

**VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL**

**ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING SERVICES DIRECTORATE**

**POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT**

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

**(Revised August 2022)**

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**Passenger Transport Team Details**

In the Vale of Glamorgan Council all functions relating to school and college transport are dealt with by the Transport Services Department.

**Any correspondence can be sent to:**

**Mainstream Transport – [schooltransport@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransport@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)**

**ALN Transport – [schooltransportsen@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransportsen@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)**

Vale of Glamorgan Council  
Passenger Transport Team  
Neighbourhood Services and Transport  
Alps Depot  
Quarry Road  
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CF5 6AA

The contact telephone number is **01446 700111**

**Website**

<http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/transportation/transportation.aspx>

## **HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT POLICY**

It is the council's intentions to provide a reliable system of transportation that will seek to carry learners safely, punctually and in comfort. These principles apply to all services provided by the Council.

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

School/College Transport Services are governed by the following legislation:

The Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1996  
The Transport Act 1985  
The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008  
The Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulation 2009  
The Safety on Learner Transport (Wales) Measure 2011  
The Learner Travel Statutory Provision & Operational Guidance 2014  
The Travel Behaviour Code Statutory Guidance 2009  
Guidance on Home to School Transport Risk Assessments 2009  
Guidance for the provision of seat belts on dedicated learner transport 2012  
Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2002  
SEN and Disability Act 2001  
Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1985  
Bus and coach accessibility and the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000

In addition, the following policies should be considered when making decisions on transport provision:

Active Travel Act 2013  
Welsh Government Transport Strategy 2021

A Code of Practice document, is also available to show compliance to legislation and statutory requirements and informs of the responsibilities of:

School Transport Operators  
School Transport Drivers  
School Transport Passenger Assistants  
Pupils  
Parents  
Schools

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## **NEAREST SUITABLE SCHOOL**

For this purpose of this policy and in line with the Welsh Learner Travel Measure 2014 the definition of nearest suitable school for pupils attending a mainstream school is the local education authority prescribed catchment area school.

For pupils with additional learning needs the definition of nearest suitable school will be decided by the Council's Complex Needs team and will take into account the pupils age, ability and aptitudes and any learning difficulties that they pupil may have.

## **MAINSTREAM SCHOOL TRANSPORT ENTITLEMENT**


**Mainstream primary** aged pupils are provided with free school transport if they live 2 miles or further, as measured by the shortest available walking route, from their nearest suitable school, as defined by the Local Education Authority. (Mainstream primary aged pupils for the purpose of this policy are those in reception through to Year 6)

**Mainstream secondary** aged pupils are provided with free school transport if they live 3 miles or further, as measured by the shortest available walking route, from their nearest suitable school, as defined by the Local Education Authority. (Mainstream secondary aged pupils for the purpose of this policy are those Year 7 to Year 11. However, at the discretion of the council also applies to those pupils in Year 12 and 13 attending their catchment school).

The Vale of Glamorgan Council currently provides free school transport for mainstream primary and secondary aged pupils, as defined above. In addition, the Council, at its discretion, provides free school transport to Welsh medium and faith based mainstream schools.

A pupils catchment school can be checked by entering the address postcode into the "Check" function on the Council website:

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/index.aspx>

 **Check**

**Check local information in your area:**

<input type="text" value="Postcode"/>	<b>Find your local services</b>
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In circumstances when the nearest suitable mainstream school is full and admission is refused, free home to school transport will only be provided to the next nearest suitable school with an available space, as defined and allocated by the Local Education Authority. The qualifying distances as outlined above must still be met.

It is the Council, as Local Education Authority in conjunction with schools who decide if a school is at capacity in any academic year. Only when the necessary information is received and confirmed will decisions be made by the Council in respect of the provision of free home to school transport to the next nearest suitable school.

Where a pupil attends, as a result of parental preference, a school other than the nearest suitable school as defined by the Local Education Authority, it must be understood that parents accept full responsibility for transport costs and arrangements.

If an Admissions application is later made to the nearest suitable school after initially choosing and attending a non-catchment school (parental choice) and the nearest suitable school is consequently full, free school transport will not be provided to an existing non catchment school or another non catchment school. Parents must consider their child's transport entitlement before making an expression of preference for a school place.

If a pupil moves address parents/carers need to inform the Passenger Transport Team and an individual transport eligibility assessment will be undertaken.

## **ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS (ALN) SCHOOL TRANSPORT ENTITLEMENT**

**Additional Learning Needs (ALN)** pupils with specific travel requirements which cannot be met with reasonable adjustment on mainstream transport will have their eligibility determined by the Council's Complex Needs Team.

