

Travel to school assistance

Travel to school assistance:

The basic legal responsibility for children's travel to school rests with parents/carers. In some circumstances, the Council will provide assistance with that travel. The following pages set out the circumstances in which assistance may be provided.

Who is eligible for assistance with travel to school?

For pupils of statutory school age (5-16 years) travel support is provided if:

- the school attended is the nearest appropriate school, as determined by South Gloucestershire Council; and
- the distance between home and that school, when measured by the nearest available walking route, is more than the 'statutory walking distance'.

The statutory walking distance is two miles for pupils aged up to eight and three miles for those aged eight and over. The statutory walking distance is 'measured by the shortest route along which a child accompanied as necessary may walk with reasonable safety'.

Distances are measured from home to the nearest school gate using the South Gloucestershire Council Routes to School Gazetteer.

Children aged under five years who are full time pupils in reception classes will also be eligible for assistance with travel to school provided they meet the conditions set out above. Travel support is not provided for part time pupils at lunch time.

What form of assistance with travel is provided?

The options may include:

- a travel pass for use on bus or rail;
- reimbursement (at rates set by the Council) for mileage for parents/carers.
Note: this will only be in cases agreed by the Council where, for example, the home location is very inaccessible;
- provision of an escort to walk to school;
- a cycling allowance.

Hired/contract vehicles will be used only in exceptional circumstances, as decided by the Council, for example because of the nature of the route or the disabilities of the child.

The decision on the form of assistance with travel is made by the Council. The costs to the Council's public budget must not be unreasonable.

Will I be eligible for travel assistance to my preferred school?

The policies that apply to school admissions and travel to school operate under separate legal requirements. In particular, if a pupil is offered a place in a more distant school preferred by the parent/carer this does not in any way guarantee that assistance with travel will be available.

Parents/carers are advised to think about transport issues when applying for a school place. If you do not apply for your nearest appropriate school as your highest ranking preference your child may not be given free transport to any school. You must then accept full responsibility for the cost and arrangements for your child's travel to and from school.

Is there any assistance with travel to school on the basis of family income?

Children entitled to free school meals or whose families are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit will be entitled to assistance with travel if they are aged between eight and 11 years and live more than two miles (measured in the same way as the statutory walking distance) from their nearest qualifying school.

Children aged between 11 and 16 in receipt of free school meals or whose families are in receipt of the maximum of Working Tax Credit will be entitled to assistance with travel if they are attending one of the three nearest qualifying schools and live between two miles (walking route) and six miles (road route) from that school.

When a child aged between 11 and 16 comes from a low income family (entitled to free school meals or the maximum level of Working Tax Credit) and attends the nearest faith based school on grounds of membership of that faith, and the home to school journey is more than two miles and not more than 15 miles, assistance with travel will generally be provided.

How long does eligibility for travel support last?

Once eligibility for support has been confirmed, the child will generally be eligible for the rest of that school year.

Eligibility will be reviewed, and may be cancelled, in certain circumstances including:

- a change in home address;
- a change in school attended;
- a change in family income so that the low income criteria are no longer met.

Where the Council decides to change any local policies on eligibility, parents/carers will be given reasonable notice of the change.

Is there any consideration for children with Special Educational Needs?

Pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (SEN) have the same entitlement to assistance with travel as any other South Gloucestershire pupil on the grounds of distance.

Some children with SEN will have no entitlement under the normal travel to school policies but will be considered on a case by case basis depending on the child's particular needs and disabilities. In specific cases entitlement may include access to a guide escort.

If a child attends a school on parental/carers preference which is not the nearest appropriate school, as defined by the Council, then assistance with travel will not be available.

Is there any assistance for 16+ years students at school or college?

In general, assistance is limited to students who are of statutory school age, i.e. up to the age of 16 years. The statutory school age has not been altered by the new requirements to participate in education or training up to 18 years of age.

Travel support may be offered to students over the age of 16 years who have special needs or learning difficulties and disabilities, though they must meet the eligibility criteria.

Students and their families are strongly advised to read the detailed policies and arrangements set out in the [South Gloucestershire Transport Policy Statement](#).

With effect from September 2018, a contributory payment will be required where assistance is given with travel. The charge will be £456 per year, payable in three termly instalments of £152. Students/families entitled to the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (the free school meal level) will not be required to pay but proof of entitlement will be required.

