

SCHOOL TRANSPORT CONSULTATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS

1. Why are you proposing these changes now?
2. What is the current policy around school transport?
3. Who will be affected by the changes?
4. What are the proposed changes?
5. When could the changes happen?
6. How can I make sure my views are heard on the Council's proposals?
7. Who are you consulting on the proposed changes?
8. Who will be eligible for free school transport under the new proposal?
9. Which schools/colleges do children and young people in Cheshire East attend?
10. What does the law say that the Council has to provide?
11. How do you know the proposed changes are fair?
12. Doesn't this proposal go against the Council's plans to be more eco-friendly?
13. What will happen next?
14. Can I appeal against the proposed change?

Glossary

- Families on a low income
- Nearest suitable school
- Designated school
- Walking distance
- Qualifying school

1. Why are you proposing these changes now?

Cheshire East wants to provide the best school transport service it can and to support children and young people to get to the school or college of their choice. However, due to financial constraints Cheshire East, like many Councils, is looking at what services it must provide by law and those that it can choose not to provide, including parts of the current school transport service.

The Council spends in the region of £10 million on home to school transport each year. A review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy is required as a result of the tight financial framework within which all local authorities are now operating. Providing subsidised post-16 travel and denominational travel account for 15 per cent of the overall expenditure – more than a million pounds each year. As a consequence, it is proposed that the policy is reviewed and a public consultation is carried out.

2. What is the current policy around school transport?

Cheshire East's current school transport policies are set out below and can be found on the Council's website:

- [Under 16 School Transport Policy](#)
- [Post-16 Transport Policy](#)
- [Complex Special Needs Transport Policy](#)

3. Who will be affected by the changes?

Those accessing the following services will be most affected by the changes:

- denominational transport; and
- post-16 transport (including those with complex and special needs)

4. What are the proposed changes?

The table below sets out the groups affected, along with the current and proposed policy changes.

Group affected	Current Policy	Proposed Policy
Those attending denominational schools between 2-15 miles of where they live	Charges are made at £299 each year per pupil for subsidised transport.	<u>Sept 2011</u> – charge to increase to £385 per year <u>Sept 2012</u> – no subsidised transport to be provided by the Local Authority
Post-16 mainstream students	Charges are made at £415 each year per student for subsidised transport	<u>Sept 2011</u> – charge to increase to £500 per year <u>Sept 2012</u> – no subsidised transport to be provided by the Local Authority
Post-16 students with complex and special needs	No charge currently made	<u>Sept 2011</u> – charge to be made in line with post-16 mainstream charges
<u>Exception</u> – those pupils who have attended a denominational school since before 2008 and in receipt of free transport under the 2007 policy.	No charge made	No charge made until they either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change school; or • reach 16 They will then be either charged for subsidised transport unless they are eligible for free transport

5. When could the changes happen?

It is expected that any new arrangements will be agreed in time for parents/carers to make decisions about which school they choose for the academic year 2012/13. The first changes to charges for subsidised transport could be made from September 2011. All other changes could take effect from September 2012.

6. How can I make sure my views are heard on the Council's proposals?

The Council hopes to get as many views as it can. Those interested can:

- Complete the consultation questionnaire online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools
- Complete a paper copy and return to the following address:

Cheshire East Council
School Transport Consultation (GB)
Children & Families Service
Dalton House, Dalton Way
Middlewich Cheshire CW10 0HU
- Email any comments/forms to stp@cheshireeast.gov.uk
- Tell us face to face at one of our drop in sessions that will be taking place across the borough (see below).

Date	Times	Venue
Tuesday 5th April 2011	2-4pm 5-8pm	Assembly Room, Macclesfield Town Hall Macclesfield, SK10 1DP
Thursday 7th April 2011	2-4pm 5-8pm	Alexandra Suite, Crewe Alexandra Football Club, Gresty Road Crewe, CW2 6EB
Wednesday 13th April 2011	2-4pm 5-8pm	Creche Room/Hall, Middlewich Community Church, 34-36 Brooks Lane Middlewich, Cheshire CW10 0JG
Thursday 14th April 2011	4-7pm	Main Hall, New Life Church, Danesford Community Centre, West Road, Congleton, CW12 4EY

All responses will be considered by Elected Members before a decision is made.

