

West Dunbartonshire Council Educational Services

Free School Transport Do You Qualify? Information for Parents/Guardians and Pupils



West Dunbartonshire ~ from the banks of Loch Lomond to the shores of the Clyde

Introduction

This leaflet is intended to provide pupils, guardians and parents with useful background information about the school transport arrangements made on behalf of the Executive Director of Educational Services.

The Council is responsible for the general safety and welfare of a pupil during the time they are being conveyed to school and on boarding the vehicle at their school

In addition, all operators, drivers and escorts are issued with a Code of Conduct booklet which explains how they should perform their duties, including procedures that should be followed in emergency situations.

The driver (and escort when provided) will take reasonable steps to ensure the security, safety, dignity and comfort of pupils in their care. When provided, the escort will be the main point of contact with the pupils and their parents/guardians.

How can we help get your child to school?

Whilst it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure their child's attendance at school, West Dunbartonshire Council is happy to help you get your child of school age to school safely and on time. That is why school crossing patrols are provided and we operate a school transport policy which is more generous than the law requires. Indeed our home to school transport provision is amongst the most generous of any Scottish local authority.

The policy states that we provide FREE school transport if:

- Your child lives more than one mile away from his or her local primary school (by the shortest, safe walking route).
- Your child lives more than two miles away from his or her local secondary school (by the shortest, safe walking route).

- Your child has been recommended for transport on health grounds by a designated medical officer. (Application should, in the first instance, be supported by a letter from your GP and this request may then be referred to the Community Medical Officer who may arrange to have your child examined).
- Your child has been assessed to attend a particular school, other than your zoned school, that meets his or her additional support needs. (These assessments involve West Dunbartonshire Psychological Service who will recommend appropriate transport arrangements).
- Your child has to walk a route that is considered unsafe for children based on advice from Housing and Economic Department.

What free school Transport means

Educational Services identify the need for provision based on the criteria above. For primary and secondary schools we work through Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) who engage the operators to provide free school transport. For pupils with additional support needs or medical conditions, Educational Services undertakes all arrangements.

The choice of a precise mode of transport depends on a variety of factors and is decided by Educational Services after taking all circumstances into account. This can result in any of the following:

- Dedicated school bus (service solely for pupils).
- Bus pass on local service bus (which can either be a commercial service or a subsidised local service also carrying members of the public).
- Train pass on service train.
- Taxi or private hire car, minibus or boat.
- The Council's own school transport vehicles.

Free transport normally covers one return journey, to school in the morning and home at the end of the school day. Additional provision is made for home journeys for Primary one pupils who may have a shorter day until September each year. Children not collected by parents can be supervised until the end of the normal school day.

Parents/guardians of Primary one pupils wanting to use lunchtime transport until September should note that pupils are only returned to their home address.

When to apply for free transport

If your child is starting primary school you should apply when you enrol him or her for school. If your child is going into secondary school you should apply in February of his or her last year at primary school.

You can apply at a later time but there could be a delay while arrangements are being made.

Should you move house at any time during the year, a fresh application for transport should be made.

What happens after you apply?

You will be informed by Educational Services by letter, as to the outcome of your application. Staff at the office will be happy to discuss this, or any other matter connected with your child's application, with you. If your application is related to a child already attending school and it is successful, we will aim to notify you of the arrangements before the end of June, although there can sometimes be a delay into the summer holiday period.

Making appeals

If you wish to appeal against any decision made regarding your application for school transport, you may do so by writing to Educational Services at the address shown on the back of this leaflet, indicating the grounds on which you wish to make your appeal.

Getting to the pick up point

Parents/guardians are solely responsible for getting their child to the school transport pick up point in the mornings on time and for meeting their child from the transport in the afternoons.

In certain instances, parents/guardians can be expected to walk/transport their child up to 1 mile (primary) or 2 miles (secondary) in order to reach the designated pick-up point.

Drivers are not authorised to help children cross roads.

Parents/guardians should advise their children accordingly and ensure children use the crossing patrols, Pelican or Toucan crossings when available.

Non arrival of Transport

Morning

Pupils should wait approx 20 minutes thereafter return home or to an alternative address arranged by parents/guardians. Parent/guardian should contact SPT by telephone. SPT will contact the authority if necessary.

Afternoon

Buses/taxis – Schools/establishments should wait approx 20 minutes before contacting the SPT Dedicated Helpline number, followed by the authority.

Trains – Pupils should return to the school or establishment. Schools/establishments should contact the SPT Dedicated Helpline number, followed by the authority.

Head teachers should ensure that there are procedures in place to account for the whereabouts of all pupils who normally access school transport at the end of the day. In the event of this procedure breaking down and a pupil missing the bus at the school, a contingency plan should be in place to inform the parent/guardian and arrange for the pupil's safe transport home.

Your rights

It is your right to:

- raise any concerns or problems which your child may be having related to transport.
- be told by the school or authority about any problems your child has on home to school transport and be involved in finding a solution to these problems.
- complain if you feel problems have not been dealt with appropriately.
- serious misbehaviour could result in your child losing the right to free transport.
- receive appropriate information regarding the arrangements made to transport your child.