Is there any additional consideration for exceptionally hazardous routes to school?

Generally, travel assistance will not be provided for pupils who live nearer to school than the statutory walking distance. But, if the nearest available walking route to the nearest appropriate school represents a significant and particular road danger, transport may be provided even if it is nearer than the statutory walking distance to school.

The decision on whether a route is exceptionally hazardous is made by the Council.

Travel assistance on hazardous route grounds is not provided where the parent opts for a school other than the nearest appropriate school.

Is there any help with travel to school in exceptional circumstances?

The Council may use its discretion to provide assistance with travel where children who are not eligible are in exceptional difficulty. Examples might include:

- pupils with temporary medical problems;
- pupils living in emergency (time-limited) accommodation;
- pupils with parents/carers who are disabled.

Each case is considered on its merits and advice may be sought from medical or other professionals who are involved. Where travel assistance is agreed, it will be only for a limited period.

If I am refused assistance with travel to school can I appeal?

When a parent/carer is dissatisfied with the decision on assistance with travel, it is possible to appeal.

An appeal is considered by a senior officer (not previously involved in the case) who will consider all the circumstances afresh. The consideration of an appeal will take into account:

- the law and South Gloucestershire local policy on home to school transport;
- the original application for assistance and the reasons for its refusal;
- the circumstances set out in the appeal and any supporting information/documents.

The outcome of an appeal can be to uphold the original decision, to amend it or to decide that assistance with travel should be given because of the exceptional circumstances of the appellant's case.

Will I receive assistance with travel to a faith/church school when my child is attending that school on faith grounds?

Since September 2013, the Council has no longer, generally, given assistance to new starters travelling to faith schools even when the child is attending on faith grounds and regardless of distance.

There is an exception for children from low income families as set out above.

If my child is not eligible for assistance with travel to school is there any other help?

When contract vehicles are arranged to serve particular schools there are sometimes spare seats not required by entitled passengers. These seats can be made available as CONCESSIONARY SEATS to other children. There is a charge (September 2018) of £152 per school term (excepted in the case of free school meal entitlement).

There is no guarantee that concessionary seats will be available on any particular route or that they will be available for a particular length of time. As far as possible, contract vehicles are specified to the capacity required for entitled passengers.

The information on [CONCESSIONARY TRANSPORT](#) sets out some current discounts which may be available on a commercial basis from local bus companies.

How do I apply for assistance with travel costs?

To apply for assistance with travel to school costs please download an [application form](#) and return to:

South Gloucestershire Council

Admissions and Transport Team
Department for Children, Adults & Health
PO Box 1955
Bristol
BS37 ODE

Telephone 01454 868008

PLEASE NOTE: The information set out above contains only the basic points in assistance with travel to school. If you are in any doubt about your own position or require further or more detailed information please contact the Admissions and Transport Team, as above.

What happens where assistance with travel is agreed?

Assistance with travel, where appropriate, is agreed by the Admissions and Transport Team. The detailed practical arrangements are then made by the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) which issues travel passes, arranges any contract vehicles and allocates passengers to routes. The ITU will notify parents of the transport arrangements and any changes.

The ITU is also responsible for employing escorts, where agreed, and will liaise with parents about any special equipment or vehicles required for children with special needs or disabilities.

The ITU, through contract arrangements, will require drivers and escorts to undergo CRB vetting in the interests of child protection.

Where assistance with travel is agreed the following points should be noted by parents/carers:

- except where specifically agreed, travel assistance is not a 'door to door' service. The ITU will identify pick up points/bus stops for transport and parents/carers will be responsible for the safety of children to and from those points;
- it is important that where children have places on a contract vehicle, parents/carers should inform the ITU if their child will not be attending school. This will reduce unnecessary expenditure;

- in the case of contract vehicles parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that children are ready on time to be picked up and that they are available to receive the child when they return;
- in the interests of safety and other passengers it is important that children behave when using transport. Persistent/serious misbehaviour which poses a threat to other passengers, the driver and/or escort and the safety of the vehicle may result in transport assistance being withdrawn. In that event, the parent/carer will then have to arrange transport to school;
- any parental concerns about drivers/escorts should be reported to the ITU;
- in the case of severe weather events the Council will arrange as far as possible to announce school closures and any transport cancellations on local radio.