



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

Department of Education and Children's Services

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

1. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

- 1.1 Home to School Transport is the service provided to and from the designated catchment area school and the primary address of each pupil on the SEEMIS system. The only exceptions to this are detailed in Section 10 of the policy.
- 1.2 Pupils who move address during the summer holidays or have previously not informed the school of a change of address, will not receive entitlement to transport or a bus pass for their new address until they start school in August and the school have updated their residency details on SEEMIS.
- 1.3 Pupils who may qualify for assistance and a place on the Home to School Transport service (subject to the further qualifying criteria set out later in this policy) will be:
- All Primary and Secondary pupils, who are ordinarily resident in the Western Isles and attending their catchment area school;
 - Any Primary and Secondary pupils who are not ordinarily resident in the Western Isles but who will be temporarily resident in the Western Isles for a period more than six weeks;
 - Students repeating S6 or returning to school to complete their studies after one year out of education.
- 1.4 Transport for children or young people with Additional Support Needs requiring special assistance with travel up to their 19th birthday is not covered by this policy. Please refer to the Comhairle ASN Transport Policy.
- 1.5 Early Learning and Childcare pupils will not be entitled to assistance with transport from home to nursery under this policy. The Comhairle has no statutory obligation to provide Home to School Transport for nursery children.
- 1.6 Pupils are “entitled” to Home to School Transport when they attend their catchment area primary school and live more than two miles from it, and when they attend their secondary catchment area school and live more than 3 miles from it.
- 1.7 Where there are vacant seats on dedicated school transport services, the Comhairle must make them available to other pupils, including pupils who do not meet the entitlement criteria for school transport. Where there are vacant seats on integrated public/school transport services, it is at the discretion of the Comhairle how many seats are made available to pupils who do not meet the entitlement criteria for school transport. Spare capacity on ASN Transport is not available for use as part of Home to School Transport (access to this service is only by assessment and a needs matrix). The Comhairle may charge for the use of vacant seats on Home to School Transport. However, if a charging scheme is introduced, the Comhairle will have regard to the financial circumstances of the parents and whether the charges would cause undue hardship – no families in receipt of Clothing Grant will be charged for use of a vacant seat under this policy.
- 1.8 Non entitled places on Home to School Transport must be re-applied for each school year at the appropriate time – see Section 3.2. If the number of non-entitled pupils exceeds the number of vacant seats available, the Comhairle must select which of those pupils can travel on the vehicle. If the number of pupils entitled to places subsequently increases during the academic year, **then those who are not entitled will need to relinquish their places.** If the number of catchment area pupils subsequently increases during the academic year, **then placing request pupils will need to relinquish their places.** If more applications are received than the number of vacant seats on any given route then priority shall be given as follows:
To those attending their catchment area school over those attending an alternative school by parental choice;
Amongst those attending their catchment area school, to those who live furthest away;
Amongst those attending an alternative school by parental choice – applications in date order of placing request approval.

2. STANDARD QUALIFYING DISTANCE FOR ASSISTANCE WITH HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

- 2.1 The Comhairle's policy is that primary school pupils, except for pupils who are the subject of a placing request, shall be required to walk up to 3220 metres (two miles) during their journey to or from their catchment area school. The Comhairle's policy is that secondary school pupils, except for pupils who are the subject of a placing request, shall be required to walk up to 4830 metres (three miles) during their journey to or from their catchment area school. These rules are qualified by the requirement that where a home accesses an unadopted road, transport will only be provided from the nearest public road and pupils will be required to walk to this road for pick up. The Comhairle is not required to provide "door-to-door" transport. Children may be expected to walk anything up to the legally specified maximum walking distance to/from the transport pick-up and drop-off (PUDO) point. Parents/carers are responsible for this part of the journey. The PUDO will be clearly identified in the letters sent out by the Comhairle and on the bus pass itself. The Comhairle currently requires each PUDO to be identified within 1610 metres (1 mile) of the entrance to the pupil's residence in a safe location as specified by the Transport Section of the Comhairle.
- 2.3 The distance between a pupil's home and the catchment area school will be measured to determine eligibility for Home to School Transport. Where the distance between a pupil's home and the catchment area school is disputed or where the measurement of distance is on the border of approval, the Comhairle will award Home to School Transport with a limited tolerance of 30 metres to take account of potential topographical features which may alter the accuracy of a 2D electronic measurement. This discretion will always be exercised to the advantage of the school pupil. There is no right of appeal where the distance has been physically verified by the Comhairle and is more than thirty metres greater than the relevant policy distance.

