

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

Introduction

The provision of an effective school transport system is an important responsibility of the Education Department and contributes towards our vision of *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving Through Excellent Experiences*.

The Education Department's School Transport Service has responsibility for ensuring the provision of home to school transport, making sure all eligible pupils are able to travel to and from school safely. The School Transport Policy outlines the eligibility criteria, provision and responsibilities for school transport for pupils accessing both mainstream and ASN schools.

All school transport provision is arranged in line with the Council's statutory responsibilities, set out in legislation, most notably through the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.¹

This policy relates to transport between a pupil's home address and the school. Transport throughout the school day, for example, school trips or transport for consortium arrangements are not in the scope of this policy.

Principles of School Transport

In providing school transport, the Education Department will consider our responsibilities under each of the four key principles:

- All school transport is put in place to meet the needs of pupils first and foremost. It is not intended to address any parental or childcare need.
- School transport will be provided in a way which seeks to minimise the time pupils spend being transported to and from school where possible.
- School transport will be organised in line with the Council's statutory responsibilities in ensuring Best Value.
- The Education Department will be mindful of the Council's environmental responsibilities and commitments in the provision of school transport.

¹ Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 sets out the legislative duties in the provision of school transport. Section 42 of the Act sets out the distance criteria for walking distances, whereby transport must be provided.

Mainstream Transport

1. Legislative

- 1.1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 sets out the legislative basis on which school transport requires to be provided. The Act specifies that transport provision is to be provided for children aged up to 8 years old who live 2 miles or more from their allocated school and for those aged over 8 who live 3 miles or more from their local school.
- 1.2. Transport is only required to be provided to the allocated school. Where a pupil attends an alternate school as a result of a successful placing request, transport does not require to be provided.

2. Eligibility for School Transport within East Renfrewshire

School transport is provided for pupils to support their travel to and from school in the following circumstances:

2.1 Distance

- 2.1.1 The pupil lives 2 miles or more from their allocated primary school via the shortest safe walking route.
- 2.1.2 The pupil lives 3 miles or more from their local allocated secondary school via the shortest safe walking route.

2.2 Redirected Pupils

- 2.2.1 Where a pupil is redirected from their catchment school to an alternative school and where they reside beyond the normal distance eligibility criteria, transport will be provided.
- 2.2.2 This transport will only be provided for the period in which the pupil is redirected. In the event that a redirected pupil is offered a place at their catchment school as a consequence of a place becoming available, but the parent/carer or young person decides to remain at the redirected school, in such situations, the child will no longer be regarded as a redirected child and will be removed from the redirected list; school transport will cease to be provided.

2.3 Exceptional Support

- 2.3.1 In exceptional circumstances, where a pupil faces challenges with travelling to school due to a significant medical condition or injury, a request for short term transport can be made. This may include where a pupil has sustained an injury or is experiencing another significant medical condition.
- 2.3.2 Any request should initially be made to the school directly to consider what support may require to be made available.
- 2.3.3 As part of assessment, the ability of the parent or carer to support the pupil's transport to school will be taken into consideration. In addition, medical evidence may be requested to support the application for time-limited school transport.
- 2.3.4 Where any such requests are granted, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and will only be awarded for a period of up to 3 months.

3. Safe Walking Routes

- 3.1. Where required, safe walking routes will be assessed by the Education Department's Health and Safety Advisor, in line with the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum Guidelines. The distance will be measured from the entrance to a property's garden to the nearest suitable entrance to the school grounds.
- 3.2. Any appeal on the suitability of an existing safe walking route can be made to the Education Department's School Transport Service. Where a material change has occurred in the route, this will be reassessed in line with the above outlined process.
- 3.3. Where a route has been assessed as a safe walking route by the department's Health and Safety Advisor and is less than the distance limit outlined above, transport will not be made available.

