



Home to School/College Travel

for Pupils/Students Requiring Special Arrangements

This leaflet explains the travel policy for those who need special arrangements (disabilities and or special educational needs) to get to and from school/College.

Transporting
Somerset



Our Duty to these children and young people below statutory school age.

The local authority (LA) has a duty to:

1. Provide travel assistance for a child/young person with Special Educational Needs (SEND) who is unable to attend the nearest, appropriate school for his/her age and needs, and lives beyond statutory walking distance (SWD); 2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for those aged 8 plus.
2. Consider the child's needs not just whether or not they have a Statement of SEN or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
3. We have a duty to provide a full travel policy and ours can be found on the learning and schools/school transport website: www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport

Applying for Travel Assistance

Parents/Carers are required to apply for travel assistance. Applications can be made through the school transport website www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport or over the phone on 0300 123 2224

If there are any changes to the child/young person's circumstances such as a change of home address or change of school attended a new application for travel assistance will be require

Entitlement to Travel Assistance

The decision to provide free Travel Assistance is made by the School Admissions and Entitlements Team based on certain criteria.

Entitlement to free travel assistance is based on it being necessary which means the LA has to assess the evidence as to whether it is.

The key factor is the distance. If the request is for transport within SWD, it means it has to be agreed that the young person cannot make their own way to school (even with a responsible adult accompanying the child).

Somerset LA will do all it can to work with and support families to get their children to school ready to learn.

Appeals can be made to the School Commissioning Team as outlined in our Education Travel Policy.

Those over Statutory school age in further education

Following consultation there is a charge for post 16 students qualifying for transport to Further Education establishments including those remaining in 6th Forms at Special Schools.

The criteria for access to support at a Post 16 education provider

- Age (16-25);
- The length of the journey in relation to the needs of the young person;
- Appropriate nearest Post 16 provider offering the appropriate study programme with the necessary level of support;
- Level of need, in as much as it affects the ability of the young person to use the public transport or mainstream options;
- Full-time course (540 hours per academic year, average of 14 hours per week of supervised study across 3 academic terms)
- Proven progression in course content for second and subsequent years.

The full FE Policy Document can be found on the Somerset County Council website at www.somerset.gov.uk/schooltransport

Assistance with Travel

The following sections of this leaflet provide further details of travel arrangements once entitlement has been granted by the School Admissions and Entitlements Team.

What travel assistance is given?

Travel assistance is provided at the beginning and end of the official school/college day from a defined pick up and setting down point, not necessarily the home address. Journeys outside of the official school/ college day remain the responsibility of the parents/carers.

Travel to Link Courses and off-site bases at Further Education colleges, other schools or work experience is the responsibility of the parent/carer to organise and fund.

Unfortunately we are not able to make travel arrangements or meet the costs of parents/carers attending review meetings at school.

If travel assistance is required to or from school to a respite care arrangement, please liaise with your social worker to request travel assistance.

Before we make the travel arrangements

Before travel is arranged, you will be contacted by the Transport Officer who will carry out a telephone risk assessment with you. This is to ensure that the arrangements we make to transport your child are appropriate for their needs and that we have all relevant information regarding any medical conditions, physical needs and behaviour issues.

From the risk assessment we will be able to ascertain what level of support your child will need on the transport and arrange for any specialised or additional safety equipment to be provided to the transport provider.

If the pupil travels in a wheelchair, we will need the make and model of the wheelchair to ensure that it is safe for us to transport and that the transport provider has the correct restraints and harnesses. As an added precaution, a 'wheelchair passport' will be attached to the pupil's wheelchair so that the driver and passenger assistant know which restraints should be used and how they should be attached to the chair.

Booster seats will be provided for all pupils under the age of 12, and under 135cm, who travel in vehicles designed to accommodate less than eight passengers.

The information we gather from you will also be written into a Travel Care Plan which will be issued to the Driver/Passenger Assistant so that your child's needs are met on the journey.

Transport will not be provided until the telephone risk assessment has been completed.

Travel arrangements

Once the travel arrangements have been made, your Transport Officer will contact you, either in writing or by telephone, to advise you of the details.

If parents or carers are willing to make their own travel arrangements for pupils who are entitled to travel assistance, and there is no other suitable transport available within our network, we will pay a petrol allowance at the Somerset County Council standard rate of 18p per mile. The mileage allowance is calculated as two return journeys. Where appropriate you may be offered a Personal Travel Payment (PTP).

We are charged with making the best use of our resources and therefore arrange transport for pupils that fit in with school/college start and finish times and our current network of routes. Whilst we understand that parents/carers may have other commitments, unfortunately we cannot arrange collection and drop off times to suit individual arrangements.

Parents/carers may be asked to make their way to a pick up point to meet the transport. These are never more than half a mile away from the home address for pupils under eight and one mile for pupils over eight. Parents/ carers are responsible for their child's safety between home and the pick-up point, whilst waiting for the transport and again after leaving transport at the end of the day.

Home collections will be arranged where appropriate, if this is the case, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to take the pupil to the vehicle when it arrives in the morning, and meet the pupil from the vehicle in the afternoon as the Passenger Assistant must remain with the other pupils on the vehicle.

Pupils should arrive at the scheduled collection point or be ready at home five minutes prior to the agreed pick up time as drivers are instructed to wait no longer than five minutes. If the vehicle has to leave without the pupil, transport to school will become the parent's responsibility.

