

APPENDIX A

Transport Policy 2014/15

The LA is required to determine whether the provision of transport for pupils of statutory school age is necessary to facilitate the attendance at a designated school of the pupil concerned. If such transport is deemed necessary, then the transport must be provided free of charge.

Statutory transport provision

The LA provides free transport for children of compulsory school age (i.e. 5-16yrs) as follows:-

- where a child receiving primary education lives over two miles from the nearest appropriate school;
- where a child receiving secondary education lives over three miles from the nearest appropriate school.

The LA also provides free transport for pupils of statutory school age

- where the route to school is considered to be hazardous by the LA in consultation with the Environment Directorate;
- where transport to a named school is identified in a pupil's Statement of Special Educational Needs. This would normally be on medical or educational grounds and would be deemed essential in the context of other criteria identified in this policy
- where a child requires transport on medical grounds and no suitable public transport exists;

Other transport provision

Free transport is also provided for pupils of statutory school age:

- where a child whose parents are in receipt of Income Support or Working Tax Credit, resides more than 2.5 miles from the nearest appropriate school;
- to the nearest Welsh medium school under the criteria identified above;
- to the nearest voluntary aided school where the admission to the school is on denominational grounds, subject to the distance criteria. Consultation with individual schools will take place to confirm the admission criteria under which pupils are admitted. Suitable evidence of adherence to the faith of the school such as a baptismal certificate or a letter from a priest may be requested.

Post-16 Transport

Free transport will be provided for post 16 students living in Flintshire attending a first course of full time study at a school or college, subject to meeting the 3 mile distance criteria and providing the student is attending the nearest educational establishment offering the courses they wish to study. Free transport will be provided to specified sites only. These sites are:

- All Secondary School sites within Flintshire offering post-16 courses
- Chester Catholic High School, Coleg Cambria sites at Connah's Quay, Northop, Wrexham and Llysfasi (for land based courses only), Prestatyn High School, Rhyl 6, St Brigid's School, Ysgol Glan Clwyd, St. Asaph.

Transport will only be provided to an educational establishment which is not the nearest if, in the judgement of the LA, there is a considerable variation between the student's course and the course on offer at the nearer institution. The courses should be at a higher level than the previous one: for example GCSE retakes would not normally qualify for assistance.

Free transport after the age of 19

Free transport is provided to eligible students who have reached 16 years of age and have not yet reached the age of 19 on 1st September of the academic year. The free transport will be maintained for students for the length of their initial course even if they reach their 19th birthday before the end of that course.

Concessionary fares

The LA may provide concessionary transport, at a cost, where a pupil/student does not qualify on the above criteria but can be placed on an existing contract transport route which has empty seats. In these circumstances:

- a charge of £55 per term will apply. (This is subject to an annual review)
- concessions may be withdrawn at short notice, with a pro-rata rebate, when seats become unavailable.

However, under the Transport Act 1985, concessionary fares cannot be made available where public service transport runs along a school route at convenient times for the start and finish of the school day.

Application forms for concessionary seats can be obtained on www.flintshire.gov.uk/schools/ **school transport** or from the Access Officer, Tel No: 01352 704068.

Pupils/students with learning difficulties/disabilities

Specialised transport will be provided for pupils/students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities when specified in the statement of SEN.

The LA will consider a pupil's special educational needs or disability, irrespective of whether the pupil has a SEN statement, when deciding which is the nearest suitable school. The transport requirements will depend on individual circumstances and each application will be considered on its own merits.

When other factors are identified in the statement, e.g. specialist provision, transport may be provided for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to travel beyond their nearest school/college.

Young people who have severe medical conditions that seriously affect their mobility may be provided with free transport even though they do not meet the distance criteria. In all cases, the request must be supported by medical evidence.

Travelling expenses for parents of pupils placed by a Statement of SEN in schools outside Flintshire

Where such pupils are placed in boarding schools more than 100 miles from home, the LA will assist with travelling expenses for parents to attend the statutory Annual Review meeting, by the most cost effective means of:

- arranging transport, or
- making a cash payment (currently 20p per mile), or
- providing a ticket (or cash equivalent) for one or both parents on public transport

Such assistance will also be given when a pupil who normally travels in a vehicle provided for a group, is unable to travel at the same time as the group because of his/her ill-health. Medical certification will be required.

