

FOR BOURNEMOUTH RESIDENTS GENERAL TRANSPORT TO SCHOOL GUIDANCE NOTES

Many parents worry about how they can help their children to get to and from school each day. Bournemouth Borough Council can help in some cases. This information will give you guidance about who can claim for assistance with transport to school. Assistance is normally in the form of a bus pass. Transport provision is subject to regular review. If you move home or your child moves school you must inform us immediately and this could mean that entitlement to transport assistance is ceased because your child no longer qualifies. This guidance also provides information on how to appeal the decision to refuse transport.

How far must I live from my catchment school to qualify for free travel?

The distance measurement for children attending their catchment school is a statutory measurement and is measured by the nearest available safe walking route. The distance is 2 miles and over for children aged under 8 years old and 3 miles and over for children aged 8 years and over. The route can include footpaths, bridleways, other pathways as well as recognised roads. This is referred to as the distance criteria. Parents should accompany their children if they feel they need to do so.

What if my child is not attending the catchment school?

If you have expressed a parental preference for a school other than the catchment school, you must accept responsibility for your child's daily travelling arrangements to and from the school, including any costs incurred.

Are there any exceptions to this? YES:

- **For primary school children (Reception to Year 6)** where families are on Free School Meals or the maximum level of Working Tax Credit and the **distance from home to school is at least two miles, and normally not more than five miles transport assistance will be provided to their nearest qualifying school and;
- ***For secondary school children (Year 7 to Year 11)** where families are on Free School Meals and the distance from home to school is at least three miles, and not more than ten miles. Please note the entitlement for children in Years 7-11 will be also include children attending secondary school who are on Free School Meals or the maximum level of Working Tax Credit to one of their 3 nearest qualifying schools if it falls between **2 and no more than 6 miles from home or up to a maximum of 15 miles if the nearest faith school. **Please note distance measurements over 2 miles a road route will be used.

If your child is attending a school for one of the following reasons, assistance may be provided as follows:

Year group full - when the catchment school is full, then a child may be eligible for assistance with transport to the next nearest school with an available place, provided the distance criteria are met. They do however need to ensure they apply for their catchment school and remain on the waiting list for the school as this transport is reviewed regularly to ensure entitlement is still applicable.

Re-housing - if a family is moved from an area on a short term basis (i.e. re-housed by the council or another housing association) transport to the existing school may be offered for the period of the temporary re-housing, until the family's return to permanent accommodation. Once again the distance criteria will need to be met. If the transport is agreed during the summer term, it is for one term only.

Medical – assistance may be considered, if a child has a medical condition that would affect their ability to get to school, if the child is attending the catchment/qualifying school. Also where for a route to be considered safe it relies on the parent accompanying the child and because of the parent's disability they are unable to do so. Proof of the child's medical condition will need to be provided by a School Medical Officer. Proof of a parent's disability can be a letter detailing the higher award of disability benefit for mobility or a letter from a hospital consultant indicating that the parent cannot walk.

Continuity - a child in year 10 or 11 who has already started GCSE study may be eligible for assistance if the family move, providing the distance between the home and school is 3 miles or more and is still within reasonable daily travelling distance.

What about 4 year olds who are not attending school for a full day?

Transport will be provided only at the start and end of a school day. Parents are normally responsible for any midday travel where your child attends school for part of the day. There may be exceptions to this so you should check with the Admissions Services Team on (01202) 456200 for confirmation.

Are there any concessions available?

The Bournemouth Borough Transport Group either hires vehicles to take children to and from school or pays for bus passes. Very occasionally there may be one or more seats on small hired vehicles which are available to children not eligible for free transport. A fixed price will be charged for these concessionary places unless the family is in receipt of Free School Meals or maximum level of Working Tax Credit. However, a concessionary place may not be available and, at very short notice you could be faced with making your own transport arrangements to and from the school of your choice. This happens if:

- The seat is required for an pupil who is entitled under the policy
- The service is withdrawn, or
- The passenger-carrying capacity of the vehicle is reduced.

What about when my child reaches 16 years of age?

Once your child reaches the age of 16 and is above statutory school age, the Authority has no legal obligation to help with transport. The present policy is that assistance can be given if your child is attending the nearest appropriate school or college (as designated by the LA) if the parents are in receipt of Income Support, income based Job Seekers' Allowance, Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit up to the level of income (as assessed by the Inland Revenue) which will qualify the family for help with health costs and if the distance when measured by the nearest available safe walking route is five miles or more.

How is unacceptable behaviour on transport dealt with?

Children travelling on LA transport are expected to conform to the accepted code of behaviour, which applies in the school. Any breach will be dealt with by the school. Public transport operators are entitled to refuse to provide a service where there would be a risk to safety. In addition, the Passenger Transport Unit at Bournemouth LA will be informed and they will consider withdrawing the bus pass for up to 12 weeks for a serious incident: parents will be informed accordingly. If the behaviour is repeated the child will be banned from transport provision and parents will be expected to make alternative transport arrangements. The LA works with bus operators, schools, parents and the police in dealing with behaviour issues.

What information will I receive about the transport arranged for my child?

The Passenger Transport Unit will send you a booklet "Passenger Transport" which gives important information. You will also be sent details about the transport that has been arranged. You may be offered an appointment for a photograph to be taken prior to issue of the photo bus pass.

Can I appeal or request a review of the original decision made about help with transport?

Yes. You may request that the initial decision to refuse is reviewed if you are unhappy with the decision to refuse transport or with the transport provision put in place. You will need to put your reasons for wishing to have the review in writing to **The Manager, Access Services, Community Learning & Commissioning, TH E3, Town Hall, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth BH2 6DY.**

The original decision will then be reviewed by a Senior Officer within the Council who is independent of the original decision and they will write to you with the outcome of their investigation into your specific circumstances.

Please ensure you provide all relevant professional or medical reports with your request to review the decision. If you do not provide all the information or evidence to support your request it may be that

important information is not able to be taken into account for the review process. If you are unsure if a document or information is important please include it as all information and evidence you provide to the Senior Officer will be considered.

What can I do if I am still unhappy with the outcome of the Review by the Senior Officer?

If you remain unhappy with the response you receive from the Senior Officer then you can lodge an appeal with the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel are also independent of the original decision process and will then consider the original decision and the review. If you require an appeal form you may contact the Admissions Services Team on (01202) 456200, or download a form from the Bournemouth Borough Council website. If you wish to make a complaint you can follow the Bournemouth Borough Council Corporate Complaints procedure via the website, information is also available from Customer Services. Attached with this Guidance is a flowchart of the review and appeals process detailing the timescales.

Who should I contact if I wish to complain about how my Review and Appeal was processed?

If you remain unhappy following the review and appeal process you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman on telephone number 0300 061 0614 or in writing P O Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH. The Local Government Ombudsman will consider complaints where there was a failure of the Local Authority to comply with the procedural rules or if there were any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled. If the complainant considers the decision of the Appeal Panel is flawed on public law grounds, the complainant may also apply for a judicial review.

We hope that this information will be helpful to you. If you require assistance with completing the form please do not hesitate to contact us:

**Admissions Service, Community Learning & Commissioning, Extension 3,
Town Hall, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth, BH2 6DY Tel: (01202) 456200**

This information is a brief guide and is correct at the time of going to print. The full policy is subject to review and could be changed at any time.

Is there assistance for children aged 16 and over?

This service is for children under 16 only. If your child is aged 16 or over and you are interested in finding out about the type of transport support available, you may wish to look at our Post 16 Travel Statement. This can be found here:

<https://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/childreducation/Schools/help-with-transport-to-school.aspx>