

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for parents regarding the Home to School Transport policy & eligibility changes

Leicestershire County Council changed its mainstream home to school transport policy from the start of the 2015/16 academic year. The following questions and answers are to help parents understand the changes.

Why has the Council needed to change its school transport policy?

The Government has encouraged schools to become academies and these national changes have altered the education landscape significantly and there are now many academies across Leicestershire, including nearly all secondary schools.

Academies and free schools can choose to change their age ranges and their admission catchment areas, and a number have already done this or are planning changes. This means that for many schools their catchment areas (for both admissions and transport) overlap with those of neighbouring schools; the main cause of this is where schools extend their age range causing their catchment area to overlap with schools that they have traditionally fed into e.g. an 11-14 high school converts to an 11-16 secondary school meaning the catchment area then overlaps with that of the 14-19 school it previously fed into. The Council's transport policy needs to reflect these changes where they have occurred and be clear on the transport arrangements which will apply if other schools change in the future.

During 2013, Leicestershire County Council announced that it was facing its biggest ever financial challenge. This means that we need to save £78 million over the next 4 years and we are transforming our services in order to achieve this. As noted above, these latest changes to school transport are not being put in place simply to save money, but they will reduce the risk of increasing costs in the future by avoiding multiple transport eligibility where schools and academies have overlapping admission catchment areas.

Did the Council consult on proposals to change?

Yes – there were two public consultations - the first during February and March 2014 and the second in April and May 2014. We asked for views on proposals to change the existing policy. Just over 2,000 responses were received during the first consultation which proposed moving to a 'nearest school only' policy. It was clear from those responses that there were concerns about appropriate transport being provided when pupils change schools. Another key concern was that Leicestershire residents wanted the ability to express a preference for their traditional catchment school, instead of the nearest school which could be in a neighbouring local authority area.

We responded to this feedback and the second consultation proposed a revised policy which aimed to address many of the concerns raised by parents and schools. There were around 400 responses to the second consultation. Although the reduction in the number of respondents answering the second consultation suggest that the new proposals addressed many of the concerns raised in the first consultation, the proportion of respondents who disagreed with the new proposals remained high.

What are the key points of the policy?

The first thing to note is that the new policy means that the traditional pattern of school transport around Leicestershire has significantly changed. Therefore, please **do not assume** that just

because school transport has previously gone from your area to your child's school that this will still be the case in future.

The recognition of traditional '**catchment areas**' for transport **is generally no longer the case**. In brief, free home to school transport for under 16s in mainstream education will be provided as follows:

- for pupils aged between 4 and 16, who live over 2 miles for primary age (up to age 11) and 3 miles for secondary age (11 -16) from home to the nearest school (or educational placement) with places available (note: for addresses around the borders of Leicestershire the nearest school may be in another local authority area)

and in addition to provide one of the following:

either

- free transport over the qualifying distances (listed above) to the nearest Leicestershire school, with places available (a school will not be seen as appropriate if it doesn't offer a transfer entry point that is compatible* with the current school attended by the pupil i.e.. 10+ High Schools: see our website for a list of schools that are in this category)

or

- where the child lives in the catchment area of a frozen area school, **only** to that school

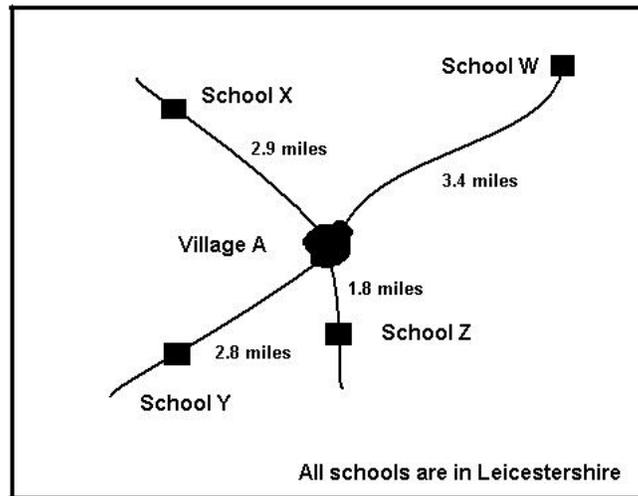
Note: where a child lives in a frozen area they will only be provided transport to the frozen area school or their nearest school. Where the nearest school is not the frozen school and is in another local authority area e.g. Leicester City, there will be no additional entitlement to any other Leicestershire school.

