

Public consultation:
Submit your views by 12 March 2014



Home to school transport policy consultation

What is the council consulting on?

The home to school transport policy for mainstream schools.

Why is the council consulting?

- The council is consulting because it needs to make changes to the current policy.
- The Government has encouraged schools to become academies. This means that schools are allowed to set their own new catchment areas for admission of pupils and to change the age range of pupils that they admit.
- The traditional link between eligibility for free transport and the pupil's catchment area school is broken by this change.

Tell the council how this might affect you

• Online

www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport

• By post

Cut off the questionnaire attached to this leaflet and return to the freepost address

For general queries or comments phone 0116 305 0002 or email transportassessments@leics.gov.uk

What does the current policy say?

- Schools in Leicestershire have two stages of secondary education (covering 11-16 years of age) up to GCSE level, with high schools for 10/11-14 year olds and upper schools for 15-16 year olds.
- Transport and catchment areas have developed over time to take account of traditional boundaries and school capacity. This was to ensure that high and upper schools had enough students to fill the school. In practice, this meant that pupils were transported to schools with space and not necessarily their nearest school.
- The current policy (www.leics.gov.uk/mainstream_policy_2013_-14_update_july_2013_v1.0_final.doc) says that free transport is offered to:
 - primary school pupils who attend the catchment area school for their home address (or other nearer school) and the distance is more than two miles and
 - secondary school pupils who attend the catchment area school for their home address (or other nearer school) and the distance is more than three miles.

What is happening to make the council consider a change in the policy?

- Some academies have already changed their catchment areas – a decision made independently from the council.
- Some schools and academies have changed already, or are considering a change, to an 11-16 age range.
- These changes to age ranges mean the catchment area is also changed, resulting in a number of transport eligibility areas overlapping.

What are the changes the council is proposing?

- The council is proposing that free transport for pupils over the statutory walking distances (two miles for primary age and three miles for secondary age) is given only to the nearest school (or educational placement) with available spaces to the pupil's home address.
- The nearest school is measured by the shortest road distance over these walking distances.

Why is the council proposing these changes?

- Providing transport over the statutory distance to the nearest school is the legal minimum the Government require the council to provide.
- This means that the transport provided is fair for everyone. This doesn't prevent parents from choosing a different school for their child but it does mean that transport will not be free (over statutory walking distances) if the school chosen is not the nearest.

What is the likely impact?

- Free transport to primary schools is likely to be largely unchanged. But the secondary school that pupils traditionally move on to may not be the nearest school – so free transport eligibility may change.
- Where an upper school changes its age range from 14-18 to 11-18, the younger pupils at the school would be entitled to free transport only if the school is the nearest to their home address and more than three miles away.
- There are extended rights for low income families – see the frequently asked questions on page 4.

What about 16+ transport?

Transport for those aged 16+ is discretionary. The proposals, similar to those above, are:

- To continue to offer transport on a discretionary basis at a charge of £425 to either the nearest school or to the nearest post 16 Further Education college.
- To withdraw a “choice”. For example, the policy currently allows a student to travel to the school or college offering their chosen course. In future, we would not transport to a school/college that is further away because the course is not available at the nearest school/college.
- There will still be a charge for those who are eligible to post 16 transport assistance (unless they are from a low income family – see the frequently asked questions on page 4).

What are the proposed transitional arrangements?

The council is proposing that any change to the policy will only affect pupils entering into primary education or transferring to a secondary school in September 2015.

If you have a child who is already part way through their education and they currently have transport this will continue until they reach a transfer point where they would have to leave or move to a new school because of their age. Eligibility for free transport would be reassessed at this point – as it is currently.

For 16+ students who have been eligible for assistance under the old policy, the proposal is that they will retain their eligibility providing they stay on the same course i.e. if they change course, start a new course or their personal circumstances change (move address for example) then they will be reassessed under the new policy.

How do I respond to the consultation?

Your views are important in helping the council understand what effect the changes being proposed might have on you. Please submit your views by 12th March 2014. Respond to the consultation by filling in our questionnaire. This can be accessed:

- **Online**

www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport

- **By post**

Cut off the questionnaire attached to this leaflet and return to the following freepost address (no stamp required):

School Transport Consultation
Sustainable Travel Group
Leicestershire County Council
Have Your Say
FREEPOST NAT18685
Leicester
LE3 8XT

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How does the council determine the nearest school?