3. PROVISION OF TRANSPORT ON EDUCATION SERVICES

- 3.1 Pupils travelling as entitled pupils on Home to School Transport will continue to do so in future years when attending on P2-P6 and S1-S5, without the requirement to apply.
- 3.2 For new pupils to P1 and all P7 pupils transitioning to their catchment secondary school, Home to School Transport is an application-based system and requires an annual application to generate a place on the bus service. Non-entitled pupils may take advantage of any spare capacity which is allocated to the Home to School Transport service as part of the relevant bus contracts – see Section 1.8 of this policy. Transport requests can be done by making an online application for a spare place on the Home to School Transport Service at the appropriate time each year. Pupils may also use their Under 22s NEC Travel Card to travel free on public service vehicles. It is now expected that the Under 22s NEC Travel Card is used by pupils when travelling home from after school clubs on later public services.
- 3.3 Pupils referred to above must apply for a place on transport annually using the online application form. **All parents of pupils in the categories in 3.2 above who wish their child to travel on the Home to School Transport Service will need to fill in an online Home to School Transport Application Form and a Code of Conduct form to guarantee their child a place on the bus while attending their catchment area school.** A link to the relevant form will be issued to parents of P1 pupils during the enrolment process. A link to the form is to be issued to the parents when a new child moves into the catchment area and enrolls in a school. This application process allows the Transport Section of the Communities Department to issue the new annual list of entitled pupils to contracted bus operators so they can plan their bus provision for the start of term in August each year. The Code of Conduct is required to ensure parents are aware of the behaviour expected from pupils while travelling on the service. Pupils failing to adhere to the conditions identified in the code of conduct while travelling on the bus may be subject to disciplinary action by the school. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher of each school to deal with pupil behaviour issues arising on buses appropriately and as if they happened on the school campus. In extreme cases, as a last resort, a pupil's bus pass may be removed by the school on a temporary or permanent basis.

4. PLACING REQUESTS

- 4.1 Parents sending their children to a school other than the normal catchment area school because of a placing request¹ shall organise the transport themselves. This may include the use of an Under 22s NEC Travel Card on scheduled public bus services. Priority for spare places on the Home to School Transport Service is for pupils attending their catchment area school – see Section 1.8 for details.

5. SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 If an agreed² course of education is only available at a particular school, that school shall be held to be the catchment school even where it is not the nearest school. In catchment areas where the school only supports English Medium pupils, parents of Gaelic Medium pupils are entitled to send their child to the nearest Gaelic Medium School. That school shall be held to be their catchment area school even though it is not their nearest school. Similarly, in catchment areas where the school only supports Gaelic Medium pupils, parents of English Medium pupils are entitled to send their child to the nearest English Medium School. That school shall be held to be their catchment area school even though it is not their nearest school.

6. SAFETY OF PUPILS NOT ENTITLED TO HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

- 6.1 Where the safety of a walking pupil is in question, parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring their child's safe arrival at school. Where the parent of a pupil who is not entitled to Home to School Transport maintains that it is not safe to walk to the pupil's school, the education authority will take a decision on the matter considering:
- The responsibilities of the parents
 - The age of the pupil(s)
 - The nature, type and volume of traffic
 - The width of the carriageway
 - The presence or otherwise of footpaths
 - The presence of lighting
 - The presence of crossing facilities
 - The existence of a public service
 - The presence of high banking, ditches or other roadside features
 - Any temporary road conditions which may exist at the time
 - Any home to school travel plans in operation in the vicinity (see 12.1)
 - Any other factors which may exceptionally be relevant.
- 6.2 A route assessment will be requested from the Road Safety Section of the Assets, Finance and Resources Department in each case to ensure a consistent source of advice on relative road conditions.
- 6.3 Where any route (or part route) to school is designated as unsafe to the extent that no pupil of a particular age could be expected to walk whether supervised or unsupervised, that route (or part route) will be designated as such until road circumstances change. Any further pupils required to travel on that route (or part route) will be entitled to Home to School Transport. Any such routes will be kept under annual review by the Comhairle and changes in circumstances formally recorded and noted on the Comhairle website. Where road improvements have been made and the route is re-assessed as safe to walk while accompanied – entitlement to transport will be withdrawn and the website updated.
- 6.4 Where parents have expressed safety concerns and the route (or part route) to school is designated as safe to

¹ Placing requests must be made in all circumstances where a pupil resides out with the catchment area of the school they attend - including where the pupil moves out of the catchment area but continues to go to school there.

² Only courses of education agreed to be in the best interest of the pupil educationally by the Chief Officer Education and Children's Services will apply.

walk when supervised, after a route assessment – the matter will be referred as an appeal to the Education, Sport and Children's Services Sub-Committee. Any decision by the Education, Sport and Children's Services Sub-Committee to award Home to School Transport entitlement after a successful appeal will be time limited and for not longer than one year. The parents will be advised of the time limit of the award and of the specific grounds on which the award was made. The circumstances will be reviewed annually and the parent advised of any change following the annual review.