A "**frozen area school**" is a Leicestershire school where there have been no changes to the admissions catchment area or age range of that school (or another school in the area, such that this affects local education provision) since May 2012. Note that if a school (or another school in the area) changes its age range or admissions catchment area then the policy will revert to the nearest/nearest Leicestershire situation. Transition arrangements for existing students would also apply at that time for this phase of education. A list of frozen area schools is shown below.

* - an example of a compatible age range situation is where a child has to leave their primary school at the end of year 5 (because the primary school only takes children up to the end of year 5, age 10) and go to a 10+ high school. In these cases we will provide free transport to the nearest Leicestershire 10+ high school or where there is another nearer school with a year 6 and it is the nearest school with a year 6, with available space where the distance is more than 2 miles for the first year and 3 miles in subsequent years.

Equally, if a child has to leave their high school at the end of year 9 (because the school only takes students up to the end of year 9, age 14) and go to a 14+ upper school we will provide free transport to the nearest Leicestershire 14+ upper school, with an appropriate transfer entry point or where there is another nearer school with a year 10 and it is the nearest school with a year 10, with available space where the distance is more than 3 miles.

Please also note that if **any** Leicestershire school with available space is within walking distance (2 miles primary, 3 miles secondary) transport will **not** be provided **irrespective of the school you send your child to**. An example follows:



If we assume there are no other schools in the area, none of the schools are in frozen areas and all of the routes are available to walk: children from village A will receive no free transport to any of the 4 schools shown. Schools X, Y and Z are all under the 3 mile walking distance and school W is over 3 miles away, but there are 3 nearer schools where places would be available. Please note that this will apply irrespective of which school is the admissions catchment school for village A.

If School W is the admissions catchment area school and is not in a frozen area, transport would not be provided to that school, as there are 3 nearer schools with an available walking route at under 3 miles.

If School W is a frozen area school, transport would be provided **only** to that school, as it is the admissions catchment area school for village A.

Which are the schools that have not changed catchment or age ranges since May 2012 (frozen area schools)?

The following is a list (**correct as known at August 2016**) of secondary schools/academies that have **not** changed either their age range or admissions catchment area. This means that transport will **only** be provided for pupils who live in the traditional catchment area (where pupils live over the qualifying distance of 3 miles) to these schools (unless the school also happens to be your nearest); or to your nearest school if it is over the statutory distances of 3 miles.

Frozen high and 11-16 schools
Brookvale High School, Groby
Belvoir High School, Bottesford
Castle Rock High School, Coalville
Ibstock Community College
Ivanhoe College, Ashby
John Ferneley College, Melton
Longfield College, Melton
Newbridge High School, Coalville
Shepshed High School *

Frozen upper schools (14+)
Hind Leys College, Shepshed *
King Edward VII College, Coalville

NOTE: * Shepshed High School and Hind Leys College will likely **not** be frozen with effect from September 2017 but this has yet to be confirmed.

For primary schools - the majority have **NOT** changed either their admissions catchment area or age range, therefore free transport will **only** be provided over 2 miles to the traditional 'frozen' area school or to another nearest school if there is one. The following list shows primary schools **where changes have been made**, therefore transport will only be provided to these schools if it is your nearest or nearest Leicestershire primary school and over 2 miles away:

Primary schools (NOT frozen)
Albert Village Primary
All Saints Primary, Coalville
All Saints C of E Primary, Wigston
Belvoirdale Primary, Coalville
Blackfordby Primary
Fairfield Primary, Wigston
Fossebrook Primary, Leicester Forest East
Glen Hills Primary, Wigston
Glenmere Community Primary, Wigston
Holliers Walk Primary, Hinckley
Hugglestone Primary
Kingsway Primary, Braunstone
Little Hill Primary, Wigston
Manorfield C of E Primary, Stoney Stanton
Mercenfeld Primary, Markfield
Millfield L.E.A.D Academy, Braunstone
Parkland Primary, South Wigston
Ravenhurst Primary, Braunstone
Sapcote Primary
Stafford Leys Primary, LFE
Stanton Under Bardon Primary
St Mary's C of E Primary, Hinckley
The Meadow Primary, Wigston
Thornton Primary
Thythorn Field Primary, Wigston
Water Leys Primary, Wigston
Woodstone Primary, Ravenstone

Parents applying for their children to start at the primary schools listed below in August/September 2017 should be aware that, subject to DfE approval, these schools will **NOT** be frozen from August/September 2017 due to changes in age range or catchment area changes. (** still to be confirmed)