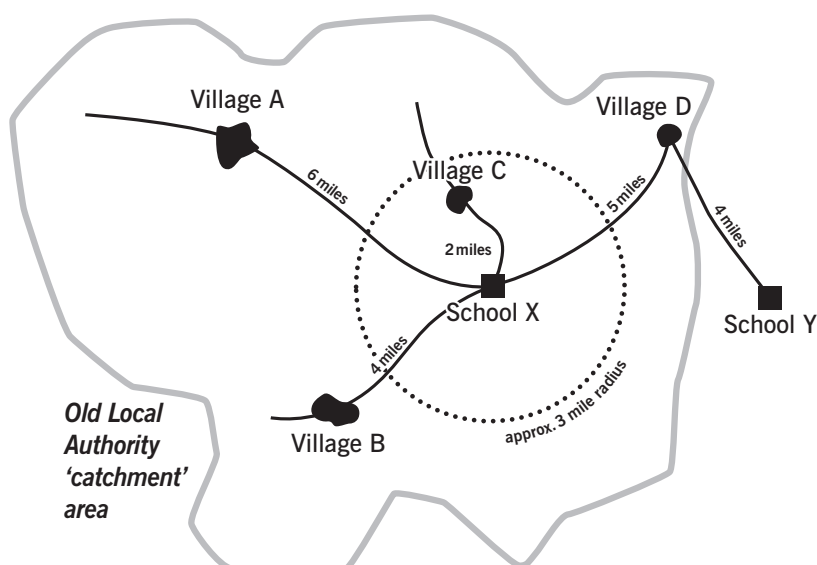
Under statutory walking distances of two or three miles this measurement is by the shortest available walking route. Over these distances the measurement is by the shortest available road route (this is because over three miles a walking route may not exist).

The assessment of nearest school would be undertaken at the same time as the normal admissions round and would take account of available space in schools i.e. if the nearest school was full transport would then be provided to the next nearest school.

How will the 'nearest school' policy work?

Under the current policy school admission catchment areas do not overlap. Therefore, there is no ambiguity about which school would entitle a pupil to free transport. In practice, there have been instances where the catchment area school is further from the child's home than another school. The current policy allows for this as it entitles the pupil to free transport to the catchment or nearer school. In certain instances, the nearer school can be outside Leicestershire e.g. in a neighbouring County or Leicester City.

The diagram opposite gives a simple example of the secondary entitlement under the existing policy and how this would be affected by the possible introduction of the proposals upon which the council is now consulting i.e. a 'nearest school' policy.



Under the current policy children living in villages A, B and D are eligible to free transport to School X, as this is the catchment area school and over three miles away. Children living in village C do not qualify for free transport as they are under three miles from the school and a walking route is available.

If the proposed new policy is accepted, children living in villages A and B would be entitled to free transport to School X as it is their nearest school and over three miles away. Children living in village C would still not qualify for free transport as they are under three miles (no change). Children living in village D would no longer qualify for free transport to School X even though this may be either their traditional catchment area school and/or within School X's academy admissions area. This is because School X is not the nearest school to these pupils' home addresses. These pupils would be eligible for free transport to School Y as it is the nearest school and is more than three miles from the home address. Note that School Y may be in a different local authority area but this does not affect the decision on transport eligibility.

How does the council measure distance?

The council uses a highly accurate software programme for measuring distances (MapInfo), but for families wanting to assess what might be their nearest school in future they can use an online mapping tool to give an approximate indication of distances e.g. Google maps, AA maps.

Is this about saving money?

No, this proposed policy change is not expected to save significant costs but it may reduce the risk of increasing costs in the future, by avoiding areas of multiple transport eligibility when academies have overlapping admissions catchment areas. The council's current policy is more generous than the statutory requirements. If the proposals are implemented it is expected that there will still be large numbers of children entitled to transport assistance because they live over the statutory walking distance to their nearest school.

It is worth noting that many other local authorities who have operated 'catchment' transport are also going through a similar process of reviewing their policies along similar 'nearest school' lines. Furthermore, the Council has noted that one of the Government's aims of its education reform programme is to get the schools system to the point where all parents have access to a good school that is close to where they live, thereby reducing the need for extensive home to school transport arrangements.

Are there alternatives to a 'nearest school only' policy?

Yes the council may propose a different policy. That is why this consultation is important so that your views can be taken into account in developing the policy. The council does have to act reasonably, rationally and fairly to families and to schools/academies across Leicestershire.

At a time when the council is faced with making cuts of £110million over the next five years it must ensure that it protects essential services and avoids unnecessary expenditure where possible. These proposals are also consistent with the recent public consultation into the council's spending plans over the next few years – where residents listed home to school transport as a service that could be reduced.

How does the proposed policy affect parental choice?

Parental preference for admission to a particular school or academy is unaffected by these proposals. However, it has never been the case that eligibility to free transport is based on the parental choice of school – there has always been a policy setting out the criteria for eligibility to free transport. If these proposals are accepted the new policy will still require an eligibility assessment but this will focus on the distance between home and the nearest school with places rather than to the traditional catchment area school.

It is also important to note that, if this policy is agreed, for children who live nearest to a high school (11-14 age) that has or is converting to an 11-16 school they will only have transport entitlement to this nearest school from September 2015 i.e. they would not have free transport if they transfer at age 15 to an upper school as they may have done previously.

Are there any extra rights for low income families?