Your responsibilities

- To provide a current photograph of your child and attach it to the child's travel permit (if required).
- To encourage your child to behave properly and safely when boarding, travelling on the transport and alighting from it and to follow reasonable instructions given by the driver or attendant.
- To compensate for any damage caused by your child as a result of his/her poor behaviour on school transport, where appropriate.
- To ensure your child does not leave home without their travel pass.
- To make alternative transport arrangements for your child should their permit be removed temporarily as a result of their conduct on school transport.
- To ensure that your child travels on the vehicle to which they have been allocated.

Pupil behaviour

- The responsibility of ensuring safe and acceptable behaviour remains *yours* when your child is travelling in the vehicle provided.
- In cases of misbehaviour, pupils will be subject to the normal disciplinary procedures of their school.
- Any misbehaviour by a pupil that is likely to put the safety of themselves or others at risk can lead to sanctions which will include the child being withdrawn from the transport.
- Smoking on any vehicle conveying pupils is strictly forbidden.
- In the case of misbehaviour, the driver may retain children's ticket/pass for the identification of pupils involved. The incident will then be reported to the driver's supervisor. Details will then be sent to the Head Teacher, and parents/guardians will be invited to an interview with the Head Teacher to give assurance on their children's good conduct prior to the return of the 'free' travel pass. (This will not lead to any child being without means of travel home at the end of the school day).

Travel passes

- Travel passes (where provided) are issued directly to the school thereafter to be issued to the pupil.
- Any pass which is lost or stolen, will require to be replaced directly from the contractor. There will be a small replacement fee, for which the parent/guardian is responsible.
- Travel passes not claimed from the school by the October holiday break will be returned to the authority and considered to be no longer required. Thereafter your child's name will be removed from the system.

Safety of pupils on school transport

- Parents/guardians should advise their children to stand well back from the bus/pick up point when the vehicle arrives. Children should only board the bus from the pavement.
- It is important that pupils follow the instructions of the drivers and escorts at all time. In particular, pupils should stay seated during the journey and at no time attempt to open the doors of the vehicle.
- Only the Executive Director of Educational Services is authorised to allocate pupils to vehicles. Drivers are issued with pupil lists detailing the pupils who travel on each vehicle.
- The council's seatbelt requirements follow the procedures as the law states.
- Where seat belts are provided, parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child wears the seatbelt at all times.
- In order to monitor performance of contractors, spot checks will be carried out on behalf of the authority. This may involve discussions with the contractor and parent/guardian. Digital photographs may be taken.

- In order to monitor the behaviour and safety of pupils while travelling, the authority may in some circumstances place CCTV cameras on school contract vehicles. Parents/guardians will be informed in advance of this happening and given information regarding the use of the
- CCTV footage in line with the Council policy and the Data Protection Act.

If you need to know more or wish to complain

Parents/guardians who have any concern or complaint regarding the provision of school transport may contact the school their child attends by telephone giving the details which will then be recorded and submitted to SPT. (Parents/guardians may also complain directly to SPT in writing to reinforce their concerns). SPT will respond directly to parents and advise the school of the outcome of their investigations.

SPT is responsible for placing primary and secondary school contracts and for their day-to-day operation. SPT actively monitors the performance of all school transport contracts through the deployment of a team of specialist inspectors. To assist its monitoring, SPT welcomes the raising of any issues of concern by schools or by parents. SPT can be contacted at the address given on the back of this leaflet.

If you have any enquiries about the eligibility of your child for transport, please contact Educational Services (school transport) at the address listed on the back of this leaflet.

Notes

Walking distance

Shortest, safe walking distance between your home and the designated gate of their zoned school i.e. 1 mile for primary schools and 2 miles for secondary schools.

Medical

Requests for transport on medical grounds should, in the first instance, be supported by a letter from your GP and this request may then be referred to the Community Medical Officer who may arrange to have your child examined.

Safety

If there is no reasonable safe walking route between your home and the school, please note that we will make a decision after checking the route with the Roads Section of Housing, Environmental, and Economic Department.

Placing requests

Please note that if your child attends a school by means of a placing request you are responsible for arranging transport to school.

Useful Telephone Numbers and Contacts

Your child's School	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport	Educational Services Department
	Consort house 12 West George St Glasgow G2 1HN Tel: 0141 333 3360	Head of Service Council Offices Garshake Road Dumbarton G82 3PU Tel: 01389 737313

Primary ones

Please indicate if you are interested in using the lunchtime transport for Primary 1 pupils

Please note that the granting of free travel is bound by the operator's/SPT conditions. If your child misbehaves, free travel may be withdrawn until suitable terms of agreement are reached on future behaviour.

Signature of parent/guardian	
Home telephone number	
Date	

School use only

Stage number: P/s	
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Soed Number: 8	
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Contract number:	
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Educational Services Office use only

Pupil reference number	
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Please complete and return to the school or the council office at the address shown overleaf.

School Transport Application form

Data Protection Act

Please note we may hold the information that you provide in our computer files for our use and for transport operator's use in planning and administering their services.

Pupil's Details

Name of school (to be attended)	
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Surname	
Forename	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Town	
Post Code	
Date from which transport is required	

If your child currently receives school transport, please state which school he/she attends

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This application is made because of: (please tick as appropriate)

- Walking distance (see note 1)
- Medical reasons (see note 2)
- Safety reasons (see note 3)