7. Who are you consulting on the proposed changes?

The following groups/individuals will be asked for their views on the proposals:

- All parents/carers of children resident in Cheshire East, and in particular:
 - Those currently receiving free or subsidised transport to denominational schools (including the parents of pupils due to join Year 7 at a denominational secondary school in September 2011 those
 - Those who are eligible under the current policy for subsidised transport), and
 - Those accessing or proposing to access post-16 transport in the future (including students with complex and special needs).
- The Diocesan authorities
- All headteachers and governing bodies of Cheshire East maintained primary, secondary and special schools (including denominational schools)
- All headteachers and governing bodies of denominational schools in neighbouring authorities where there are children resident in Cheshire East attending currently
- Academies in Cheshire East
- All Cheshire East Elected Members
- Neighbouring local authorities' Directors of Children's Services
- Members of the Youth Parliament
- Colleges of Further Education
- Unions and Professional Associations

8. Who will be eligible for free school transport under the new proposals?

The following groups will continue to be eligible for free school transport:

Age or category of pupil	Statutory entitlement
Pupils of compulsory primary school age up to age 11 (Reception to Y6)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school if it is more than two miles away, as measured by the shortest available walking route
Secondary school pupils up to age 16 (Yrs 7 – 11)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school if it is more than three miles away, as measured by the shortest available walking route, including pupils at a place other than a school and excluded pupils, still registered, but receiving education outside of school premises

Secondary pupils aged between 11 and 16 (years 7-11) from families who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit (entitled to free school meals or maximum working tax credits)	Free transport to one of three qualifying secondary schools if it is between two and six miles away as measured by the shortest available walking route. This also applies to pupils registered at a qualifying school which is between 2 and 15 miles away; and whose parent has expressed a wish, based upon their religion or belief, for the child to be provided with education at that school
Pupils of compulsory primary school age or secondary school age who live within the statutory walking distance, but where the nature of the route has been deemed unsafe	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance but where, due to the nature of the route, they are unable to walk in reasonable safety even when accompanied by a responsible person
Pupils of compulsory school age with Special Educational Needs, disability or mobility problems	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school, where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance but where, due to their special needs or disability or mobility problems, they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school.

9. Which schools/colleges do children and young people in Cheshire East attend?

The main denominational schools currently attended by Cheshire East children and young people are set out below:

School	School type	District
All Hallows Catholic College	Secondary	Macclesfield
Astbury St Mary's CE Primary School	Primary	Congleton
Bickerton Holy Trinity CE Primary School	Primary	Crewe & Nantwich
Brereton CE Primary School	Primary	Congleton
Bunbury Aldersey CE Primary School	Primary	Crewe & Nantwich
King David High School	Primary	Manchester
Marton and District CE Primary School	Primary	Macclesfield
St Alban's RC Aided Primary School	Primary	Macclesfield
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	Primary	Crewe & Nantwich
St Gabriel's RC Aided Primary School	Primary	Congleton
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School	Primary	Macclesfield
St John's CE Primary	Primary	Congleton
St Mary's Catholic Primary	Primary	Congleton
St Mary's Catholic Primary - Crewe	Primary	Crewe & Nantwich
St Nicholas Catholic High School	Secondary	Vale Royal (Northwich)

St Paul's Catholic Primary School	Primary	Macclesfield
St Thomas More Catholic High School	Secondary	Crewe and Nantwich
St Wilfrids Catholic Primary School	Primary	Vale Royal (Northwich)
Warmingham CE Primary School	Primary	Crewe and Nantwich
Wincle CE Primary School	Primary	Macclesfield
Wybunbury Delves CE Primary School	Primary	Crewe and Nantwich

The schools and Colleges attended by post 16 students with complex and special needs are:

