



every **child** matters
a brighter future for Norfolk's young people

2009/10

Norfolk County Council

School & College

Transport Policy



Norfolk County Council
at your service

School and College Transport Policy 2009/10

CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Page Nos.</u>
1.	General transport policy	2
2.	Assessing eligibility for children of compulsory school age	2/3
3.	Assessing eligibility for post 16 students	3
4.	Pupils with special transport needs	3/4
5.	Post 16 students with special transport needs	4
6.	Other transport assistance	5
6.1	Attending a school preferred on denominational grounds	5
6.2	When a school reorganisation takes place	6
6.3	Purchase of spare seats	6
6.4	Exceptional circumstances	6
6.5	Unavailable walking routes	7
6.6	Schools full situation	7
6.7	Authorised school transfers	7
7.	Transport grants for cycling	7
8.	Fuel allowances	7
9.	Payment of contributions towards transport costs	8
10.	Travelling times	8
11.	Distance to transport pick up points	8
12.	Behaviour whilst travelling	8
13.	Review procedure	8/9
14.	Sustainable Transport	9
<u>Appendix</u>		
1	Journey Information	10/12

1. General Transport Policy

The general policy of the county council is:

- Free transport is provided for eligible children of compulsory school age (5 to 16 years)
- Free transport is provided when a child starts school at age 4 years if they will be 5 yrs old before 31 August that year. Midday journeys to support part time attendance are not normally provided
- For students aged 16 -19 years the county council operates a subsidised transport scheme on existing local bus or train services or education transport contract vehicles
- For students aged 16 – 21 years who have learning difficulties or disabilities, subsidised transport may be provided for any special transport arrangements that are necessary to meet their needs.

The county council has the power to provide transport support outside of the general policy on a discretionary basis. Such requests will be assessed individually and must fall into the criteria outlined in section 6 of this document.

2. How we assess transport eligibility for children of compulsory school age

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

- 1.1 Under 8 years of age and living more than 2 miles from school or
- 1.2 8 years of age and over and living more than 3 miles from school
- 1.3 Primary school pupils aged 8 and over who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit are eligible for free transport to their nearest appropriate school more than 2 miles from their home
- 1.4 Secondary school pupils who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit are eligible for free transport to:
 - (a) one of 3 appropriate schools closest to their home, where this is more than 2 and less than 6 miles away
 - or
 - (b) the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief where this is more than 2 and less than 15 miles from their home

Please note:

- The ages are taken on 1st September in each school year
- The nearest school is determined by the shortest available walking route to the school, measured from front door to nearest school entrance
- The qualifying distances stated at 2.4 will be measured by the shortest route by road (ie over 2 and under 6 or 15 miles)

- Parents are required to ensure their children get to and from the nearest vehicle boarding point (see s.11)
- Transport to schools of parental preference, except those stated at 2.4, is the responsibility of parents and guardians
- A pupil's home address is the address of their main residence. Where a child lives with separated parents who have shared responsibility, the home address is considered as the one that the child lives at for most of the calendar week. Where a child lives for an equal amount of time with each parent, the home address will be considered as that of the parent who receives child benefit in respect of the child concerned. Evidence of this will be required to support the application.

3. How we assess transport eligibility for post 16 students

Subsidised transport is available on existing local bus or train services or education transport contract vehicles to students who are seeking to progress to further study. Transport services operate from defined points or as a "main road" type of service. It is the family's responsibility to make provision to reach the nearest pick up point.

To qualify a student must:

- Live in Norfolk
- Live at least three miles from a state funded school sixth form, a sixth form college or a further education college, as measured by the nearest walking route
- Be under 19 years of age at 31st August or 21 years for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Transport will be provided up to the end of the course year in which the student reaches 19 years (or 21 years for those with learning difficulties or disabilities)
- Be attending a full time course (i.e. a minimum of 12 hours per week of supervised study)
- Be attending:
 - their local designated school sixth form,
 - another school sixth form within ten miles of their home, or
 - a sixth form college or further education college within twenty five miles of their home.

Any financial support for a student seeking to take a course outside of the specified distances will be at the discretion of the county council.

A student contribution is payable towards transport costs. See S.9 for how to access up to date payment information and current contribution rates.

This policy does not apply to higher education courses such as degree courses, higher certificate and diploma courses, work placements or workplace apprenticeships.

Transport support will be provided for standard academic terms only. Access to courses outside of these times will have to be discussed directly with the establishments attended.

4. Provision for pupils with special transport needs

The county council will consider applications for specialist transport assistance on an individual basis.

For pupils of compulsory school age, transport will be provided if a Statement of Special Educational Needs indicates that specific transport should be provided to enable a pupil to attend the school named within their Statement as the nearest appropriate school that can meet the pupil's educational needs, and that school is over the qualifying distance. This does not apply to a school named within a Statement as a school of parental preference. Transport to schools of parental preference is the responsibility of parents and guardians.