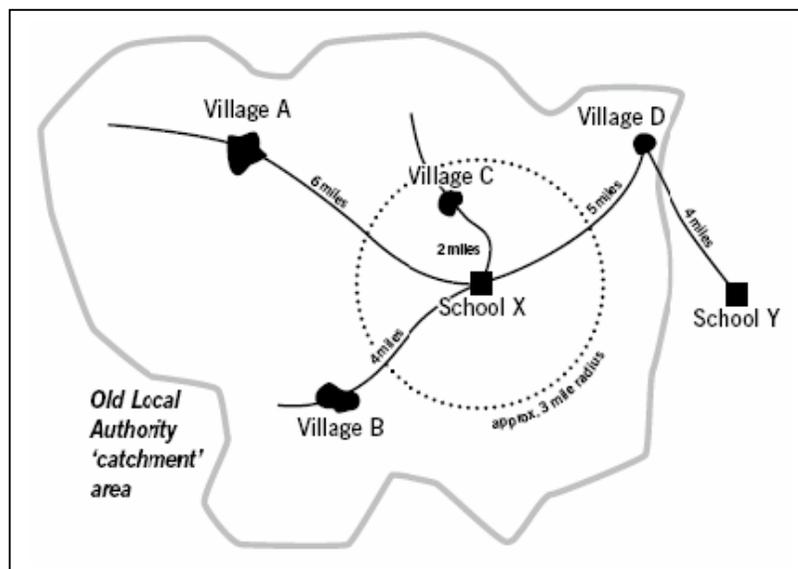
Primary Schools NOT frozen from 2017
Belton CE Primary **
Breedon on the Hill CE Primary
Castle Donington St. Edward's CE Primary
Castle Donington Orchard Primary
Diseworth CE Primary
Hemington Primary
Houghton on the Hill Primary
Kegworth Primary

Long Whatton Primary
Oadby Brocks Hill Primary
Oadby Brookside Primary
Oadby Langmoor Primary
Oadby Launde Primary
Oadby Woodland Grange Primary
Shepshed Newcroft Primary **
Shepshed Oxley Primary **
Shepshed St. Botolph's Primary **
Thurnby Fernvale Primary
Thurnby St Luke's CE Primary

You should note that if a school/academy changes its age range or admissions catchment area (or another school/academy in the area does, such that this affects local education provision) then the policy will revert to the nearest/nearest Leicestershire situation. Transition arrangements for existing students would also apply at that time for this phase of education. The admissions catchment areas for frozen schools can be found on the school's websites.

Can you give me an example of how the policy works?

The previous transport policy (used up until July 2015) assumed school admission catchment areas and age ranges did not overlap. Therefore, there was no ambiguity about which school a pupil would have entitlement to free transport to (if any). In practice, there were instances where the catchment area school was further from the child's home than another school. The previous policy allowed for this as it entitled the pupil to free transport to either their catchment or nearer school. In certain instances, the nearer school was outside Leicestershire e.g. in a neighbouring county or Leicester City.



The diagram above gives a simple example of secondary transport entitlement under the previous policy and how this has changed under the new 'nearest Leicestershire school' policy. Under the previous policy children living in villages A, B and D were eligible to free transport to School X, as this is the catchment area school and over three miles away. Children living in village C did not qualify for free transport as they are under three miles from the school and a walking route is available.

If we assume there are no other schools in the area and Schools X and Y are not frozen, then the new policy will only recognise the nearest and/or nearest Leicestershire school. Therefore, children living in villages A and B would be entitled to free transport to School X as it is their nearest Leicestershire school and over three miles away. Children living in village C would still not qualify for free transport as they are under three miles to their nearest Leicestershire school (no change). Children living in village D would no longer qualify for free transport to School X even though this is their traditional catchment area school and may be within School X's academy admissions area. This is because School X is not the nearest Leicestershire school to these pupils' home addresses. These pupils would be eligible for free transport to School Y as it is the nearest Leicestershire school and is more than three miles from the home address.

Note - if School Y was in a different local authority area e.g. Leicester City or another county; then pupils in Village D would get free transport to either School X as their nearest Leicestershire School or School Y as the absolute nearest school.

How does the council measure distance?

The Council uses a highly accurate software programme for measuring distances (MapInfo). In order to determine which school is the nearest to a home address, distances beyond the statutory walking distance are measured by the shortest road route. Once the nearest school has been identified, to establish a child's transport eligibility, statutory walking distances (2 miles for primary aged children and 3 miles for secondary aged children) will be measured by the shortest available walking route from the centre line of the public highway immediately outside the home address to the nearest school or college pedestrian entrance.

