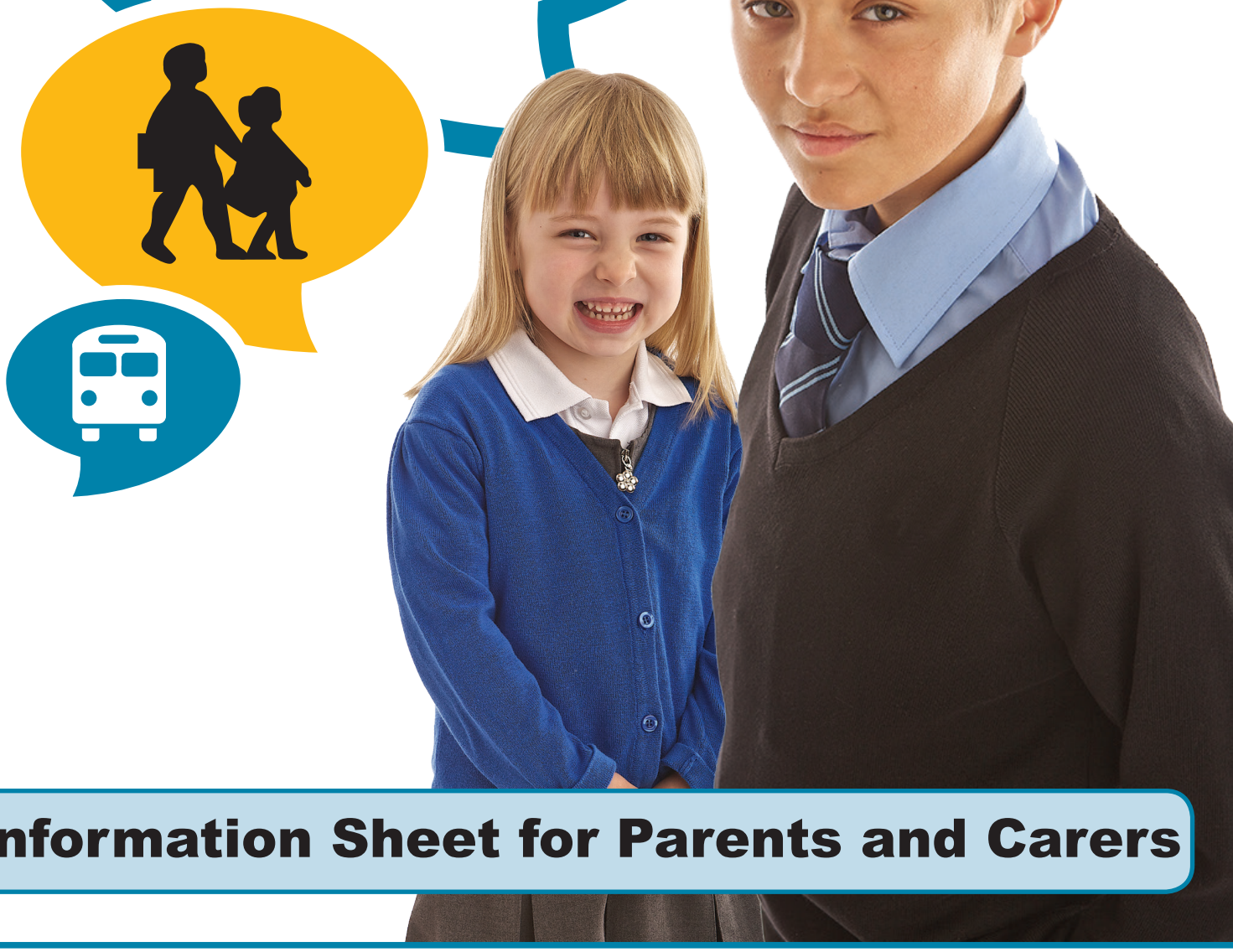
How to apply for School Transport - 2017/2018 Academic Year



Information Sheet for Parents and Carers

This information sheet explains the responsibilities of parents/carers and Cumbria County Council regarding school transport. It also explains how to apply for school transport. Only people residing in Cumbria will be considered for school transport assistance from Cumbria County Council.