4. Privilege Transport

- 4.1. The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 enables local authorities to make any surplus capacity on any existing school transport available for purchase by pupils with no other existing eligibility. Within East Renfrewshire, this is known as privilege school transport. Privilege transport will only be made available where there is no additional cost to East Renfrewshire Council.
- 4.2. Privilege school transport is only available where there is surplus capacity on any existing school transport and, as such, is not available for all schools. Where privilege school transport is able to be made available, the capacity is limited and it is often not possible for all requests to be granted.
- 4.3. There is no right or guarantee to privilege school transport and it is always awarded on a temporary basis. Access to privilege transport does not confer any ongoing right to this service in subsequent years.
- 4.4. Privilege school transport is only made available after all pupils with an eligibility have been granted a place at the beginning of a new school session. Following this process, where surplus spaces are available, details will be advertised on the Council's website and communicated through individual schools. Applications for privilege school transport can be made directly to the Education Department's School Transport Service.
- 4.5. All pupils wishing to access privilege transport are required to submit an application for each school session. This includes pupils who have previously used the service.
- 4.6. Privilege transport is allocated by means of a ballot of all received applications. Full details on the allocation of places is available through the scheme's terms and conditions.
- 4.7. A daily charge is applied for pupils who access privilege school transport. Where this charge is not paid, the service will be withdrawn.
- 4.8. Any privilege school transport is allocated on a termly basis. Due to the need to ensure that those with an eligibility to school transport can be accommodated on existing school transport, it is not possible to guarantee that privilege school transport will continue beyond any existing allocation. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for privilege school transport to be withdrawn during a school term.
- 4.9. The terms and conditions for the privilege school transport scheme are available on the Council's website and will be shared with all parents/carers accessing the scheme.

5. Placing Requests

- 5.1. There is no school transport for pupils attending an alternative to their allocated school by means of a successful placing request.
- 5.2. School transport is not available for pupils residing out with East Renfrewshire Council.
- 5.3. Where an East Renfrewshire resident pupil attends either Calderwood Lodge Primary School or Thornliebank Gaelic Primary School by means of a successful placing request, transport will be provided where the pupils resides 2 or more miles from either school, due to both schools' authority wide catchment area.

6. Out of Authority Provision

- 6.1. School transport will not normally be provided in circumstances where a pupil attends a school outwith East Renfrewshire.

Gaelic Medium Education Provision

- 6.2. Where a pupil attends GME provision which is not offered within East Renfrewshire, transport will be provided.

7. Early Learning & Childcare Transport

- 7.1. Transport is not provided for children attending early learning and childcare. Families are able to access a range of different types of locally available provision within their Early Learning and Childcare Community.

8. School Transport Provision

Types of Provision

- 8.1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 indicates that school transport can be made available through a range of different types of provision. This includes, but is not limited to: dedicated school buses, service buses, trains or individual or shared minicab services. Where a service (or public) bus or train is used, a pass will be provided where required.
- 8.2. Where an appropriate public service bus is available, this may be allocated as school transport provision. In such circumstances, the pupil would be expected to use the National Entitlement Card to access this service.
- 8.3. Where alternative provision is not available, in exceptional circumstances, the Education Department may also offer mileage costs to parents/carers who are able to transport their own children to school. Any such request for mileage should be submitted to the School Transport Service and will be considered in line with the principles outlined in the policy.
- 8.4. Where a pupil has an eligibility to transport, it will be made available via the provision outlined above. All transport will be allocated in line with the needs of the pupil. There is normally no choice offered in the type of provision that would be preferred.

Collection and Drop-off Locations

- 8.5. Pupils will be required to travel to and from a designated pick-up/drop-off location to access school transport. This distance will be in line with the existing distance criteria outlined in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.

- 8.6. Parents/carers are responsible for pupils' safe travel to and from the allocated location. Where a pupil is unable to travel to and from the location independently, the parent/carer must ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place.²
- 8.7. School transport will not normally collect and drop-off pupils from an individual home address.

Transport outwith Normal Hours

- 8.8. School transport will normally cover a return journey on each school day; to school in the morning and back to the drop off location in the afternoon. Arrangements may be made by schools to cover pupils taking part in activities outwith the course of a normal school day; however this will be considered on a case by case basis. The costs of additional transport accrued because of extra-curricular provision will not normally be met by the Council.
- 8.9. School transport will not normally be provided for pupils attending appointments through the course of the school day and it would be the responsibility of the parent/carer to arrange for transport in such circumstances.

Applying for Transport

- 8.10. Applications for school transport are only required to be made for pupils starting either P1 or S1. There is no requirement for an annual application to be made.
- 8.11. Where a family's circumstances change, for example, moving to a separate address or different school, an application for school transport can be made on the Council's website. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school of any changes to their home address and this must be submitted as quickly as possible.

Accessing Transport

- 8.12. Where a pupil is accessing a public service, they will be required to have a valid National Entitlement Card. This card provides free access to bus travel and, where necessary, a train pass will be allocated to this card.
- 8.13. Responsibility for applying for and maintaining this card sits with individual parents/carers and pupils. Where a pupil loses or forgets their card, they may be charged for or denied travel. A lost card should be reported to the Education Department to ensure the existing travel pass is deactivated.