For students progressing to post 16 education a review of transport needs will be undertaken in the secondary school leaving year (see s.5 for further details).

All pupils/students will be expected to undertake travel independence training unless they are assessed, by professional advisers, as being unlikely to benefit from such training.

The county council operates the TITAN travel training programme and details of the programme can be obtained from school SEN Co-ordinators (SENco) or from the travel training team on 01603 433276.

5. How we assess special transport needs for post 16 students

The county council will consider any difficulty or disability that prevents a pupil/student from travelling safely e.g.

- Any significant mobility difficulties that may prevent a pupil/student from using public transport (e.g. unable to walk to a pickup point)
- Any significant sensory/communication difficulties that may prevent a pupil/student from using public transport (e.g. sight, hearing, social and/or inappropriate behavioural or communication difficulties), in a safe manner
- if the pupil/student is “at risk” to themselves or others in using public transport independently.

Travel independence training will be available for those students who are assessed as being likely to benefit from it. Part of the assessment of transport needs will include the potential for the student to travel on public services or contract buses following travel independence training.

During the secondary school leaving year, the Connexions Personal Adviser and student, in conjunction with the school, other professionals and the parents/guardians will review Post 16 options. Subject to the student being eligible under S.3 the assessment of transport needs in order to access the post 16 provision will be made at this time and the Connexions Personal Adviser will complete the assessment form which will be submitted to Norfolk County Council for consideration.

For those students continuing at a special school beyond the age of 16, transport will continue to be provided in the same or a similar way to how it has been provided at the secondary phase of schooling, subject to a review of needs. Students beyond the compulsory school age of 16 years will be expected to pay the standard post 16 student contribution towards their transport. Concessions are available for low income families.

The county council will consider applications for specialist transport assistance on an individual basis.

6. Other Transport Assistance

Pupils and students who do not qualify under the county council's general policy for free transport may receive assistance with transport at the discretion of the county council under certain circumstances such as:

- Attending a school preferred on denominational grounds who do not qualify for support under S.2
- When a school reorganisation takes place
- Ineligible pupils/students wishing to purchase spare seats on vehicles transporting eligible pupils/students
- Exceptional circumstances eg an unavoidable move to temporary accommodation, social care issues, severe medical problems
- A home to school route is assessed by the county council as being unsuitable for walking, accompanied as necessary, due to safety factors
- If the catchment school is full
- Children with special educational needs who live under the qualifying distances and have been assessed as having specific transport needs
- When a pupil undergoes a school transfer managed by the county council.

6.1 Attending a school preferred on denominational grounds

The county council's general policy does not provide free transport for children attending a school on denominational grounds. (Please see S.2.4 for attendance at secondary schools on religion or belief grounds). We will consider providing some assistance if all of the following apply:

- A parent/carer or pupil adheres to the denomination for which the school provides regular collective worship
- The transport application is supported by evidence eg baptismal certificate or a letter from a person of authority within the appropriate religion eg clergy or diocesan representative
- The pupil fulfils the distance and age criteria detailed in the general policy at section 2
- The pupil lives within a radius of 20 miles at primary school stage or 25 miles at secondary school stage (measured from the school to home in a straight line)
- The pupil can travel within the maximum travelling time criteria of 45 minutes at primary school stage and 75 minutes at secondary school stage from door to door
- The school is the nearest maintained school of the family's stated religion and denomination

Travel assistance will normally be a travel pass for the nearest available bus or train service on payment of the appropriate contribution from parents. In exceptional circumstances a grant may be paid to parents for taking their child to school.

Parents are responsible for getting their children to and from the nearest transport pick up points.

6.2 When a school reorganisation takes place

The county council may use its discretion to provide transport assistance for pupils affected by any schools reorganisation including

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

Only pupils directly affected by these changes at the time they are made will be considered for transport assistance.

Arrangements will differ depending on the specific situation at the time.

All parents of those pupils deemed by the county council to be directly affected will be notified of the proposed arrangements prior to the changes being implemented. The level and duration of assistance will be determined by the county council's Cabinet committee.

6.3 Purchase of spare seats for pupils/students

Pupils/students who are not eligible for transport under the general policy may be invited to purchase spare seats on contracted vehicles transporting eligible pupils/students in return for a contribution towards the cost.

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

- Sixth form or college students who meet the basic eligibility criteria for the Post 16 travel scheme
- Siblings of eligible pupils from the same address already travelling on the same vehicle
- Under distance pupils (low income concessions apply for this category of pupil)
- Pupils attending a school of parental preference (it is not necessary for such pupils to be resident in Norfolk but priority will be given to those who are)

In all cases, priority in each category will be given to those who have been travelling in the previous academic year. For under distance pupils those living the furthest distance away will be given next priority and for pupils attending a school of parental preference next priority will be given to those living nearest the school attended.