ALN pupils will be eligible for free school transport if they are assessed as having severe and/or complex difficulties and are attending a special school as directed by the Complex Needs Team.

ALN pupils will be assessed for free school transport if they have severe and/or complex difficulties and are attending a school resource base, as directed by the Complex Needs team.

Consideration will be given for free school transport for ALN pupils living within the 2 and 3 mile limits on an individual basis, complying with Section 9 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, ensuring fairness and compliance with relevant equality legislation to ensure no unlawful discrimination between learners. This decision will be made in consultation with all relevant parties.

If a pupil cannot walk to school (either with the support of an appropriate adult or independently depending on their age/ability) because of the nature of their additional learning needs or disability, the council may provide free home to school transport even if the distance is less than the statutory limit.

The decision on this will be made by the Passenger Transport Team in conjunction with schools and the Complex Needs Team.

If possible and in conjunction with the agreement of the learner, parent/carer, the school and Complex Needs Team, passenger assistant provision may be provided, instead of transport, to enable the pupil to get to school independently. This promotes sustainable modes of travel and encourages independent living as well as health and wellbeing.

In undertaking assessments of a child's additional learning needs the Complex Needs Team will gather information from a range of key professionals and determine the provision and placement necessary to meet those needs. Any individual requirements for transport will be assessed as part of this process in consultation with the passenger transport team.

### **School Day Placements outside of the Vale of Glamorgan**

If provision to meet a pupil's additional learning need is not available within the Vale of Glamorgan, a decision may be taken that a day school in a different authority is the nearest appropriate placement. If this is the case, transport will normally be provided on a daily basis. This placement must be agreed by the Complex Needs Team.

## **School Residential Placements outside of the Vale of Glamorgan**

A very small number of pupils with the most complex additional learning needs attend residential school placements. The decision that this is appropriate is taken by the Complex Needs Team. Transport arrangements and costs are considered as part of the process relating to placement decisions. Transport may be provided on the following basis:

- Weekly or fortnightly boarding – transport for the child to return home weekly or fortnightly during term time.
- 38 week termly boarding – transport at the beginning and end of each half term and one additional return journey per half term.
- 51/52 week residential placements – one return journey per term

## **Other ALN Transport Provision**

Transport is not provided for integration or for assessment preceding a transfer into a special school or unit. Transport will be provided only when the permanent placement is agreed.

If parents decline an offer of a placement at an appropriate school for their child's needs and prefer their child to attend an alternative appropriate school, parents become responsible for both providing transport to school and the financial cost.

Under normal circumstances the Passenger Transport Team will not provide transport to respite accommodation. However, where existing school transport can accommodate transport to and from the respite provision without delay or deviation from the route, this can be considered. The cost of which will be recouped from the relevant service. Any request for transport to respite must be made directly to the Passenger Transport Team and not drivers/passenger assistants/operators directly.

If it is decided that a Looked After Child (LAC) should attend a school other than the nearest suitable one to their current residence because of a need to maintain continuity in education or contact with siblings and friends, transport will be provided by the Passenger Transport Team and charged back to the LAC Team budget. Alternatively, under Section 18 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 the costs of making the travel arrangements may be recouped from the authority that looks after the child.



### **FURTHER EDUCATION TRANSPORT (16 to 19 year olds)**

Learners aged 16 to 19 living in the Vale of Glamorgan are provided with free travel if they live three or more miles from their nearest appropriate further educational establishment for the course they are undertaking. If a course is chosen that is available at an institution closer to the student's home address, free school transport will not be provided.

Free transport will only be provided to publicly funded institutions within the Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend and Cardiff.

Appropriate Home to School Transport will continue to be provided for ALN pupils aged 16 to 19 (aged under 19 on 31<sup>st</sup> August prior to the start of the academic year) who continue their education at the educational establishment agreed by the Complex Needs Team.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

**The service is not able to take the following into account when considering transport entitlement:**

- Parents work or other commitments
- Attendance by siblings at other schools
- If a parent chooses to send their child to a school/education provider that is not the catchment or nearest appropriate school to the home address
- A work experience placement
- A work-based placement
- An address other than the home address, including child-minders/relatives
- A journey from one educational establishment to another
- Ad hoc visits to other schools, colleges or other establishments
- Out of hours clubs (e.g. breakfast, after school activity)
- Link courses
- Any educational provision planned over weekends or bank holidays
- Respite arrangements other than as detailed separately (see Respite section)
- Attending a special school/unit/class for a period of assessment
- Attending medical appointments
- Collections from school due to illness
- Detention requirements
- Parental attendance at meetings
- Part-time timetables
- To meet examination timetables or extended schools clubs

Transport is provided from home to school/college at the start of the day, and school/college to home at the end of the day.

