

The Highland Council  
**School Transport Policy**

**1. Administrative Arrangements**

The policy on school transport is defined by the Council's Education, Culture and Sport (ECS) service. In Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey, transport is planned and administered by the Transport, Environmental and Community (TEC) Service. In other areas it is currently planned and administered by ECS, but this responsibility will move to TEC before August 2009.

**2. Statutory Obligations**

The Education Authority is required by law to arrange transport for pupils to and from school so that they do not have to walk more than the following distances each way:

- 2 miles if aged under 8;
- 3 miles if aged 8 or over.

The Education Authority is required to have regard to the safety of pupils when making arrangements for the provision of school transport.

There is no requirement to provide transport for pupils who have been granted a placing request to attend a school other than the school in whose catchment area they reside.

The relevant Act is the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Sections 42(4) and 51(1), as amended by the Education (Scotland) Act 1981, Section 2, the Education (Scotland) Act 1996, Schedule 5 and the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, Section 37.

**3. Parents/Guardians' Responsibility**

Although the Council provides assistance, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to get their child to school, in particular ensuring that the child arrives at the pick-up point on time.

Parents/Guardians are ultimately responsible for the proper and safe behaviour of their child when getting on, travelling and getting off the transport provided. Schools have the right to apply sanctions for misbehaviour on transport in exactly the same way as if the misbehaviour occurred in school. If misbehaviour is very serious or persists after a warning the school may also suspend the provision of free transport for a period of time. The school will involve parents/guardians at an early stage in any disciplinary measures which are considered necessary. If free school transport has been withdrawn, parents will be responsible for making travel arrangements to ensure that the

child continues to attend school (unless the pupil has also been excluded from school).

#### **4. Entitlement to Free School Transport**

Highland Council provides free school transport if:

- a child is under eight years old, lives in the catchment area of the school which he or she attends, and lives more than two miles away from that school (by the shortest safe walking route)
- a child is aged eight years and over, lives in the catchment area of the school which he or she attends, and lives more than three miles away from that school (by the shortest safe walking route)
- a child has a medical condition which the Council has accepted as making him or her unfit or unable to walk to school
- a child has been assessed as having additional support needs which include transport provision
- a child would have to walk a route which is considered by the Council to be unsafe for children to walk, even when accompanied by an adult.

The Council does not undertake to provide door to door transport. In many cases pupils will have to walk some distance to a pick-up point.

The provision of transport for pupils attending special schools is arranged by the Education Authority on the basis of individual needs.

Free school transport is not provided for pupils who have been granted a placing request. Parents of these children should make appropriate transport arrangements to ensure their child arrives at school safely. Such pupils may, however, be provided with concessionary transport if available. (See section below.)

The Council does not provide transport for pre-school education.

#### **5. Definition of Free School Transport**

Free transport normally covers transport to school in the morning and transport from school to home in the afternoon. No additional provision is made for homeward journeys for Primary 1 children who may have a shorter day for the first four weeks of the year or for infant children who attend for a shorter day than pupils in the upper stages. In these instances, children entitled to transport who are not collected by parents are supervised until the end of the normal school day.

Provision for transport home from after-school activities is not provided as part of the school transport policy. If no suitable public transport is available, schools may at their own discretion arrange such transport.

## **6. Application for Free School Transport**

Applications for free school transport should be made on the form provided (download [here](#)) when pupils are enrolled for primary school. Secondary school pupils should apply in February of the pupil's last year at primary school. They will be notified by 30 April if their application has been accepted or refused.

Applications for transport due to a change of address may be made at any time but should be made as soon as the new needs are known. There may be a short delay while arrangements are made. If a pupil already receiving transport moves house at any time during the year, a fresh application for transport should be made.

## **7. School Transport Appeals Procedures**

Parents/guardians may appeal against any decision to refuse school transport. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Transport Development Officer, Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX, clearly stating the grounds for appeal, and must be made within 30 days of receipt of the decision.

## **8. Types of School Transport**

Highland Council contracts out school transport provision to local transport providers. The type of transport depends on the requirements of the route and the tenders received. The transport supplied could be one of the following:

- dedicated school contract bus (service solely for pupils)
- bus pass on local service bus
- taxi or private hire car
- ferry
- a Council-owned vehicle.

## **9. Capacity and Seat Belts**

The capacity of a vehicle will be based on one seat per pupil and seat belts will be provided for all pupils.

## **10. Concessionary Transport**

On a "dedicated" school contract i.e. for school pupils only, after seats have been allocated to children who meet the criteria for free school transport, any vacant seats may be allocated for concessionary transport. Education Authorities have a statutory obligation to allocate seats to concessionary applicants if available. Where the number of requests for concessionary

transport is greater than the number of seats available, appropriate criteria will be used to determine allocation.

This transport is not guaranteed for any period of time and may be withdrawn if more children are granted free school transport by meeting the criteria for entitlement.

### **11. Additional Support Needs**

Transport will often be required for pupils with additional support needs, and in many cases, accompanying escorts will also be provided. Provision will normally be in accordance with recommendations made by the Council's Psychological Services.

### **12. Disclosure Checks**

All drivers and escorts employed on school transport contracts have undergone Enhanced Disclosure Scotland checks, and have been cleared by an authorised officer of the Council as being an appropriate person to have responsibility for children.

### **13. Quality Management**

The Council will monitor and inspect the quality of school contracts periodically. Comments, suggestions or complaints should be made in the first instance to the officer who has granted the provision of transport, or to [public.transport@highland.gov.uk](mailto:public.transport@highland.gov.uk).

### **14. Emergency Arrangements**

Every effort will be made to ensure that pupils travelling on school transport get to and from school each day. However, transport operators or drivers may cancel journeys if, in their judgment, adverse weather would make the journey unsafe. If journeys are cancelled or alternative arrangements need to be made, every effort will be made to notify parents/guardians/pupils as quickly as possible. Communication will normally be via local radio, and a phone information line is available for each school; parents are given the appropriate number.

### **Further information**

Further information regarding this policy is available from the Transport Development Officer, Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX, or from [public.transport@highland.gov.uk](mailto:public.transport@highland.gov.uk).