School/College	District/Location
Bishops Bluecoat CE High School,	Chester
Blackfriars School (FE College)	Staffordshire
Brentwood School	Altrincham
Bridge College	Stockport
Callow Park College	Derbyshire
Cavendish School	Runcorn
Cloughwood Special School,	Vale Royal (Northwich)
Condover Hall School	Shrewsbury
David Lewis Centre - College	Macclesfield
Dee Banks School	Chester
Derby University	Buxton College
Fallibroome High School	Macclesfield
Greenbank School	Vale Royal (Northwich)
Hebden Green Special School	Vale Royal (Winsford)
Home from Home Placement	Congleton
Inscape House	Stockport
Knutsford High School	Knutsford
Macclesfield High School	Macclesfield
Mid Cheshire College, Hartford Campus	Vale Royal (Northwich)
New College	Worcester
Oaklands School	Vale Royal (Winsford)
Park Lane Special School	Macclesfield
Reaseheath College	Crewe and Nantwich
Sandbach Boys School	Congleton
Seashell Trust	Stockport
Sir John Deane's VI Form College	Vale Royal (Northwich)
South Cheshire College	Crewe and Nantwich
Springfield School	Crewe and Nantwich
St Vincent's School For The Blind	Liverpool
Strathmore College	Stoke
The Petty Pool Trust	Vale Royal (Northwich)
The Russett School	Vale Royal (Northwich)
Wargrave House School	Newton le Willows
Wilmslow High School	Macclesfield
Wilsic Hall School (Lancashire)	Doncaster

10. What does the law say that the Council has to provide?

The Education Act 1996 states that the Local Authority must make the arrangements that '*...they consider necessary to **facilitate attendance** at...*' an **appropriate educational setting**. This means that all home to school transport is discretionary, although the law does set out how it expects the Local Authority to use this discretion around some 'eligible' groups. These are set out at Question 8 above.

A charge can be made for transport arrangements made under the other relevant sections of the Education Act 1996, i.e. sections 508C to 509A, subject to that charge being **reasonable** in the circumstances. In carrying out its duties, the Local Authority is expected to take into account the wishes of parents.

11. How do you know the proposed changes are fair?

The Council is aware that this proposal will affect some families more than others and is keen to understand this impact. A full equality impact assessment will be carried out that will help us to see what the impact might be and what we could do to help this. This will look at the groups that the Council has identified in its Single Equality Plan. An equality monitoring questionnaire forms part of the questionnaire to collect the relevant information.

12. Doesn't this proposal go against the Council's plans to be more eco-friendly?

The Council will look at other ways it can support and encourage families to be more eco-friendly, including encouraging schools, colleges and others to coordinate their own transport arrangements, car-sharing, walking bus schemes, school travel planning and making safer routes to school. If you are a parent, you can ask to look at your school's travel plan that should set out ways that the school has identified to improve safety on the journey to and from school.

13. What will happen next?

Following the closure of the consultation on 20th May, all responses will be considered by Council Members before making their decision on which proposals to take forward. Once a decision has been made, the existing school transport policies could be amended to reflect the changes and these will then be implemented.

14. Can I appeal against the proposed change?

Specific appeals against a policy change can only be made where the policy is either failing to meet the statutory requirements or where the policy contributes towards inequality in provision. Any revised policy would be designed to be equitable and compliant with current legislation.

GLOSSARY

Families on a low income

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Local Authorities to adopt the following criteria for assessing a family as low income or 'disadvantaged':

"The Act will place a new duty on Local Authorities to provide free transport for some of the most disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit)..."

Nearest suitable school

The nearest suitable school is defined as the local zoned or catchment school; or, if closer than the zoned school, the nearest maintained school that is deemed by the Council as suitable to a child's particular age and needs.

Designated school

A designated school is one deemed by the Council as the appropriate school for a particular pupil (eg, a permanently excluded pupil, a statemented pupil, a child in care of the local authority, where normal admissions procedures have failed).

In relation to faith schools, the 'designated school' is the appropriate school as agreed between the Council and the Diocesan Authority. This may not always be the nearest faith school.

Walking distance

Walking distance is defined by the Council as:

- Less than 2 miles from home for children attending primary school ; and
- Less than 3 miles from home for children attending secondary school

This is measured by the “nearest available route”. This route is measured using digital mapping from the pupil’s home gate or drive nearest to the school to the nearest available gate/entrance of the school grounds by way of the nearest walking route. The route is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety.

Qualifying school

Qualifying schools are the three nearest to the child’s home address (and within 2 to 6 miles) from:

- Community, Controlled, Foundation or Voluntary Aided Schools
- Community or Foundation Special Schools
- Non-maintained special schools
- Pupil Referral Units
- Maintained nursery schools
- City Technology Colleges (CTCs), City Technology Colleges for the Technology of Arts (CCTA), or Academies.

In relation to a child with special educational needs, an independent (other than a CTC, CCTA or Academy) will be a qualifying school if it is the only named school in the child’s statement, or it is the nearest of 2 or more schools named in the statement.