### **Codes of Guidance**

The Council has compiled a code of guidance for the following:

School Transport Operators  
School Transport Drivers  
School Transport Passenger Assistants  
Pupils  
Parents  
Schools

These documents are available on the council website and form part of this policy.

As part of this policy each code of guidance must be adhered to by the relevant party.

## **Welsh Government Travel Behaviour Code**

All pupils being transported to and from school/college should adhere to the Welsh Government's Travel Behaviour Code.

It is, however, recognised that some ALN pupils behaviour cannot be subject to the prescribed penalties in place on mainstream transport as it might be a symptom of their medical condition which cannot be controlled.

Pupils attending Pupil Referral Units (PRU) are subject to the travel behaviour code on the basis that the travel behaviour code is universally applicable to all learners aged 5 to 19 years.

### **Transport Request Forms (ALN School Transport)**

The Complex Needs Team will send a Transport Request form to parents/carers of qualifying pupils for them to check, add further information, amend, sign and return. This is the parents/carers opportunity to ensure that the transport provider is advised of all information necessary to transport their child safely. This information will be passed onto the Passenger Transport Team where suitable transport will be arranged.

Upon receipt of the signed form, ten (school) days are normally required to arrange transport and inform all parties of the arrangements that will be put in place. Wheelchairs will not be transported until a "tag" has been issued by the Passenger Transport Team providing information on suitable wheelchair and passenger restraint systems for that type of wheelchair.

### **Bus Passes (mainstream transport)**

The Council will send out to individual bus passes, for those who qualify for free school transport, for the following academic year over the summer holidays. Any pupil who does not produce either a bus pass or a letter from the school, to the driver, will be refused travel. The council asks all operators to adhere to a strict "no pass no travel" rule (details of which can be found in the Code of Guidance).

Any request for transport during term time can take up to ten school days to be processed.

### **Replacement bus passes**

In all circumstances it is the parent's/carer's responsibility to pay for the cost of replacement bus passes that are lost or damaged. The Passenger Transport team should be contacted at the earliest opportunity where payment can be made and the replacement pass issues.

On receipt of the replacement bus pass form it can take up to ten school days for the pass to be sent out. An email can be issued while the form is being processed to ensure the pupil can continue to travel.

## **Siblings**

From an educational perspective the Council, as a Local Education Authority does cater for siblings of pupils to attend the same school, even in cases where the catchment school is not the nearest available school. However, the Council is not in a position to offer free school transport in such instances and it will be the responsibility of parents to meet the costs and arrangements transporting their child/ren to and from school. There may however be instances where a spare seat on existing school transport services can be purchased – see spare seat purchase section.

## **Walking Route Assessments**

All walking route assessments are undertaken as a desk-based exercise initially, with the assessment returning a distance from the boundary of the pupil's property (excluding private roads) to the first available gate of the school. All measurements are produced using the Council's in-house GIS software. Should the distance be queried a manual measurement can be undertaken or previous manual assessments referred to if a measurement from a similar area to the same school has already been undertaken.

## **Unavailable Walking Routes**

The council has a duty to provide free transport if a walking route is deemed as unavailable. The availability of a walking route is based on the Welsh Government's Risk Assessment of Walked Routes to School Guidance (chapter 5 of the Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014).

Each route will be considered on its own merits. If there is still contention after any initial assessment, the Council may appoint an independent company to assess the route.

Should a walking route be deemed unavailable in line with the guidance the Council will not refund any costs incurred by parents prior to the walking route assessment report being received.

## **Transport links**

The council will exercise discretion in determining whether or not it will provide a taxi link to an existing bus service for those pupils living in rural locations.

## **Managed Move between schools**

In exceptional circumstance where a managed move has been arranged between two schools a pupil may be eligible for free school transport. Evidence of the

managed move needs to be provided to the Transport Services team who will assess eligibility.

### **Spare Seat Purchase**

From time to time it is possible that the numbers of pupils entitled to free transport will be below the capacity of the vehicle used. In such cases the Council will, at its discretion, aim to make spare capacity available to other pupils, who do not qualify for free school transport, at a charge.

Applications are treated on a first come first served basis, with details of the date forms are made available published on the School Transport webpage two weeks before the end of the Summer term.

