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CEREDIGION County Council
DEPARTMENT OF LEARNING
& PARTNERSHIPS

Home to School/College Transport Policy

March 2014.

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Introduction

Whilst parents/guardians have a duty to ensure that their children attend school and to make any necessary transport arrangements, Ceredigion County Council will provide home to school transport in certain circumstances and will issue free travel passes where the home to school mileage criteria is met.

The policy is determined in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Education Act, 1996 (particularly Sections 444 and 509) and The Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.

Where reasonably possible, and in line with Government legislation, the Local Authority will endeavour to offer school places which are within reasonable access of pupils' homes.

The Local Authority aims to provide appropriate safe, efficient and cost effective transport to those pupils who qualify under this policy, and every effort will be made to ensure that this is maintained.

SECTION 1: TRANSPORT FOR MAINSTREAM PUPILS

Primary and Secondary Aged Pupils

Transport will be provided free of charge for pupils of primary and secondary school age travelling over the statutory walking distance to/from the main entrance of their nearest suitable school.

A pupil applying for assistance must be a Ceredigion resident. If he/she is attending the nearest suitable school and the distance between home and school by the shortest pedestrian route is equal to or greater than the distances indicated below, they will normally be provided with free transport

- **Primary Aged Pupils (from 5 years of age)** - 2 miles or more from the school
- **Secondary Aged Pupils** - 3 miles or more from the school

Distance is measured by the shortest walking route between home and school. (From the nearest council maintained road to the property, to the nearest school entrance onto the school site).

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 gives the local authority a power under Section 6 to make discretionary arrangements for pupils who would not otherwise qualify for free home to school transport.

This discretion will be operated in accordance with Section 6 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and paragraph 2.3 of the Welsh Government Guidance to it, and will apply to any arrangements the local authority thinks fit to facilitate the travel of learners to and from a place of education and learning.

Assistance may also be provided for pupils in certain circumstances on the grounds of: -

- capacity
- closure of school
- re-organisation of school(s)
- safety
- medical
- statement of educational needs
- a change of residence in a final examination year

- continuation of an advanced course of study not being available at the designated school
- religious beliefs (within an 8 miles radius of the school)
- post 16 students

1.1 Schools at Capacity

Free school transport will be provided when the Local Authority is unable to make arrangements for the child to become a pupil at a school nearer to his/her home which offers education suitable to his/her needs, including any special education needs he/she may have where the number of pupils already attending the establishment is at its capacity.

1.2 Closure of School

Free transport for a specified period will be considered in accordance with the published Section 12 Education Act, 1980 notice following the closure or a change in the status of a school.

1.3 Safety

Free transport may be provided on the grounds of safety. Parents must apply, in writing, to the Director of Learning and Partnerships stating their reasons. The Authority will take into account the following when considering the application: -

- age of pupil.
- nature of the route: is it dangerous and whether the child should be accompanied.

(Note: For a route to be available within the meaning of Section 39(5) Education Act, 1944, as amended by Section 199(5) Education Act, 1993, it must be a route along which a child accompanied as necessary can walk, and walk with reasonable safety to school. (It does not fail to qualify as available because of dangers, which would arise if the child were unaccompanied).

- whether the pupil is registered at the nearest school.
- the availability of public passenger services or designated school bus on which spare places may be available.

1.4 Medical Cases

Pupils requiring temporary provision due to medical needs must be referred for consideration for transport provision by their Consultant or General Practitioner.

Each case will be individually assessed.

The transport needs will be assessed by the Local Authority with advice, where necessary, from other appropriate professionals.

1.5 Special Educational Needs

The majority of pupils with Special Educational Needs will not require assistance with home to school transport. In normal circumstances only those pupils who have a statement of Special Education Needs issued by the Local Authority and where the Local Authority considers that transport is "necessary" will be provided with free school transport.

The policy seeks to develop both inclusion and independence in pupils. It is therefore in the best interest of all pupils that they are encouraged to develop educationally and socially, this includes working towards independent travel. Pupils will therefore be encouraged to achieve this as soon as possible, this will of course be in consultation with parents/guardians.

Each case will be individually assessed in relation to the pupils' school placement. The transport needs will be assessed by the Local Authority with advice, where necessary, from other appropriate professionals.

The following will be taken into consideration when deciding if a pupil/student is to be allocated free home to school transport.

- The severity of the pupil's/student's special needs.
- The distance to the school/college/placement in relation to the criteria set out in Section 1.
- Whether the journey is on a main bus route, which is accessible to the pupil/student.
- Whether the pupil/student has serious medical problems, short-term or long-term.

- Whether the pupil/student has serious difficulty with walking or general mobility difficulties.
- Whether there are any severe family/personal circumstances which impact on the pupil's/student's ability to attend school/college which should be taken into account.

1.6 Change of Address

Assistance may be provided at the time of the change of address irrespective of whether the school is located within Ceredigion or another Authority providing that all the following criteria are met.

- (i) the pupil is in Year 11.
- (ii) transfer to a school closer to home is impractical because of syllabus requirements.
- (iii) the distance between home and school by the shortest walking route is 3 miles or greater. (From the nearest council maintained road to the property, to the nearest school entrance onto the school site).

1.7 Course of Study

Assistance may be provided for pupils who undertake a course of study at the nearest suitable school but who are subsequently unable to continue with the course at an advanced level at the same school.