Current legislation encourages parents/carers to state their preference of school. This does not mean you can have transport to any school you would like your child to attend. If you think that your school preference could be affected if transport was not available, you should read this information sheet very carefully before you apply for a place.

This information sheet consists of 6 sections:

Section 1 : Children
Section 2 : Religion and Belief
Section 3 : Applications
Section 4 : Appealing decisions
Section 5 : Young People of Sixth Form Age
Section 6 : Glossary of Terms

Section 1 : Children

Parents/carers of children aged 5 – 16 years are responsible for ensuring their child's attendance at school. This means that parents/carers are responsible for their child's transport arrangements.

However, if you live further away than the statutory walking distance from your catchment or nearest qualifying school or you fall within the "low income group" transport arrangements are the County Council's responsibility for children up to age 16. Such transport is free.

The statutory walking distance is 2 miles for children aged under eight and 3 miles for children aged eight or over. This is defined as the distance measured by the nearest available walking route. For a route to be available, it must be one which a child, accompanied by an adult, could be expected to walk with reasonable safety.

If your child is in school years Reception to Year 11, you live under the statutory walking distance and you consider all routes to school to be unsafe walking routes, you may ask for them to be assessed. Route reviews are undertaken on a regular basis. Should transport be given on route safety grounds and it becomes safe at a later date, transport will be rescinded.

Transport can only be provided from one address which should be the child's main residence. In the case of a child having more than one address the one which receives the child benefit will be considered the main residence.

Distance measurements to determine entitlement will be undertaken using the Local Authority's computerised Geographical Information System (GIS) and will be to the nearest entrance on the school site which is available at the time of undertaking the assessment of your application form.

Entitlement to free transport is linked to your catchment or nearest qualifying school. Children from your area may be attending a school which is not the catchment school. To check in which school's catchment area you live, contact the School Admissions Team on **01228 221582.**

It must be stressed that it is the catchment area designated by Cumbria County Council which will be used to determine transport entitlement. For community and voluntary controlled schools, the catchment area for deciding priority for admission and assessing transport entitlement will always be the same. For a small number of academies, foundation schools and voluntary aided schools, the admissions policy may include reference to a catchment area which is different to the one designated by the Authority for school transport purposes.

If Cumbria County Council has not established a catchment area for a qualifying school, the nearest qualifying school will be used to determine transport entitlement. Please contact the School Admissions Team on the above telephone number if you require clarification.

Should you choose a school that is neither your catchment or nearest qualifying school **you will be responsible for transport for your child.** This would be a long term commitment for you as a parent/carer and it needs your very careful consideration. For most families, the catchment school is usually also the nearest school. Where, however, the nearest qualifying school is a selective school, i.e. Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, and you either do not apply or are not offered a place at the school, the next nearest will be recognised as the nearest qualifying school.

If the Local Authority is responsible for your child's transport, it will be provided by the most economic means available. Usually it is a pass to travel free by public service or a vehicle which the Local Authority has under contract from an approved transport operator. Taxis, mini-buses and coaches are currently hired as part of the private hire school transport network. Children who are issued a travel pass on a vehicle privately contracted to Cumbria County Council will be restricted to travelling in the morning and afternoon at the standard times. Children who are issued with a Stagecoach travel pass may be able to travel flexibly for one journey to and one journey from the school daily. Please contact the Transport Commissioning Team who will advise you of restrictions on your route.

If your child is entitled to transport, you will be expected to take/collect them to/from the nearest boarding point/ alighting point. This may be up to half a mile for primary aged children and a mile for secondary pupils. **The home to boarding point/alighting point would not be assessed for route safety.** You must also bear in mind that their journey to/from school may not be by the most direct route and that the arrangements are likely to change from time to time. For example, the operator or timetable could change.

