to their nearest allocated mainstream school/centre should not normally have a single journey time of more than 45 minutes for primary schools and 60 minutes for secondary schools. Where parents express a preference for Welsh-medium education these journey times may be longer as Welsh-medium schools/streams are fewer and farther apart.

Special schools would be an exception because of their wider catchment area and pupils attending the Authority's special schools should not normally expect to have a single journey time in excess of 1 hour 15 minutes when travelling on a daily basis. Where particular medical circumstances apply which may suggest a shorter journey time then the case will be treated on its merits through the appeals procedure.

Definition of place of residence

If a child or young person has more than one home, for example where a child's parents are not living together but the child lives partly with each parent, or with a parent and also at a children's home, then both places of residence will be regarded as their place of ordinary residence. If there are more than two such places then only the two places closest to the nearest allocated school within the catchment area or further education college site will count.

A 'parent' includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility or who cares for the child or young person.

Measuring routes and mileages ('available routes')

The two and three mile limits included in the policy will be measured in the same way as the 'statutory walking distance' i.e. along the nearest available route. An available route may not necessarily be the shortest distance by road as it is measured by the shortest route that a child, accompanied by an adult as necessary, may walk in

reasonable safety. Such routes may utilise public footpaths which may not be suitable for vehicles.

Where mileages and routes have to be calculated in order to determine eligibility under the policy, the Authority will use its computerised Geographical Information System (GIS).

Part Two

Transport for Individual Circumstances

Transport related to admission appeals

The Authority will provide transport for pupils who meet the standard distance qualification criteria and are refused admission to their nearest allocated school via an admission appeal, to enable them to attend the nearest allocated alternative school.

Transport provision on school closure

Following a permanent closure of a school, transport to the named receiving school will be provided for qualifying pupils at the school at the time of closure and who meet the standard distance qualification criteria.

Transport to denominational schools

From January 2010 transport will not be provided for any new pupils to denominational schools other than those pupils who qualify under the standard qualification criteria.

Transport for early years

Transport will not be provided for pupils below the Powys school admission age.

Transport related to English / Welsh provision

- **Primary**
For those qualifying pupils who wish to receive their education through the medium of English or Welsh, transport will be provided to the nearest allocated school/centre for primary school pupils providing education through that language medium. In order to qualify pupils must meet the standard qualifying criteria.
- **Secondary**
In the secondary sector, transport will be provided for those qualifying pupils who wish to receive their education partly or fully through the medium of Welsh to the allocated secondary school providing education through that language medium as identified in the Authority's Schools Information and Admission Arrangements booklet for parents. In order to qualify pupils must meet the standard qualifying criteria.

Transport provision on safety grounds

Free transport will be provided for pupils of statutory school age where the Authority is satisfied that the route between home and school is sufficiently hazardous to warrant such provision, even though the distance is below the standard distance qualification criteria.

Transport related to pupil referral services

The Authority's pupil referral units / complementary education centres are located in Newtown and Brecon but pupils accessing the pupil referral units / complementary education centres may need to travel to different centres for provision during a week. Under these circumstances, the Authority will provide home to school transport, on a daily basis, to the educational centres attended by a pupil on a weekly basis, subject to the standard distance qualification criteria. As the complementary education arrangements can, on some occasions, be quite flexible, it may prove necessary to change educational settings and, under these circumstances, home to school transport arrangements will be changed accordingly.

Transport to meet the needs of Looked After Children

The same age and distance criteria apply to Looked After Children but there is no requirement that they attend the nearest allocated school/centre to their home. It will be for the Authority looking after a child to determine where he/she should go and that might be a school other than the nearest allocated school because, for instance, of priority to maintain continuity in their education or contact with siblings and friends.

Transport related to permanent exclusions

The Authority will provide transport for permanently excluded pupils who meet the standard distance qualification criteria to enable them to attend the nearest appropriate alternative school.

Vacant Seat Payment Scheme

Pupils who live within the statutory walking distance from school and live near or on an existing dedicated home to school transport route can apply under the Vacant Seat Payment Scheme on payment of the appropriate fee. The Vacant Seat Payment Scheme will only be available to pupils travelling under the statutory transport arrangements. The Vacant Seat Payment Scheme will only be available on contracted vehicles i.e. it will not apply on public service vehicles. Transport will be withdrawn if the seat is required for a qualifying pupil. A minimum of one weeks notice will be given. The Vacant Seat Payment Scheme fee will be waived in certain circumstances e.g. for pupils of statutory school age living within the County boundary who qualify for free school meals.

The charge for vacant seats will be reviewed annually and will reflect the average cost in line with inflation.

If pupils express a preference for a school other than the nearest allocated school they will not be entitled to apply for a vacant seat on transport facilities, even if such facilities exist.