6.4 Exceptional circumstances

Temporary assistance will be considered in cases of exceptional circumstances such as where a family has undergone a sudden unexpected change in circumstances eg

- An unavoidable move to the nearest available temporary accommodation, when any assistance will be limited to a period of no more than eight weeks
- Severe medical problems
- Social care issues
- Unavoidable home move (evidence required) when a pupil is in yr 10 or 11 and cannot be accommodated in a local school providing an appropriate similar GCSE curriculum

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

Cases will be reviewed at any natural break point within an academic year ie half term break or end of term or at a suitable point appropriate to a particular situation ie 4 weeks after a pupil has suffered a broken leg.

6.5 Unavailable walking routes

If a route to school is assessed as being unavailable for walking due to safety factors, the county council may provide free transport. This will only apply to compulsory school age pupils attending their catchment or nearest appropriate school. Any such route will be assessed based on primary age pupils being accompanied by an adult.

Whilst a route is undergoing the assessment stage, parents will be responsible for ensuring that their children get to school using a safe mode of travel.

Unavailable walking routes will be reviewed on a regular basis and if a route becomes suitable it will become the parent's responsibility to get the pupil to school. The county council will give a minimum of two week's notice in such circumstances to allow time for new travel arrangements to be made.

6.6 Schools full situation

If the catchment and nearest appropriate schools are full, transport will be provided to the next nearest school, in accordance with the general policy. This arrangement will continue until the end of the pupil's current phase of schooling ie infant, junior, secondary.

Siblings of children accommodated in alternative primary phase schools under a schools full situation will be entitled to transport support, in accordance with the general policy, providing this would result in them spending a minimum of 2 years at the same school together and on condition that there are places available within the appropriate year group.

6.7 Authorised School Transfers

The county council will only consider providing transport support for pupils who transfer before the natural end of their current phase of schooling where a move of school is managed by the county council eg pupils at risk of exclusion.

Any pupil moving schools due to alleged bullying issues will not be considered for transport support unless the school's complaints procedure has been fully exhausted without resulting in the issues being resolved.

7. Transport Grants for Cycling

The county council wishes to support cycling to school as a 'healthy and green' alternative to motorised vehicle travel. A cycling allowance of £90 per year will be considered for any pupil or student who is eligible for support under the general policy. This allowance will be payable in place of any other provision that would normally be made eg instead of a bus pass.

Each application for this type of grant will be individually assessed and those awarded this grant will also be provided with a voucher for a free cycle helmet.

8. Fuel Allowances

In some cases parents will provide their own transport to and from school instead of the county council making the necessary transport arrangements. These arrangements are only agreed if contracted or public transport is not available. The level of allowance is based on the mileage for one return journey each day from home to school or college, at the public transport rate, and on the condition that the driver is acting as a volunteer.

The current allowance payable is 18.5p/mile.

(Example: Where a school is 5 miles from home the calculation will be

$$5 \times 2 \times 18.5p = £1.85 \text{ per day.}$$

For pupils/students required to pay a contribution towards transport costs, the appropriate level of contribution will be deducted from any fuel allowance they are entitled to.

9. Payment of Contributions towards the cost of transport

Parental/student contributions for young people who are not entitled to free transport are determined annually. These rates, along with payment options, are published on the county council website and are issued with all appropriate transport application forms. Alternatively this information can be obtained from the county council's passenger transport group on 0344 800 8003.

10. Travelling times

The county council will seek to provide single journeys that do not exceed

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

Journey times are assessed using the door to door time.

11. Distance to transport pick up points

Pick up and set down points are provided as near as possible to home but parents are required to ensure their children get to and from the nearest boarding point up to 1 mile away from home for children under 12 years old and 1.5 miles for those aged 12 years and over.

Post 16 students are expected to make their own way to the nearest boarding point which can be up to 3 miles away from home, but is usually no more than 2 miles away.

12. Behaviour whilst travelling

Whilst travelling on home to school/college transport, young people must behave in an appropriate manner. Any bad behaviour may result in a temporary withdrawal of transport arrangements during which time it will be the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their children access the education service provided.

Transport will only be reinstated for banned pupils when they have demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the county council, that they are willing to behave appropriately.

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

13. Review Procedure

Anyone who is not happy with the decision in respect of their application for transport assistance may write in the first instance to:

Customer Services Manager
Passenger Transport Group
Planning & Transportation Department
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2SG

Following the review of the decision by the Customer Services Manager, a further review request may be made to the Children's Services Department. Requests should be sent to:

Transport Policy Manager
Children's Services Department
Norfolk County Council
County Hall
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2DL

Children's Services reviews will be undertaken by the Education Transport Panel. The decision of the Panel will represent the full and final decision of the county council.