1.8 Religious Beliefs

The Local Authority will have regard to parental/guardian wishes in respect of denominational religious education in considering whether it is necessary for free school transport to be provided. The Local Authority will also exercise its discretion to provide free transport or travel assistance for pupils who attend the nearest school of their parents' religious denomination if it is beyond walking distance, even though they could have attended a suitable non-denominational school nearer home.

The Authority currently provides free transport for pupils of the minimum compulsory school age (i.e. 5) provided that they reside outside the statutory walking distance and not more than eight miles from the school.

1.9 Post 16 Transport

Free transport may be provided for students attending a college of further education on the same basis as 16-19 year olds attending school sixth forms if: -

- (i) a student between 16-19 years of age attends a full time course;
- (ii) the course is not available at a school or college nearer the student's home;
- (iii) the student qualifies for transport assistance according to the free transport criteria (distance).

Such provision may be made if the post 16 student: -

- is ordinarily resident in its area;
- attends the nearest school/or college (even if outside the Local Authority's Area);
- has special educational needs or other individual circumstances which made the provision of free transport necessary.

Assistance for both secondary and college students of the age group 16-19 may be provided "by the most efficient means" i.e. to include:-

- conveyance by contract vehicles;
- conveyance by public transport;
- payment of travelling expenses for conveyance by parent/own car.

Where a pupil/student entitled to free transport reside 1.5 miles or more from the nearest pick-up point consideration may be given to the provision of a taxi from home to the pick up point.

SECTION 2: GENERAL

2.1 Parental Preference

The Council recognises its obligations under the Education Act, 1996, to comply with parental preferences regarding choice of school. *However, parents/guardians choosing a school further away from their home than the nearest suitable school available will be responsible for transport costs and arrangements to and from that school*

2.2 Seat Belts

All designated school transport vehicles are provided with seat belts.

It should be noted that: -

- i) seat belts must be worn.
- ii) it is the responsibility of each individual pupil to ensure that he/she is wearing a seat belt.

2.3 Behaviour

In the provision of a transport service, staff and service users can expect fair and equitable treatment. Harassment of any form will not be tolerated. Abuse and violence of/to staff and/or service users and damage to vehicles will not be accepted. Pupils' behaviour while in transit which results in any of the above may result in that pupil's transport being withdrawn (see document "School Transport - A guide for Parents/Guardians and Pupils") and/or charges for damage being passed on to the parents/guardians of those responsible. The Authority may refuse to transport pupils displaying aggressive or dangerous behaviour, other than where this is symptomatic of the pupils identified special needs.

2.4. Cross Border Provision

The Local Authority will provide free transport to any pupil or student over the age of 5 years who lives more than 2 miles(Primary) or 3 miles(Secondary) from the school or college at which he/she is registered. This will include free transport where the nearest suitable school or college is in the district of another Local Authority.

However, if the Local Authority makes suitable arrangements under Section 39(2)(c) Education Act, 1944, as amended by Section 199 Education Act, 1993, to register the pupil/student at a school or college nearer to his/her home, and within walking distance of his/her home, there is no duty imposed on the LEA to provide transport or to pay the travelling expenses

2.5. Cameras

CCTV have been installed in certain contract vehicles.

The aim of the exercise is to

- ensure the safety of passengers and drivers.
- identify individuals who by virtue of their unacceptable behaviour contravene the behaviour code of the Local Authority and possibly in the worst-case scenario endanger the lives of other passengers. Where such individuals are identified the action that could be taken by the Local Authority is set out the document "School Transport - A guide for Parents/Guardians and Pupils".

2.6 Spare Seat Passengers

Pupils: -

- (a) attending a school other than the nearest suitable school
- (b) living within the statutory walking distance

are generally not entitled to free transport. Consideration will however be given, following application to the Authority, to travel free of charge on Local Authority contracted vehicles if there are spare places available.

The concession is granted on the understanding that should the Local Authority's requirements change then the concession would cease and the responsibility for transport would revert to the parents.

2.7 Complaints

All complaints regarding home to school transport from pupils, parents, members of the public, drivers, etc will be investigated. Concerns can be raised through contacting the following or via the school. (This information is available in the handbook " School Transport – A Guide for Parents/Guardians and Pupils")

Complaints regarding pupil behaviour

Complaints regarding drivers

Complaints in relation to vehicles used for school transport

Complaints/queries regarding Car Escorts

**Corporate Passenger
Transport Unit**

(01970 633555)

2.8 Use of Public Transport

The majority of pupils entitled to assistance will be conveyed by vehicles specifically contracted to the Local Authority however use may also be made of public passenger transport or a fixed rate mileage allowance may be made for parents/pupils making use of their own vehicles.

2.9 Pick-up Point

Where contract or public passenger vehicles are used then it is not always possible to arrange the routes of vehicles to pass close to the home of all pupils. Parents may therefore be required to make their own arrangements for their children to get to and from the nearest 'pick-up' point of the vehicle. Every effort is made to keep this distance to a minimum and it should not exceed 1.5 miles.

IN THESE INSTANCES THE ASSISTANCE OF PARENTS IN ESCORTING PUPILS SAFELY TO AND FROM VEHICLES IS SOUGHT.

The handbook " School Transport – A Guide for Parents/Guardians and Pupils" is available from the Local Authority offering advice and guidance for pupils/students and parents on what they can do in order that the journey to and from school/college may be undertaken safely.

2.10 Appeals

Parents are requested to note that they may appeal against a decision to refuse to provide free transport. Such an appeal should be submitted with any supporting evidence to the Director of Learning & Partnerships within 28 days of being notified of the original decision.