7. PROVISION OF TRANSPORT ON PERMANENT CHANGE OF HOME

- 7.1 Where a pupil continues at a school other than his or her catchment school (on a placing request basis) following a permanent change of address, the Comhairle will provide Home to School Transport only in exceptional circumstances and only in cases where, in the view of the Chief Officer Education and Children's Services, it is essential that the pupil continue at the placement (original) school for educational reasons. The duration of the provision of transport will be determined in the circumstances of each case by the Chief Officer Education and Children's Services.

8. PROVISION OF TRANSPORT ON TEMPORARY CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- 8.1 Where a pupil experiences a temporary change of address but remains at his or her original catchment area school, Home to School Transport from that address will only be provided in wholly exceptional circumstances and where the change of address is out with the parents' control rather than as a matter of personal choice (e.g., where a family has been temporarily moved from their home due to fire damage or other unforeseen events.) The duration of the entitlement to transport will be determined in the circumstances of each case by Chief Officer Education and Children's Services.

9. PROVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT ON MEDICAL GROUNDS

- 9.1 The Comhairle will provide Home to School Transport on medical grounds only based on an unambiguous opinion by an appropriate medical adviser that provision of Home to School Transport is necessary to prevent injury to a child's health. The Comhairle will seek independent medical advice if judged appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

10. PROVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT TO MORE THAN ONE ADDRESS

- When enrolling a pupil in a primary or secondary school, only one address can be used to identify the catchment area and entitlement to Home to School Transport.
- 10.1 Allocation to a second bus route with an entitled bus pass is only possible when parents are subject to a residence order with linked contact order made by the court (either the Sheriff Court or Court of Session) stating with whom a child or children shall live.

11. NATURE OF TRANSPORT PROVIDED

- 11.1 Home to School Transport will be provided by the Comhairle on the following basis:
- The transport may be an education only bus, minibus or taxi contract with school pupils only carried, or may be an integrated bus service where pupils and members of the public travel together but must arrive at each school at least five minutes before their designated opening times;
 - The transport provided will be the most efficient having regard to the numbers of pupils (and members of the public where appropriate), opening times of each individual school, any specific pupil requirements (e.g. wheelchair accessibility), road conditions and may vary from a taxi car to a full size coach;
 - Compliance with all relevant legislation and Comhairle policy and guidelines will continue to be a condition of contract for operators providing services;
 - Operator compliance with contract conditions will be monitored by the Comhairle Communities Department. This will include regular surveys of client satisfaction and spot checks on route operation, bus standards and journey timings;

- Where agreed with parents and suitable in the circumstances of a particular case, the Comhairle may at its discretion pay a parent a standard mileage rate (equivalent to HMRC tax free limit) for them to transport their child or children to school.

11.2 Home to School Transport arrangements are reviewed annually prior to the start of the new academic year based on information entered into the SEEMIS system by schools detailing the latest pupil numbers and locations. The new pupil lists for each route are then supplied to contracted bus operators to ensure they have capacity available to meet the contracted needs of schools or to redesign their services to meet the new demand. Pupils who are entitled to school transport will be provided with the appropriate bus pass and details of their route and operator before the start of the August term each year.

11.3 Changes to Home to School Transport services may be required at any time in the academic year to cater for pupil or other changes. Any such changes to routes or operators will, except in emergencies or other exceptional circumstances, be advised to pupils and parents with at least 14 days' notice.

12 TIMING OF TRANSPORT

12.1 The times of Home to School Transport will be determined having regard to the following criteria:

- **The need for effective integration** - Where possible school services should be integrated with public services but having regard to the opening times of the schools attended by relevant pupils;
- **The length of the journey for school pupils** - No pupil entitled to Home to School Transport shall ordinarily be expected to travel for more than one hour and twenty minutes and the Comhairle will aim to limit all journeys for primary pupils to no more than 40 minutes. Secondary pupils may be required to travel more than one hour on their journey to school. The Comhairle will actively minimise the travel time for those pupils, using the most effective means of transport, with the goal of keeping all pupil travel time under one hour and twenty minutes;
- **The waiting time required at the beginning and end of the school day** - No pupil entitled to Home to School Transport shall be required to arrive earlier than and leave later than 30 minutes at the beginning or end of the school day. In normal circumstances, the Comhairle will aim to contain all waiting times to a maximum of 20 minutes. The Comhairle will aim to minimise the waiting time at the end of the school day for those pupils who live more than twenty miles from their school by prioritising their bus services over other services.

13. AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND EXAMINATIONS

School pupils attending after school activities should use their National Entitlement Card (NEC) to travel home on any available public service bus. Pupils attending official scheduled examinations during the school day should also use their NEC card to travel to school on any available public service bus.

National Entitlement Cards:

Primary Pupils: Junior NEC Card - call 01851 822 661

Secondary Pupils: Young Scot NEC card - contact youngscot@cne-siar.gov.uk

14. APPEALS AGAINST NON-PROVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

14.1 Parents may appeal against all decisions taken about section 3 to 10 of this policy where the parents or pupils believe this decision was unsuitable in the circumstances of their case.

14.2 All such appeals will be to the Education, Sport and Children's Services Sub-Committee.

14.3 Appeals will normally be heard by the Sub-Committee within 28 days of the appeal being lodged unless external advice needs to be sought by the Comhairle, further information being required from the appellant or a Road Safety Assessment is necessary. If external advice is sought by the Comhairle (independent medical advice) the Sub-Committee will meet within 14 days of the receipt of this advice if later than 28 days since the submission of the appeal. If further advice is sought from the appellant, the Sub-Committee will meet within 28 days of the receipt of this information.

- 14.4 The parents (and/or their representatives – or exceptionally pupils) will be invited to attend the Sub-Committee if they wish to present their case in person or over Teams. The Sub-Committee will also seek the views of officers of the Comhairle and may seek the views of any other parties whose evidence would be material to the appeal.
- 14.5 In the event of an appeal being upheld, the Sub-Committee will specifically include a time limit against each award to indicate when they wish the case to be revisited.
- 14.6 The Education and Children’s Services Department and the Communities Department Transport Section will review each such case at least three months before the expiry of the award and, in the event of changed circumstances, the education authority will write to the pupil’s parents (copied to the local member) indicating that the education authority is of the view that free transport provision will no longer be appropriate on the expiry of the original decision.
- 14.7 If this decision is disputed, the parents will have the opportunity to make a fresh appeal against that decision to the Sub-Committee.

15. SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL

- 15.1 The Scottish Government have published guidance on “How to Run a Safer Routes to School Scheme” which is intended as a tool kit of measures for everyone involved in the journey to school. Safer Routes to School, or a *school travel plan*, is a multi-disciplinary school-based approach which aims to improve safety and remove barriers to walking and cycling to and from school. There are many advantages if more children can walk or cycle to school safely:
- the physical exercise can help to improve children's health, and active children are more likely to become healthier active adults
 - the environment and safety around schools can be improved because of less traffic
 - for many children it is their first opportunity to travel independently and an important part of personal and social development
 - children learn efficient travel habits
 - there are opportunities for parents and Councils to save money.
- 15.2 The Comhairle endorses the aims of the “Safer Routes to School” initiative but acknowledges the lack of local infrastructure, persistent bad weather (wind and rain) during winter, spring and autumn, contribute to a situation where there are limited options for a school to successfully adopt a school travel plan involving walking and cycling and also to have the support of parents.

16. SCHOOL TRANSPORT GUIDANCE

The Comhairle have produced a School Transport Guidance for pupils, parents and schools. This document contains information on care, welfare and behaviour of pupils on schools transport, getting to and from pick up/drop off points (PUDOs), travelling on the bus, discipline, supervision and winter emergencies. A copy of this document will be issued to parents when they enrol their child. This document will be updated every 3 years and a QR code and bitly link will be issued by Groupcall email to all parents with access to the latest version of this document online.



The diagram illustrates the 'School Zone' concept and the 'Responsibility Key' for different transport modes. The 'School Zone' is defined as the area around the school, including the school itself and the surrounding streets. The 'Responsibility Key' identifies the responsible party for each transport mode:

- Comhairle** (Council): Represented by a blue line.
- Driver**: Represented by a green line.
- Parent**: Represented by a red line.
- School / Headteacher**: Represented by a light blue line.

The diagram shows the following transport modes and their associated responsibility lines:

- Home** (Red box): The starting point for all journeys.
- pick-up & drop-off point** (Blue box): The location where the journey begins or ends.
- Comhairle** (Blue line): Connects the Home to the pick-up & drop-off point.
- Driver** (Green line): Connects the pick-up & drop-off point to the School.
- Parent** (Red line): Connects the Home to the School.
- School / Headteacher** (Light blue line): Connects the School to the pick-up & drop-off point.

The diagram also shows the following transport modes and their associated responsibility lines:

- Car** (Car icon): Represented by a red line (Parent).
- Walking** (Walking person icon): Represented by a red line (Parent).
- Bicycle** (Bicycle icon): Represented by a red line (Parent).
- Bus** (Bus icon): Represented by a blue line (Comhairle).
- Taxi** (Taxi icon): Represented by a green line (Driver).