Anyone remaining dissatisfied with the county council's final decision may refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

14. Sustainable Transport

The county council promotes the use of sustainable modes of travel for education journeys and encourages parents and students to make joint travel arrangements wherever possible eg car sharing.

We continue to promote walking and cycling to school. More details about how we do this can be found in the county council's sustainable travel strategy at www.norfolk.gov.uk (select: Transport and Streets / Transport Planning / Travel Plans / Sustainable Modes of travel Strategy for Schools 2007-11)

Any group of parents who have children that are not eligible for support under this transport policy but who travel on the same route to school, are encouraged to contact the county council to see if we are able to arrange for new transport provision.

New transport provision will only be possible if the costs can be covered by parental contributions. We may not be able to assist in some instances but we are always happy to explore the options available in such circumstances.

Please contact the Passenger Transport Group by email to ptg@norfolk.gov.uk

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## Appendix 1

### Journey Information

#### Transport Procurement

Transport will be procured in accordance with the county council's Standing Orders, Conditions of Contract and the requirements of the Transport Act 2000.

All contracts for the provision of passenger transport services will be reviewed at least every five years to ensure best value for money and efficiency of the overall provision of transport.

#### Arrival and Departure Times

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

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

#### Seatbelts and vehicle loading

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

Seatbelts and other forms of child restraints will be provided in coaches and minibuses in accordance with current regulations.

#### Mixed Loading

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

#### Drivers and Passenger Assistants

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

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

- on double decker buses, other than those providing daily local services for the general public or those that have CCTV facilities installed
- on vehicles carrying pupils with special needs if the requirement is specified in the Statement of Special Educational Needs, or if a risk assessment of the journey indicates that one is required
- on vehicles where the driver cannot gain access to the passenger compartment without leaving the vehicle or where the driver does not have control of the vehicle doors from his driving position
- on vehicles carrying 30 or more pupils, all under 9 years old, travelling on journeys of at least 30 minutes duration
- on other vehicles where a specific need is identified.

## Travel Passes

Travel passes are usually valid for one journey to school/college and one journey home each day during standard academic terms only.

Pupils must show their pass when boarding the vehicle.

Secondary age pupils without a valid pass will be refused travel or charged a fare.

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

There is a charge of £6 for a replacement pass to cover the administration costs.

## Other Users

Other persons may be given permission to travel on contracted transport eg staff, parents helping at the school, exchange students. Such persons should obtain permission from the county council and will only be authorised to travel providing:

- there are spare seats available, and
- there are no additional costs involved.

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

## Criteria for home to school route assessment

### Introduction

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

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

### What can make a route unavailable?

A route could be considered unavailable as a walking route, even to a child accompanied by an adult, if a combination of the following factors exist:

- There is no footpath or roadside strip;
- There is no verge by the side of the road that can be used to step onto to avoid passing vehicles;
- Where there is no path or verge, the road is less than 5.5 metres wide and has a traffic count of more than 240 vehicles and 12 large vehicles per hour;
- Visibility is impaired by sharp bends, banks, hedges or other obstacles;
- There is a history of road accidents involving pedestrians along the route.

Drivers are expected to comply with the speed limits. Where they do not, the local police should be asked to take appropriate action.

If a route is considered unavailable:

- Free transport will be provided until there is a significant change, eg if a footpath is created, the route will be reassessed.
- Free transport is not provided if there is a safe alternative walking route to school, also within the qualifying distance.

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

- It is isolated and there is perceived to be a moral danger;
- There are canals, rivers, dykes, lakes or ponds along the route;
- They need to cross a railway line;
- There are short lengths of road e.g. bridge, where there is no verge;
- The school is in close proximity to the home;
- There are other variable conditions e.g. inclement weather or possible flooding;

since in these instances it is the responsibility of the parents to decide whether to accompany their child to school or to make alternative arrangements. Parents are also expected to provide protective clothing or other equipment as necessary.

This may mean parents walking with their child to school or arranging for a child minder or neighbour to accompany the child to school.

Free transport may be provided if parents can satisfy the council that no adult is available to accompany the child, e.g. you have a younger child in a pram or pushchair and the route cannot be walked in reasonable safety.

Free transport is not provided if the child cannot be accompanied due to a parent's work commitments.

When children from the same family attend different local schools in the area, eg infant and junior schools and they do not qualify for free transport, then it is reasonable to expect the parents to make any local arrangements they consider necessary for their children to be accompanied to and from different schools or to use any available transport services.