Yes, the current extended rights for low income families are not affected by this consultation and continue to be available as required by statutory guidance and law. Details are in paragraph 6.0 of the current policy (www.leics.gov.uk/mainstream_policy_2013_-14_update_july_2013_v1.0_final.doc).

What other transport is available?

Some schools have bus services organised by parents or the school itself, other schools have commercial 'school specials' and there are student season tickets available on most commercial bus services in Leicestershire.

If you require this information in an alternative version such as large print, Braille, tape or help in understanding it in your language, please phone 0116 305 0002.

ਜੇ ਆਪ ਆ ਮਾਭਿਤੀ ਆਪਨੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਮਾਂ ਸਮਝਵਾਮਾਂ ਥੋੜੀ ਮਦਦ
ਓਲਝਤਾਂ ਡੋ ਤੋ 0116 305 0002 ਨੰਬਰ ਪਰ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰਓ ਅਨੇ
ਅਮੇ ਆਪਨੇ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਵਾ ਔਪਸਥਾ ਕਰੀਯੁੰ.

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਕੁਝ ਮਦਦ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ
ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0116 305 0002 ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ
ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਦਵਾਂਗੇ।

এই তথ্য নিজের ভাষায় বুঝার জন্য আপনার যদি কোন
সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয়, তবে 0116 305 0002 এই নম্বরে
ফোন করলে আমরা উপযুক্ত ব্যক্তির ব্যবস্থা করবো।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات سمجھنے میں کچھ مدد درکار ہے تو براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر کال کریں
0116 305 0002 اور ہم آپ کی مدد کے لئے کسی کا انتظام کر دیں گے۔

假如閣下需要幫助，用你的語言去明白這些資訊，
請致電 0116 305 0002，我們會安排有關人員為你
提供幫助。

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tej informacji
w Twoim języku, zadzwoń pod numer 0116 305 0002,
a my Ci dopomozemy.

Consultation on proposed changes to home to school transport policy

Submit your views
by 12 March 2014

The council is proposing a policy that would provide free transport to the nearest academy or maintained school only if this is over two miles for children in primary education and over three miles in secondary education. This is the nearest school or academy to the child's home address which has available places at the time when school places are allocated. This may not necessarily be the admissions catchment area school or one of the preferred schools applied for in the admissions process.

The council is proposing that there be no change to the policy in relation to pupils for whom there is an available walking route below two miles (for primary) or three miles (for secondary). Free transport is not provided to this group of pupils and that will continue to be the case.

Your views

The council is now asking for your views about this revised proposal to make changes to home to school transport. Following the consultation period, your views will be considered by the council. If you have any questions about this consultation please phone 0116 305 0002 or email publictransportpolicy@leics.gov.uk.

Return this consultation form to: School Transport Consultation, Sustainable Travel Group, Leicestershire County Council, Have Your Say, FREEPOST NAT18685, Leicester, LE3 8XT
Alternatively you can complete an online version at www.leics.gov.uk/transportconsultation

Q1: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposed policy for the provision of transport to schools and academies?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any other comments on our proposed policy for the provision of transport to academies:

Q2: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposed policy for the provision of post 16 transport to schools, academies and colleges?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any other comments on our proposed policy for the provision of post 16 transport:

Q3: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposals for transitional arrangements if this revised home to school transport policy is adopted?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any other comments on our proposals for transition arrangements:

Q4: Do you have any alternative suggestions for a revised home to school transport policy?

About You

Leicestershire County Council is committed to ensuring that its services, policies and practices are free from discrimination and prejudice and that they meet the needs of all sections of the community.

We would be grateful if you would answer the questions below. You are under no obligation to provide the information requested, but it would help us greatly if you did. Information will be used to inform service development to ensure that what we are providing is fair and effective.

Q5: Are you male or female?

Male Female

Q6: What was your age on your last birthday?

Q7: Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?

Yes No

Q8: What is your ethnic group? (Please tick one box only)

White Black or Black British Mixed Other ethnic group Asian or Asian British

Q9: Are you a parent/carer of a child or young person?

Yes No

If yes, what are the ages of the children in your care? (Please tick all applicable)

0-4 5-10 11-15 16-18

Q10: Do you or your child(ren) make use of the home to school transport provided by Leicestershire County Council?

Yes No

Q11: Are there any post 16 students in your household who currently use our transport to education?

Yes No

Q12: Are you employed by a school in Leicestershire?

Yes No

Q13: Are you a school governor?

Yes No

Q14: What is your religion?

No religion Christian (All denominations) Buddhist Hindu
Jewish Muslim Sikh Any other religion or belief

Q15: What is your full postcode?

Q16: In total, how many cars or vans are owned or available for use by members of your household?

None One Two Three Four or more Don't know

Data Protection: Personal data supplied on this form will be held on computer and will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for statistical analysis, management, planning and the provision of services by the county council and its partners, Leicestershire County Council will not share any personal information collected as part of this survey with its partners. The information will be held in accordance with the council's records management and retention policy.