

School Transport Policy Consultation Responses

1. Removal of a Surplus Seat Place at short notice.

Occasionally it may be necessary for the Local Authority or one of the bus companies to cancel a surplus seat ticket when a child who is eligible needs that seat. The LA and the contractors endeavour to ensure that there is sufficient space to satisfy demand, but families are made aware that the removal of a surplus seat at short notice is possible. This is a risk that a family has to consider when applying for a school place for which they will not receive free transport and where they rely on an existing bus service that may be withdrawn or where existing surplus seat capacity may cease to exist during the course of a child's education career.

2. Bus service between Portland and All saints

The Local Authority would not provide a closed school contract service when there is a sufficient capacity on the public bus route. It is likely that a public bus route will be more cost effective for families in contrast to a Local Authority commissioned bus route.

3. Transport eligibility from Verwood to Queen Elizabeth School

At this time residents in the catchment of the Emmanuel Middle School are entitled to school transport to either Ferndown Upper School or Queen Elizabeth School. This policy is not changing in 2019-2020.

4. Eligibility for Post 16 transport

Dorset County Council is aware that the majority of young people attending an education setting in Year 12 and 13 are not entitled to transport. When it was decided to increase the age at which young people needed to remain in education or training to the age of 18, the statutory school age and the duty to provide free school transport was not extended. Unfortunately Dorset County Council has had to review the levels of discretionary school transport that can be provided which has resulted in the removal of entitled Post 16 transport provision. DCC has worked with the local providers to ensure that there are sustainable and cost effective routes into each of the 6th form schools, and systems are in place for families to purchase seats on these routes at a reasonable cost set by the bus companies. Families on full working tax credits or free school meals may also be eligible to a 50% discount on these prices.

5. Code of Conduct for bus drivers

The Local Authority as part of its contract compliance process requires all drivers to be 'Disclosure & Barring Service' checked. Each individual bus company will be responsible to providing their drivers with a day to day code of conduct.

6. Cost of a surplus seat

The cost of a surplus seat on a Dorset County Council Bus is set at £715 for 2019/2020. The cost of a surplus seat on the contracted buses into the secondary schools varies according to each provider, though DCC works with the bus companies to make sure the levels that are set are reasonable and reflect the actual costs of the service being provided.

7. Extending the eligibility criteria to include more out of catchment children.

DCC uses both a catchment school based system to allocate transport and the statutory DFE criteria of 2 miles for children from reception to end of Year 4 and then 3 miles for children Year 5 and above. In addition if a family is on working tax credits or free school meals, then in Year 5 and 6, a family will retain a 2 miles criteria for those years attending school. Unfortunately it is not possible to extend coverage for entitled families beyond these statutory criteria without the Local Authority incurring significant additional cost which at this time it is not in a position to be able to do.

8. Concerns about the safety of walking routes

DCC maintains a regular database of unsafe walking routes which it uses to determine the shortest safe walking route and thus eligibility for transport. If a family feels that a route is unsafe they may request a Route safety assessment -

<https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/education-and-training/school-transport/safety-of-route-between-home-and-school.aspx>

9. Eligibility of 16 year olds in Year 11

A bus pass issued to a young person in Year 11 will be valid to the end of their academic year, even if that young person turns 16.

10. Changes to the Swanage and Purbeck School transport areas

Please see the separate information sheets on this issue.

11. Primary Aged children on public buses.

Whenever a primary aged child is provided with a public bus pass – there is also one for an accompanying adult. The duty is still with the parent to get the child to school, and in these cases it is reasonable for the Local Authority to expect a family member to accompany their child utilising the free adult pass.