

Home to School Transport – Parents Guide

This Guide is to help parents understand their eligibility for transport support in getting their child to school. This guide must be read in conjunction with the full Home to School Transport Policy.

How to apply for free home to school travel

You **do not need to apply** for free home to school transport in most cases. We check your child's eligibility when we offer a school place. Once we have confirmed your eligibility for transport support, families will be asked to confirm they want to take up the opportunity of a seat.

In the school place offer letter, we will tell you if your child qualifies for free travel and advise you of any next steps.

In some cases, you will need to [contact](#) us to ask if your child will qualify. You may have:

- applied to a school directly
- moved to a new home address.

Or if there has been a change in your circumstance, and you believe your child is eligible.

Most children do not qualify for free travel, so **you are responsible for arranging and paying for travel.**

Eligibility for free school transport

Where we provide free transport -

We will provide free transport from Dorset homes to the **nearest available or catchment school** for any of the following reasons:

- the shortest designated route is more than two miles where the child is in year Reception to Year 4.
- the shortest designated route is more than the statutory walking distance of three miles for children in Year 5 to 11.
- the route has been assessed as unsafe to walk, even if accompanied by a responsible adult.

Contact us to check the nearest schools to your home address using the shortest designated route.

You can find the full list of criteria in the Home to School Transport Policy.

- Home to School Transport Policy 2022-23

See also eligibility on special circumstances with SEND, Disability or Medical Needs – Section 1.1.12 of the Home to School Transport Policy.

Your responsibility

You are responsible for ensuring your child attends school regularly. You should take your child to school if needed unless there is a good reason why it is unreasonable to expect you to do so.

The nearest available school for transport purposes

We mean physically the nearest school the child is eligible to attend:

- where there is an available place during the normal admission cycle
- that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child – including resourced base provision
- provides education appropriate to any SEN that the child may have subject to it being named on the Education Health and Care Plan as the Local Authority offered school– 1.1.2 of the Home to School Transport Policy.
- We measure the nearest school using straight-line distance based on Dorset Councils Mapping (GIS) system

➤ Where the nearest school is outside of Dorset Local Authority Area

For some addresses, the nearest school is outside of Dorset Local Authority Area and transport will be considered.

➤ The school types we consider

We consider the nearest state maintained qualifying school:

- community, foundation or voluntary school
- community or foundation special school
- academies & free schools
- Studio Schools
- University Technical Colleges

We do not consider a school unsuitable because it does not offer the course you want your child to attend, or you are unhappy with its current Ofsted rating.

The catchment school for transport purposes

Many schools in Dorset have a catchment area set as part of their admissions arrangements. It is this catchment area that is then used for determining transport eligibility.

Catchment Areas can be viewed at the following link [DorsetExplorer \(geowessex.com\)](http://DorsetExplorer.geowessex.com)

Section 1.1.3 of the Home to School Transport Policy details some exceptions for catchment and nearest school for the following areas:

Primary Schools in:

Gillingham
Blandford
Verwood
Weymouth

Secondary Schools including:

Dorset Studio School
The Swanage School
The Purbeck School
The Thomas Hardy School

Walking distance and shortest designated route

The shortest designated route is the distance from an address to the nearest open school gate, as measured by our mapping software. This route may include:

- roads
- footpaths
- cycle tracks
- alleyways
- public rights of way
- bridleways.

The shortest available route is not necessarily a walking or driving route.

Assessing the safety of walking routes

The Road Safety Team assesses walking routes to schools in Dorset. They use guidance issued by:

- the Department for Education
- Road Safety GB's 'Assessment of Walked Routes to School'.

The assessor will look at the route during the time your child will be travelling to school. They may also look at it at home time. They will consider potential risks posed by:

- traffic
- road conditions
- other physical features of the route.

The assessor does not base their assessment on any personal safety factors.

You are responsible for walking your child to school as necessary.

The type of transport we provide

The Dorset Travel will contact you to tell you the arrangements. Your child cannot travel on any school transport until authorised by Dorset Travel.

The transport we offer depends on what's available on existing services. Your child may travel by:

- taxi
- minibus
- coach
- public bus service bus

The council may also provide a mileage allowance of 45p a mile if this is the most appropriate.

Families on low income (Extended Rights)

We provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals, or their parent receives the **maximum level of working tax credit** and if the child is:

- Year 5 & 6 and the nearest or catchment school is more than two miles
- Year 7 to 11 and the nearest or catchment school is between 2-6 miles (and it is one of the three nearest schools – measured on a straight line distance)
- Year 7 to 11 and the relevant school is between 2 miles shortest walking & 15 miles shortest driven and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief.

Tax credits

Your income may reduce the amount of tax credits you receive. You will be able to see if you are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit by looking at the working tax credit element on your tax credit award statement. There should be a zero reduction due to your income, to receive the maximum level of award.

If you are not eligible for free transport you may:

Appeal a Decision

If we tell you that your child is not entitled to free travel, but you believe they are, you can appeal the decision. Learn more about how to [appeal a school transport decision](#).

Purchase a Seat on School Transport

Request a Surplus Seat from either the bus company or Dorset Council –[Pay for school transport if you're not eligible - Dorset Council](#)

Transport for young people aged 16-19

We do not have a statutory duty to provide free school travel for young people above statutory school-aged at a school sixth form or college.

However, we may support young people to access education in some circumstances. The Post 16 Transport Assistance Policy sets out when and how we may help a young person over 16 with travelling to a school sixth form or college.

You may find funding for support with transport from the [16-19 Bursary Fund](#). You will need to contact your school or college direct to apply for funding from the bursary

A large number of commercial bus services serve school sixth forms/colleges and further education colleges.

To buy tickets to travel on these services, contact operators directly.

Raising the participation age (RPA)

In summer 2013, the government increased the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training – until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.

In summer 2015, the government increased it until their 18th birthday. Raising the Participation Age (RPA) does not mean that young people must stay in school, and they will be able to participate through three options.

- Full-time education – whether at a school, college or otherwise.
- Work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship.
- Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.