The cost for the spare seat must be paid in full before a pass will be issued. To purchase a spare seat an application must be submitted every school year. A pupil allocated a seat one year will not automatically be entitled to purchase a spare seat the following year for the following reasons:

- there may no longer be spare capacity;
- the application has been submitted later than others and spare seats are no longer available;

It must be understood that the provision of this facility does not represent an obligation on the Council and, being entirely dependent on the capacity of the vehicle used, may result in withdrawal of the facility at short notice in order to accommodate pupils who do qualify for free transport. If the facility is withdrawn parents will be reimbursed any overpayment that has been made. Furthermore, the provision of this facility does not represent an obligation on the Council for future years if a parent purchases a pass in any one year.

Any pass purchased is done so in the knowledge that the published timetable will not be amended. No additional mileage or stops will be added to any service to cater for pupils who obtain purchase passes.

Purchase pass applications will not be considered until all entitled pupils have been allocated seats. This may mean applications for the start of the school year (September) not being dealt with until October.

The Council may also make the decision to not sell spare seats on vehicles where capacity is close to full.

It should be noted that the Council will not sell spare seats to those pupils attending nursery units. This is primarily as the ratio of pupils to supervisors on school transport does not match that of school nursery units.

### **Payments to parents/carers**

The authority may agree to a parent/carer transporting their child to and from school and receiving reimbursement of travel expenses when this is considered the most appropriate arrangement, usually where there is no other alternative transport.

Payment will be in the form of a mileage payment, an agreed daily rate or the cost of the public transport fare and will be made monthly in arrears.

Applications for payment cannot be submitted until the last school day of the month and can take up to 28 days to process.

### **Change of Address**

Any change of address should be reported directly to the Passenger Transport Team who can reassess entitlement to transport and arrange alternative transport as required. The school will need to confirm the change of address.

Ten school days' notice may be required to arrange alternative transport if an existing route with available space does not operate close to the new address.

### **Change of Catchment areas**

If a catchment area changes at any time free school transport entitlement will be in line with catchment areas as set out by the Local Education Authority.

### **Different Parental Addresses**

Pupils who live at different parental addresses throughout the school week may be allocated a space on two separate school transport services. This is on the proviso that both addresses meet the qualifying criteria and both are registered addresses with the school.

It should be noted that one of the addresses needs to be in the catchment area of the school the pupil is attending.

### **Change of Address – GCSE pupils**

If a pupil moves address when in Year 10 (after the half term holiday in October) or in Year 11, applications for free school transport will be considered on an individual basis.

Consideration will only be given to those pupils who already reside or move into the Vale of Glamorgan.

### **Free transport awarded in error**

If an error is made or where legislation is changed this may have an effect on the entitlement of a pupil or pupils using school transport. The council will honour the transport provision for that pupil or pupils for the remainder of the academic half term the mistake was found in or the legislation became effective in.

## **Parent/carer responsibility prior to boarding and on alighting the vehicle**

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure the safety of their child/ren prior to their acceptance onto school transport in the morning.

Likewise, it is the parent's/carer's responsibility to ensure the safety of the child once he/she alights from the vehicle on the way home.

The council will not accept any responsibility when a parent does not meet their child, either at a bus stop or home address, at the designated time of arrival on an afternoon journey, or where a pupil forgets their bus pass and is not accepted onto the vehicle.

## **Mainstream Primary pupil afternoon drop off**

The Council has a clear procedure that transport operators should follow when transporting primary aged pupils.

The procedure to follow if no responsible person is present:

1. Contact the Passenger Transport team who attempt to contact the parent/carer;
2. If no contact can be made, continue with the journey until the last stop is reached;
3. If still no contact at the last stop, return the pupil to school;
4. Arrangements can then be made, taking into account the safety of the pupil.

If a parent/carer does not meet a pupil regularly this may result in sanctions being imposed, such as a pupils temporary exclusion from free school transport.

All primary aged pupils should be physically handed over to a responsible person. No pupil should be allowed to walk from the bus of their own accord unless parental consent has been given and provided by the Passenger Transport Team.

## **ALN Pupil afternoon drop off**

If the parent/carer is not home in the afternoon, the driver will leave a note at the house with contact details to say he/she has called and will contact their Transport Operator immediately for advice.

## **Seatbelts**

All contracted school transport services require a seatbelt for each pupil. The only exception to this are locally registered bus services.

## **CCTV**

It is the Council's policy to provide CCTV on all contracted school services where the vehicle capacity is 21 seats or more. Clear signs will be displayed on vehicles to indicate this.