Escorts

- 8.14. Escorts will not normally be present on mainstream school transport services.

Cancellations

- 8.15. Where a pupil travels via a minicab or small vehicle service and is not requiring school transport for a particular day, notice should be provided to the driver of the vehicle wherever possible. Where this is not possible, the School Transport Service should be advised as far in advance as is possible.

² Scottish Government, *School Transport Guidance* (2021), para 8

ASN Transport

Transport may be provided for pupils who have additional support needs which means they need help travelling to and from school.

“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. The journey to and from school should not be underestimated in the role that it plays in building confidence in young people to travel more independently, which may help them access higher and further education and, ultimately, support with employment.”³

9. Legislative Context

- 9.1. Local authorities 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. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from the learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances; or social and emotional factors.
- 9.2. Under this duty, local authorities should consider if a pupil has been assessed as having additional support needs and, if so, whether this would also include the need for school transport.

10. Accessing School Transport

- 10.1. School transport is primarily provided for pupils based on the distance which they live from their catchment school. However, in addition to the distance criteria, school transport can be provided due to:
 - Placement within a school
 - Additional support needs
- 10.2. The distance criteria applies to all children, whether attending a mainstream or ASN school, however, in some circumstances, it may be that a pupil will be considered for transport due to the nature and extent of their additional support needs as detailed below:
 - The pupil has a physical or sensory impairment or a severe, profound or multiple learning difficulty which requires specialist transport arrangements;
 - The pupil has a disability which prevents them from accessing the transport generally available to take other pupils to the school;
 - The pupil attends a specialist provision or school (distance criteria will still apply);
 - In exceptional circumstances, the parent/carer is unable to transport the pupil to school.

Placement within a School

- 10.3. Where a pupil is placed in a school which is not their catchment school and the distance between the residence and school is greater than the distance criteria, transport will be provided. This applies to pupils attending Isobel Mair School, Carlibar Communication Support Service, Carolside Communication Support Service, and Williamwood Communication Support Service.

³ Scottish Government, *School Transport Guidance* (2021), para 24

- 10.4. Transport will not normally be provided for those pupils who reside within the distance criteria. Only in cases where a pupil is assessed as requiring school transport (section 10.6) would this be provided.

Assessment for School Transport based on Additional Support Needs

- 10.5. Many children with identified additional support needs who attend mainstream school will be able to make use of mainstream transport to travel to and from school, ensuring inclusion and encouraging independence.
- 10.6. Where a pupil with additional support needs does not have eligibility for school transport based on the distance criteria, the parent/carer can request an assessment for school transport and should contact the school directly. Information will be collated from a range of relevant sources including: parents/carers; school staff; community and allied health professionals who are involved with the child or young person; and the Educational Psychology Service if the child or young person is known to them or is an open case.
- 10.7. Any assessment will include consideration of the nature and extent of the child's additional support needs, and the assessed impact of transport on a child's transition to and from school.

11. Transport Provision

Types of Provision

- 11.1. For pupils accessing ASN transport, this will normally be provided through either a private shared minicab service; a larger minibus vehicle; or an adapted minibus or other such vehicle. The specific type of vehicle provided will be suitable for the assessed needs of the pupils travelling. All legislation regarding the safety of wheelchair users is considered in allocating school transport. In addition, current guidelines around the safe transportation of oxygen are also adhered to at all times.
- 11.2. Where a pupil has an eligibility to transport, it will be made available via the provision outlined above. Emphasis will be placed on the safety, sensitive care and comfort of the pupil travelling. There is normally no choice offered in the type of transport provision that would be preferred. Should the needs of a pupil change to the extent that they require alternative transport provision, this should be discussed in the first instance with the school directly. This may require to be assessed before any changes can be implemented.
- 11.3. The type of vehicle used will also be informed by the number of pupils from the local community also requiring to access the service. This will be balanced with the need to ensure that time spent on school transport remains appropriate. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and the allocated transport may be altered throughout the session where improvements to journey times can be made.
- 11.4. Consideration will be given to a parent/carer transporting a pupil to school where they have access to a Mobility vehicle. This is particularly suitable for those pupils with an adapted or specialist vehicle. Where this arrangement is in place, the parent/carer will be provided with a mileage rate. This will be in line with the Council's mileage rate paid for staff travel.