Low Income Groups

Children from "low income groups" [defined as those who are entitled to free school meals, or whose families are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit] are also entitled to assistance with transport as follows:

- Primary aged children aged 8, 9, 10 and 11 and where the distance is more than 2 miles;
- Children aged 11 to 16 at secondary school have a choice of one from the three nearest schools all of which must be more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from home;
- Children aged 11 to 16 attending their nearest faith secondary school preferred by parents on the basis of religion and which is greater than 2 miles but not more than 15 miles from their home.

When choosing a school you will need to consider the possibility of your income increasing above the threshold. Should your family income increase above the threshold limit for low income families, the additional transport benefit will continue up to the end of the current academic year in July. In the following year, assistance will revert to that based on the statutory entitlement.

Children with Special Educational Needs

A Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan may contain details of transport which the County Council considers appropriate to meet a child's individual needs. If this is not the case, the normal school transport policy will apply.

Exceptional Circumstances

There may be rare occasions where the circumstances are such that the County Council will assist with transport to ensure a child can access education. For instance, a child with a medical condition living below the statutory walking distance from school may be given transport.

Spare Seats Scheme

If your child does not have an entitlement to transport and there are spare seats available, your child may be able to travel as a 'Spare Seats Scheme' passenger. Information about the Spare Seats Scheme, including the current charge, is available from:

www.cumbria.gov.uk/schooltransport

or by contacting the Commissioning Procurement & Contract Management Team on **01228 226428 or 01228 226427.**

It will be after the start of term before you hear about the availability of a 'Spare Seats Scheme' seat. If there is a seat available, there is no guarantee about continued availability and it may be withdrawn at very short notice if it is required for an entitled child, or if the route or vehicle size is changed. **It must be stressed that until you are advised in writing by the Transport CommissioningTeam that a seat is available, you must make appropriate arrangements to get your child to school.**

You should not base your preference of school on the possibility of your child travelling as a 'Spare Seats Scheme' passenger. Your child's transport remains your responsibility and at any time throughout your child's education you may have to make your own transport arrangements. Your child may become settled in a school to which transport becomes a difficulty for you. If you are able to find a solution it may be expensive. It is important to have alternative arrangements in mind as every year this causes problems for some parents/carers.

Moving House

If you move house you will need to complete an application form for your new address to find out if you will be entitled to assistance with transport.

Section 2 : Religion and Belief

If your child is aged between 5 and 16 and you apply for a place in a school on the basis of religion, and in the view of the Corporate Director - Children's Services the appropriate religious education is not provided in the catchment or nearest school, then transport from the nearest boarding point can be made available at an annual cost of £390.00 per child payable termly (£160.00 Autumn term, £150.00 Spring term and £80.00 Summer term), provided:

- Adherence to the relevant denomination can be demonstrated and;
- Your child is attending the nearest such school and it is no more than 8 miles away in the case of a primary school and 15 miles for a secondary school, and;
- Your child is aged under eight and you live more than 2 miles from school or aged eight or over and you live more than 3 miles away, measured by the shortest available walking route.

No refund will be made in respect of any unexpired part of a travel pass no longer required.

Low Income Groups

Children aged 11 to 16 from low income families attending their nearest faith secondary school preferred by their parents/carers on the basis of religion and, which is greater than 2 miles but not more than 15 miles from their home are entitled to assistance with transport.

Should the family income increase above the threshold limit for low income families, the additional benefit will continue up to the end of the current academic year in July. In the following year, assistance will revert to that based on the policy detailed above.

It is important to remember that you, and not the Local Authority, are responsible for your child's transport to school and you must take this into consideration even if you are currently in a 'low income group'.

Section 3 : Applications

If you wish to apply for transport you should do so using the appropriate application forms. Application forms are available online at the website address below or from the Transport Commissioning Team. If you qualify for assistance on 'low income' grounds, you will need to re-apply each year. Should a duplicate travel pass be required, a £10.00 replacement fee is charged.