The LA will not normally assist with travelling expenses for other functions or meetings.

Definition of criteria

Appropriate school criteria

An appropriate school is deemed to be the nearest school which provides education for the relevant age and ability of a pupil, the nearest Welsh medium school or the nearest Voluntary school.

The LA is not responsible for the cost of transport:

- where parental preference results in a pupil being placed in a school or facility other than the nearest appropriate school;
- to schools maintained by other Authorities where admission to those schools is a result of parental preference, unless that school is the nearest school.
The Authority operates arrangements with neighbouring authorities for Flintshire pupils whose nearest appropriate school is outside the Flintshire County boundary;
- of pupils who reside outside Flintshire but who receive their education in Flintshire schools.

Age Criteria

The LA has no legal responsibility to those not deemed entitled to free transport.

- The LA does not provide transport for pupils attending nursery school or nursery classes at the age of three. Transport is provided from the commencement of the school year in which the child attains the age of five.
- The LA currently makes provision for pupils above compulsory school age, who qualify, to be transported free of charge to the nearest appropriate school or college as detailed in the Transport Policy.

Criteria for the Provision of Escorts

An escort may be provided by the Authority for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need, who qualify for transport under the defined criteria. Provision of escorts will take place after consideration by relevant officers of the individual needs of the pupils or group of pupils and the nature of the transport available.

Applying for School and College Transport

If you consider, using the above criteria, your child may qualify for free school transport you will be required to complete an application form. An application needs to be made at entry to Reception, Secondary and Post-16 and is not retrospective. You will also be required to re-apply should any of your circumstances alter during the period your children attend school, or if your child's course alters. Application forms are available on www.flintshire.gov.uk/schools/schooltransport or from the Access Officer, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire. CH7 6ND (Tel: 01352 704068/704073).

Applications for transport to colleges should be directed to the college concerned (details below). Applications can be made at any time of year although students are recommended to apply at the end of the summer term prior to commencing courses in September.

Mode of Transport

In determining the mode of transport required, the following principles will apply:

- the need for specialist transport;
- the Additional Needs of a pupil as defined in a pupil's statement.

In all cases, the efficient use of resources will dictate the mode of transport (subject to the above conditions). Transport may be provided by means of school contract transport services or existing public transport services which, together with the type of transport (bus, minibus, train, taxi, etc.) will be dictated by cost effectiveness. In some cases, one contract bus may transport different pupils to more than one school site.

In exceptional circumstances, a cash payment (currently 20p per mile) may be available for transporting pupils who meet all the criteria, if deemed by the LA to be more cost effective.

Collection and Return

Transport will normally be to and from bus stops or pick-up points for groups of pupils. It will only be provided from door-to-door in exceptional circumstances. The maximum distance a pupil is expected to walk to and from pick-up point will depend upon, for example, the age of the child, their individual needs and the nature of the route they are expected to walk.

Travel Behaviour Code

The Welsh Assembly Government has issued a Travel Behaviour Code which is compulsory for all learners up to the age of 19. It applies to all modes of travel to and from education institutions. Learners must comply with the Code whilst travelling to and from their place of learning. Under the Code, travel arrangements may be withdrawn from learners whose behaviour during the journey to or from school or college is not of an acceptable standard.

The driver will, in accordance with the agreed procedure, report any incidents of misbehaviour to the LA and Headteacher of the school concerned. Any such incidents will be investigated and appropriate action taken, if necessary, including suspension from transport.

Smoking on Buses

Smoking is not permitted on any vehicle contracted to the Council for the conveyance of school pupils to and from school. Any pupils found smoking on school or college buses will be reported for disciplinary action to be considered.

Parents have responsibility for:

- getting their child to and from school where they do not qualify for free school transport;
- applying for free transport where their child qualifies;
- informing the LA and the school of changed circumstances which may affect transport;
- ensuring that their child is ready and waiting for transport at the appropriate time and place. It is the parent's responsibility to accompany the child to and from the vehicle;
- ensuring that their child's behaviour while using school transport is acceptable.