Out of Authority Provision

- 11.5. Where a pupil has been placed in a school outwith East Renfrewshire, transport will be provided. This transport may be shared where more than one pupil is attending the same school.

Collection & Drop-off Locations

- 11.6. Pupils will normally be required to travel to designated collection and drop-off locations to access school transport. Parents/carers are responsible for making arrangements for the pupil's travel to and from the pick-up/drop-off location. The parent/carer should consider the appropriateness of any pupil travelling to this location independently and, where they are unable to do so, the parent/carer must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place.⁴
- 11.7. Appropriate locations will be identified within close proximity to the pupil's home address. All locations will be accessible via a safe walking route from the pupil's home address and, where possible, will be based at existing bus shelters. This will provide shelter in the event of inclement weather whilst waiting to be collected.
- 11.8. Consideration will be given to establishing alternate locations, for example at a local school, where this is more appropriate and accessible. Parents/carers can make such requests to the School Transport Service. Such arrangements will only be possible on the provision that there is no detrimental impact to the wider operation of the service.
- 11.9. Only where a pupil has been specifically assessed as unable to travel to and from the pick-up/drop-off location will consideration be given to arranging a collection at or near the home address. It is automatically assumed that all children attending Isobel Mair School will meet this threshold and will therefore all be collected and dropped off at their home address.
- 11.10. Where a parent/carer is not at the allocated location at the end of the day to collect the pupil, the driver or escort will initially look to establish contact with the parent/carer to arrange for them to collect their child. In the event that contact is not made and no alternative provision is in place, the driver/escort will contact the Education Department who will identify an appropriate drop-off location in conjunction with HSCP colleagues.

Escorts

- 11.11. Escorts will only be provided on any school transport to look after pupils specifically assessed as requiring supervision. This may include medical or safety needs.
- 11.12. Whilst an escort may offer support to a pupil in accessing the vehicle, they will not collect a pupil from a home address or undertake any such similar duties.
- 11.13. Escorts will normally only be provided on larger vehicles on which a number of pupils travel. In smaller vehicles, there is normally no requirement for an escort to be provided.
- 11.14. Appropriate training and support is available for all escorts (including those employed by East Renfrewshire Council and those on contracted services) to ensure the ongoing safety of all pupils travelling on dedicated school transport.
- 11.15. Where more specialist support is required due to more complex individual needs, this will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with health professionals.

⁴ Scottish Government, *School Transport Guidance* (2021), para 25

Applications

- 11.16. For the majority of pupils accessing ASN school transport, there is normally no requirement for an application to be submitted. The provision of transport is normally arranged by the School Transport Service on confirmation of the pupil's attendance at the specific school.
- 11.17. Where there is no assumed eligibility to ASN school transport, an application for provision can be made through the Council's website or by contacting the school directly.

Cancellations

- 11.18. It is required that parents/carers contact the operator if the pupil does not require school transport due to illness or other reasons to avoid any undue cost to East Renfrewshire Council. Where this is not possible, parents/carers should contact the School Transport Service directly.

Administration of Medication

- 11.19. Medication cannot be administered by operators or escorts under any circumstances unless they have been fully trained and authorised by the Education Department to do so in respect to the specific pupil. Operators should be advised of any medical condition which may impact on the pupil during the course of the journey.

12. Early Learning & Childcare Transport

- 12.1. Transport is not provided for children attending early learning and childcare. Any exceptional requests for ASN transport to an early learning and childcare specialist service will be considered by the Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) as part of the wider consideration of the most appropriate placement for a child.

Temporary & Short Term Transport

13. Transport may occasionally require to be provided for pupils who would not normally qualify under the school transport policy. This can be for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to:
- Short term injury impacting mobility (section 2.3)
 - Housing referrals
 - Social work referrals
- 13.1. Where a pupil is displaced from their home address, for example due to domestic violence/crisis, homelessness or foster/kinship care arrangements, transport may be provided in the short term to enable the pupil to continue to attend their school. It is recognised that this continuity will be important during such challenging periods. The need for transport will be considered by the Education Department in conjunction with the pupil's school. Any such requests will require to be supported by the relevant service (for example, social worker or housing officer). It is essential any such requests are supported by the appropriate Head of Service/Senior Manager within the relevant service.