Due to the volume of applications you need to apply in good time. **All application forms must be returned by the 30th June to guarantee your application will be assessed by the beginning of the academic year.** If you apply later, transport may not be in place at the start of term and there may be a considerable delay. In the meantime, you are responsible for your child's transport and any expenses you incur will not be refunded.

If you submit an application by the 30th June and you do not hear anything about your application or receive a travel pass by 18th August, you should contact the Commissioning Procurement and Contract Management Team.

A new application for school transport needs to be made at various stages:

- Starting infant/primary school;
- Transfer from infant to junior school;
- Transfer from junior/primary to secondary school;
- Changing address or changing school at other times;
- Annual review for 'low income' families.

Please complete the relevant application form and return it to the Commissioning Procurement and Contract Management Team or to complete an online form go to:

www.cumbria.gov.uk/schooltransport

Section 4 : Appealing decisions

The County Council has discretion to grant assistance in exceptional circumstances (see section 1). In addition all applicants have a right of appeal if they think the above arrangements have not been applied correctly. All appeals should be sent in writing to the Transport Services Team, Parkhouse Building, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 4SJ.

Section 5 : Young People of Sixth Form Age

A Post-16 Transport Policy statement for the 2017/2018 academic year will be published, as required by statutory guidance, on the 31 May 2017. The purpose of the transport policy statement is to inform young people in years 11, 12 and 13 and their parents/carers about what transport arrangements and support are available locally. The statement is a single point of reference providing information about transport arrangements to all types of provision, including arrangements made by bodies other than the local authority.

The Local Authority does not provide subsidised transport for Post-16 students unless they fulfil criteria for assistance because of 'low income' or have Special Educational Needs.

The 2017/2018 Policy Statement can be accessed on or after 31 May by following the link below:

www.cumbria.gov.uk/schooltransport

Section 6 : Glossary of Terms

This Information Sheet contains a number of words and phrases that require definition.

'qualifying school' – qualifying schools are:

- Community, foundation or voluntary schools;
- Community or foundation special schools;
- Non-maintained special schools;
- Pupil referral units;
- Maintained nursery schools; or
- City technology colleges (CTC) city colleges for the technology of the arts (CCTA) or Academies.

'available route' – a route will be available if it is a route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school. A route will be 'available' even if the child would need to be accompanied along it by his or her parent or carer, as long as such accompaniment is reasonably practicable.

'child/children' – 'child' or 'children' refers to those of compulsory school age or below. A child becomes of compulsory school age when he or she reaches the age of five and must start school in the term following his or her fifth birthday. Compulsory school age ceases on the last Friday in June in the school year in which the child reaches the age of 16.

'religion or belief' – the Equality Act 2006 defines what is meant by 'religion or belief' for the purposes of this Act, Section 44 (a) defines 'religion' as 'any religion', a broad definition in line with the freedom of religion guaranteed by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

'walking distance' – is defined in section 444(5) of the Act as either two miles (if the child is under eight years old), or three miles (if the child is eight years old or older). This is measured by the 'nearest available route'. The route is not necessarily the shortest distance by road; it is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety.

'young person of sixth form age' – is someone above compulsory school age but under the age of 19, or who has begun a particular course of education or training at the establishment before attaining the age of 19 and continues to attend that course.

How do I find out more about **school transport?**

Visit our website by using the following link:

www.cumbria.gov.uk/schooltransport

Staff in the Transport Commissioning Team are responsible for implementing the Local Authority's school transport policy and making the transport arrangements. They can be contacted on the following

telephone numbers: **01228 226428 or 01228 226427**

E: school.transport@cumbria.gov.uk

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone **01228 226143**.

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如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，
请致电 01228 226430

Jeigu norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba, skambinkite telefonu 01228 226430

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę zatelefonować pod numer 01228 226430

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua, telefone para o 01228 226430

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen 01228 226430 numaralı telefonu arayınız