Where applicable some vehicles with capacity under 21 seats may be fitted with CCTV.

### **Passenger Assistants**

It is the Council's policy to provide passenger assistants for all mainstream primary school services where more than 16 pupils are carried.

A passenger assistant will be provided on ALN school transport where necessary.

### **Adverse Weather Conditions**

Weather conditions can cause major problems to the provision of home to school transport. With safety paramount, contractors will take the ultimate decision, as to whether a service will operate and the specific timings of the service in the event of it operating during adverse weather.

In order to manage this effectively, please keep yourself updated of the weather conditions at all times and ensure contact telephone numbers are up to date.

Schools will inform the Vale of Glamorgan's contact centre of their closure and these will be quickly published on the Vale of Glamorgan website ([www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)). The Passenger Transport Team will also endeavour to update the Public Transport Twitter account.

If severe weather is anticipated and the Council has not announced the closure of school(s), the decision to operate morning journeys rests with the contractor. If a contractor operates the morning journey it should be expected that the afternoon journey will also be in operation unless weather worsens quickly or if forecasts predict worsening weather. If morning journeys are not carried out because of inclement weather conditions, contractors must inform Headteachers and the Passenger Transport Team of their decision immediately.

Where a decision is made to not operate a morning journey, operators must be mindful of the fact that conditions may improve to the extent that an afternoon journey is practicable. This is particularly important where children normally transported by school transport have been taken in to school by parents. In these situations the contractor must be prepared to transport pupils home in the afternoon. Contractors will not be expected to transport a child taken into school by a parent home if an assessment considers an afternoon journey inoperable.

Should weather conditions deteriorate during the day, Headteachers may decide to close their school early. If this is the case transport contractors will be asked to supply transport as promptly as possible. Schools closing earlier than normal are responsible for ensuring that parents of primary school and Additional Learning Needs pupils are available to receive their children (or have arranged for a responsible adult to do so).

### **Contract Monitoring**



All school transport services will be periodically monitored throughout the academic year. The council, on unspecified days, undertakes random checks on contracts, to ensure compliance with contract conditions.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service Checks**

All drivers and passenger assistants operating dedicated home to school transport services in the Vale of Glamorgan must complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Only once the council has given authorisation that an individual is able to work on school transport services will that person be issued with an Identification badge.

### **Training**

Driver and passenger assistants will periodically be required to attend relevant training, which will help in their understanding and management of the children they transport. Training will be provided by the Council in conjunction with the school and transport provider. Topics covered will be dependent on the service provided and will include but not be limited to manual handling, use of appropriate wheelchair restraints, safeguarding and dealing with challenging behaviour.

Certain drivers will need a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) to ensure they can carry out a service and to comply with the law. The Council and transport provider will ensure these are in place where applicable.

### **School Liaison**

The Council will request that each school has a designated member of staff who deals specifically with school transport issues.

### **Temporary Medical Conditions**

If a mainstream pupil cannot use mainstream transport due to a temporary medical condition the Council will not organise separate transport.

If an ALN pupil has a temporary medical condition transport may be provided on request from the Complex Needs Team.

Transport provided on medical grounds will be reviewed regularly. Temporary medical conditions will be reviewed every half term or sooner, dependent on medical advice. Longer term medical conditions will be reviewed annually.

### **Parent/Carer Medical Conditions**

Assistance is not provided under the terms of this policy for a young person in respect of the disabilities/medical conditions of either both of his/her parents/carers.

### **Damage to Vehicles (mainstream)**

Drivers and passenger assistants are advised to contact the police and the Passenger Transport Team immediately if there is a risk of harm or intentional damage to the vehicle.

Parents/carers are advised that where pupils have damaged a vehicle or the operator is required to undertake an enhanced clean of the vehicle , they may be required to financially reimburse the transport provider.

### **Complaints Procedure**

Any complaints should be directed to the Passenger Transport Team in the first instance. Contact details can be found at the front of this policy document.

Any complaints received by parents, pupils, schools will be investigated immediately. In the event of the complaint being upheld, the Council reserves the right to take any appropriate steps necessary in accordance with contract conditions.

In line with the Welsh Government Travel Behaviour Code any complaint made regarding pupil behaviour will be investigated. The Council may impose sanctions, dependent on the severity of the incident, ranging from a temporary suspension to a complete exclusion from transport.

### **Appeal Process**

If you wish to appeal any decision (including entitlement) regarding school transport you can put your appeal in writing to:

Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport  
Vale of Glamorgan Council  
The Alps Depot  
Wenvoe  
CF5 6AA