- 13.2. Where the need for transport is agreed by the Education Department, signed off by the Head of Service/Education Senior Manager, consideration will initially be given to any existing transport options available. This will be through the availability of public transport options. It is possible that existing public transport could provide a link to other existing school transport services which may be able to be accessed. A parent/carer may be asked to consider alternative means of transport to support the pupil's journey to and from school, including support from other families. It is only in exceptional circumstances that dedicated transport will be made available.
- 13.3. Where there are any additional costs associated with the provision of such transport, the relevant service, either Housing Services or Social Work Services, will be liable for 50% of the cost of the provision. This will be agreed in advance of the transport being made available and will require to be approved by an appropriate senior officer in the respective department.
- 13.4. Any transport provided under such arrangements will be in place for an initial period of up to 4 weeks. The arrangement must be reviewed following each 4 week period up to a maximum of 3 months. It is expected that alternative transport arrangements will be established in advance of the end of the 3 month period. Where transport arrangements are required beyond the 3 month period, this will require to be approved by a Head of Service following consideration of any exceptional circumstances.

Pupil Behaviour when Accessing School Transport

14. Parents/carers have a vital role in working alongside the Education Department to ensure that school transport is safe and accessible for all eligible pupils. Parents/carer should encourage all pupils to behave in an appropriate way to their needs at all times when accessing school transport and emphasise the importance of safety, reminding pupils to be vigilant when board or leaving the vehicle.
15. Where pupil behaviour does not meet the appropriate standard, the Education Department may suspend access to school transport, with the parent/carer assuming responsibility for their children travelling to and from school. Where pupils with additional support needs are not able to manage their behaviour in a safe manner whilst accessing transport, the Education Department will work with the school and parent/carer to consider the behaviour needs and best way to support the pupil. This may involve consideration of alternative means of provision where appropriate.

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

16. Parents/carers have a number of responsibilities in ensuring that pupils are able to access school transport safely.
 - 16.1. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure pupils can travel to and from the transport pick up and drop off location safely, and ensure that there is someone at home to receive them. Where a parent/carer has a concern about their child's ability to travel independently to any pick up location, they should ensure appropriate arrangements are put in place.

- 16.2. For those circumstances in which a parent/carer considers their child able to travel independently, they must ensure that they prepare them by ensuring they are aware of and follow the safest walking route, crossing at the most appropriate places and behaving responsibly whilst waiting to be picked up. In such circumstances, parents/carers must ensure that they have discussed with their child what to do if the transport does not arrive or if they fail to access the transport for any particular reason.
- 16.3. Where, as a result of persistent inappropriate behaviour, school transport provision is withdrawn, the parent/carer will assume responsibility for making and/or paying for alternative transport provision.

Contractual Arrangements & Conditions

17. Contracts & Procurement

- 17.1. School transport is delivered by a number of different providers, contracted through the Council's transport partner SPT and by the Council directly. Each provider is required to align with the Council's procurement specifications. This includes specifications around the operation of the contract, safety of the provision and vehicle specifications.
- 17.2. All drivers and escorts are required to complete a PVG Disclosure process to ensure the safety of all pupils accessing school transport. This is monitored by SPT and individual providers as part of the condition of the contract.
- 17.3. The Education Department works with SPT and individual providers to monitor performance and ensure compliance with contract specification. Where a provider is not meeting the contract specification, for example due to time delays, either SPT or the Education Department directly will engage with the provider to monitor performance and seek improvements where possible.

18. Vehicle Timetable

- 18.1. Tender specifications normally allow a 10 minute time band within which pupils must be picked up or set down with the middle of the band being the preferred time. Given the volume of traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, there can be occasions where school transport is unavoidably delayed.
- 18.2. The Education Department expects all pupils to arrive at school before the start of the school day and all timetables are designed to achieve this. Unfortunately, at the beginning of each session, there can be a degree of short term disruption as providers and pupils adjust to new routes. Whilst in most cases this will resolve itself very quickly, where this is not the case, the Education Department will work with providers to ensure any necessary adjustments are made.

Complaints

19. Where a parent/carer or pupil is unhappy or concerned about school transport provision, they should follow the department's complaints procedure.
 - 19.1. For mainstream school transport, complaints should initially be made to the pupil's school directly. The school will record the complaint and send it on to SPT who will investigate the complaint with the operator directly. The complaint may also be sent directly to SPT, using their own complaints policy. Where the issue cannot be resolved by the school in conjunction with SPT, the complaint can be raised directly with the Education Department. This should be completed in line with the Council's complaints policy, available online.
 - 19.2. For complaints related to the provision of ASN or temporary transport, these should initially be raised with the pupil's school who will aim to offer an initial resolution. Where the issue is not resolved, the complaint should be raised through the Council's complaints procedure, available online.