Pupils will only be handed over to the parent/carer or a nominated responsible adult who is known to the pupil and the driver/passenger assistant.

If there is no appropriate adult to meet the pupil, the driver will continue with their route and then return to the designated drop off point. If there is still nobody to meet the pupil the driver will take them to the nearest Social Services office or local police station. We will contact parents/carers and schools to advise.

Drivers are not permitted to transport pupils to alternative addresses without prior agreement from Transporting Somerset, therefore please do not ask them. If you have a request for alternative travel, please speak with your Transport Officer who will let you know whether this is possible.

The Department for Education guidelines suggests a maximum journey time of 45 minutes each way for pupils up to the age of 11 years and one hour and fifteen minutes for pupils over the age of 11 years. To make the most efficient use of our vehicles, pupils may not travel to school by the most direct route. If a pupil is attending a school outside of Somerset, journey times may exceed these targets.

Changes to travel arrangements

Each pupils travel arrangements will be reviewed each year at the annual review of statement/EHC Plan, at any change in the pupil's condition and at any transfer of education. At the annual review of Statement/EHC Plan the school will assess whether the current method of travel is still appropriate given the child's needs and abilities. If a more independent approach to travel is suitable, such as using public buses this will be arranged and training provided where appropriate.

It may be necessary to move pupils between vehicles or to change pick-up and/or drop-off times so that we can accommodate additional pupils and use our network effectively. We will try to keep changes to a minimum and give parents/carers as much notice as possible. Where a complete change of transport is required, we will try to give at least two weeks notice.

Travel provision and safety standards

The majority of vehicles used for school transport are provided by contractors. We set quality standards for these vehicles and they are all inspected annually and at spot checks at schools. All drivers must carry two-way communication. Safety equipment is regularly inspected and replaced if necessary.

Passenger Assistants are only provided on vehicles transporting pupils with complex special educational needs or medical conditions or where there are a large number of pupils with special educational needs.

All drivers and passenger assistants are checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (previously Criminal Records Bureau) and receive training from us in Passenger Care, Disability Awareness, Moving and Handling People and Wheelchairs, Emergency Aid, Child Protection, Behaviour Management and Somerset County Council Safety Procedures.

Once their DBS clearance is completed the drivers and passenger assistants are issued with a badge. If the driver or passenger assistant of your child's route is not wearing a badge, please let us know and we will be able to reassure you about their status.

We do not allow eating or drinking on school transport for safety reasons, please do not put your driver and passenger assistant in an awkward position by allowing your child to board the transport with food.

Behaviour on transport

The same standard of behaviour laid down at school is expected on the transport. Our drivers and passenger assistants try to ensure a happy atmosphere and will not allow dangerous or disruptive behaviour. If pupils are continuously badly behaved, causing disruption or jeopardising the safety of other passengers, we may exclude them from the school transport. It then becomes the parents' responsibility to take their child to and from school.

Seatbelts must be worn at all times; failure to do so may result in a ban from the transport.

How You Can Help

- Please ensure you have the contact numbers of the driver, school and the Transport Officers for use in an emergency.
- Please notify us in advance if your child will not require their transport. Our office is staffed from 7.30am until 5pm each day (Mon-Fri).
- Be ready 5 minutes before the allocated pick up time.' Any delays will have an impact on the transport arrangements for other pupils and could result in the vehicle arriving late at school
- Please ensure that you bring your child to the vehicle each morning and meet your child from the vehicle each afternoon.
- Please supply as much information during the telephone risk assessment as possible so that we can ensure that appropriate arrangements are made.
- If your child's transport fails to arrive, please contact your Transport Officer who will try to find out the cause of the delay and call you back to let you know.
- If your child travels in a wheelchair, please check the tyre pressure regularly as we cannot transport wheelchairs with flat tyres because the safety straps will not work when the metal of the wheel touches the floor. Please also ensure that the wheelchair is fit for purpose including checking brakes, brackets, head and foot rests are in place where appropriate.
- Please ensure that your child understands the importance of wearing their seatbelt/safety harness provided for them at all times
- Let us know about any changes to your circumstances – change of address, school, telephone number or changes in physical or medical needs. Please provide as much notice as possible of a change of address.
- Report concerns to your Transport Officer immediately so that we can take appropriate action to ensure they are resolved.

Contacts

For SEN and Disability eligibility issues please contact:

School Admissions and Entitlements Team

Floor C4, County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY

For appeals:

School Commissioning Team

Floor C4, County Hall, Taunton
TA1 4DY

Transport Officer for pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mendip and South Somerset: **01823 356967**

Transport Officer for pupils with Special Educational Needs in Taunton/ West Somerset and Sedgemoor: **01823 358138**

**For general transport enquiries please contact Somerset Direct on:
0300 123 2224**

Somerset County Council's Equal Opportunities Promise The County Council promises not to discriminate unfairly against you because of your: race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, religion, accent, language, literacy, disability, age, income or social background, sex, marital status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, political or trade union activity.



This Information Leaflet is also available on audiocassette and in Braille. We can also provide it as a translated document or provide a member of staff to discuss the details. Please write to Transporting Somerset at the address given below or telephone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224 to arrange this.

Transporting Somerset
Somerset County Council
PPC302, County Hall
Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY

