

Section 6

Home to School Transport

Transport legislation does not recognise catchment areas as part of the assessment criteria for the entitlement of free school transport. Only the nearest qualifying school can be considered for transport purposes and this school may not be the catchment area school.

Qualifying schools include community, foundation, voluntary schools or academies.

To qualify for help with home to school transport one of the following rules must be satisfied:

- 1. Children aged 5 – 8** attending the nearest qualifying school, with places available, and the distance between home and school must exceed 2 miles*. The 2 mile limit only applies up to the end of the term in which the child becomes 8 – after that a 3 mile limit applies;
- 2. Children aged 8-11** attending the nearest qualifying school, with places available and the distance between home and school must exceed 3 miles*;
- 3. Children aged 5 – 11** baptised into the faith and attending the nearest qualifying denominational school subject to the above qualifying distances; or
- 4. Children aged 8 - 11** from low-income families who live more than 2 miles from their nearest qualifying school (these children are entitled to receive free school meals or parents receive the maximum level of Working Tax Credit).

The LA will also “have regard to”, amongst other things, any wish of a parent for their child to be educated at the nearest qualifying school on the grounds of parents religion or belief subject to the above qualifying distance criteria. If you are applying for transport on the grounds of parents religion or belief you must provide clear written supporting evidence to demonstrate the basis on which the choice of school has been made.

In cases where parents are opposed to their children attending a faith school for reasons of non-belief and where the nearest qualifying school is a faith school, free travel will be provided to the next nearest qualifying non-faith school subject to the above qualifying distance criteria.

Following a change in legislation governing the entitlement to free school transport for low income groups, it became apparent that a number of applications did not meet the qualifying distance criteria.

Given the immediate potential impact on families it was agreed to introduce a “phasing out” period. This means that where pupils have been issued with a free bus pass and it is found their child had not been attending the nearest qualifying school, that pupil would continue to receive free travel until they left school at 16.

However, any younger sibling or new applicant for free travel would be assessed strictly in line with the home to school transport policy and unless the pupil was attending the nearest qualifying school (with places available) subject to the distance criteria free travel would not be provided.

This also applies to new applicants who may have had a sibling, who previously attended the school but left prior to their younger sibling applying for free travel.

If a pupil has been issued with a free bus pass under the above “phasing out” rule but the pupil then moves address or school mid-year the application will be treated as a new application.

Where parents feel there are very good reasons as to why an exception to the home to school transport policy should be made there is an appeals process

For further details please contact the Home to School Transport Team on 01924 305643, 305675, 306980, 305481.

**The 2 and 3 mile distance is measured as the nearest available walking route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. This route can include footpaths, bridleways and other pathways as well as recognised roads.*