The Mapinfo system is a professional mapping tool that is not available for free, but families who want to assess what might be their nearest school can use an online mapping tool to give **an approximate indication** of distances e.g. Google maps, AA maps. Alternatively parents can contact the Transport Assessments Team in order to clarify their nearest/nearest Leicestershire school and contact details are provided at the end of the document.

What if there is no space in my nearest school?

Government guidance says that we should do the eligibility test for transport purposes at the same time as the normal school admissions round. This means we will check eligibility around March and April 2017 when school place offers are being sent to parents. Unless there are exceptional circumstances it is assumed that your nearest and/or frozen Leicestershire school will have space to accommodate your child.

During the normal school admissions round, if parents choose to apply for a place for their child at a school that is not the nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school as their first preference and instead apply for another preferred school and secure a place at that preferred school then the child will have no transport entitlement to that preferred school (on the basis that space would have been available at the nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school at the time of allocation and there would have been a reasonable opportunity to secure a place had parents made this their first preference).

During the normal admissions round if an application for a place at the nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school is refused, transport may then be provided to the next nearest school with space. However, in order to qualify for transport to the next nearest school with space, parents must have listed the nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school as one of their preferences and been refused a place at that school. If parents then do not apply for a place at the next nearest school and apply instead for another (more distant) school no transport will be provided to that other school.

NOTE: if parents apply for a school which is not their nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school and rank that preference higher than their nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school and secure a place at that preferred school, then transport will not be provided to that preferred school as a place could potentially have been secured at the nearest or nearest Leicestershire/frozen school.

What about 16+ transport?

New government guidance has raised the age to which young people have a duty to stay in education, employment or training i.e. this is not about raising school leaving age, as there are other opportunities than just staying at school, such as apprenticeships. There has been no change in the legislation governing transport for those aged 16+ so this remains a discretionary service that the Council doesn't have to provide. However, the new policy below will still provide a limited choice of transport options for 16+ students.

Transport assistance for the published charge (exemptions apply for students entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits or their maximum level Working Tax Credit) is available for those pupils above statutory school age if they live more than three miles from the school/college attended, if the student is aged 16, 17 or 18 when the course is started **and:**

- the school is the nearest school sixth form or nearest freestanding Post 16 Further Education/Sixth Form college.

and in addition to provide transport assistance, over the qualifying distances and ages listed above, to one of the following:

either

- the nearest freestanding Leicestershire Further Education/Sixth Form college

or

- the nearest Leicestershire school sixth form but to continue providing transport **only** to the catchment school with a sixth form in areas where there have been no changes to catchments or age range since May 2012 (frozen areas) **Note:** Where a student lives in a frozen area they will only be provided transport to the frozen area school sixth form school or their nearest school sixth form. Where the nearest school sixth form is not the frozen school sixth form and is in another local authority area e.g. Leicester City, there will be no additional entitlement to any other Leicestershire school.

Assisted transport for 16+ students is more limited under the new policy as it no longer takes account of the availability of courses or subjects and won't allow for students to attend a school or college which is further away if it offers their chosen course.

There will still be a charge for eligible students unless they are from a low income family and you must apply every year for transport – the charge for the 2016/17 academic year is £600 per annum, and this may change for 2017/18.

Local bus service season tickets may offer better value and more flexible bus travel options. Similarly many academies now provide or are considering providing school special bus services for many of their students – contact the school for information on these (our website has more information).

Are there any transitional arrangements?

The policy came into effect from the start of the 2015/16 academic year and affects anyone changing schools, moving to a new stage of education (including Post 16) or moving house. Providing no other circumstances change (e.g. change of address or a walking route becomes available at under three miles), if a child was already part way through their education in the previous academic year and they received assisted transport, this will continue until they have to leave or move to a new school because of their age or if they move to Post 16 education. Eligibility for free transport would be reassessed at this point, as it always has been. For returning 16+ students who qualified for transport assistance under the old policy, they will remain eligible providing they stay on the same course. If they change course, start a new one or their personal circumstances change (move address for example) then they will be reassessed under the new policy.

As noted above, if you are receiving transport assistance under the transitional arrangements and you move address or change school, you may lose your entitlement, as transitional protection will cease and transport eligibility from the new address will be assessed under the new policy.

Is transport to denominational (faith) schools affected?

The County Council previously (July 2013) decided to phase out assisted transport to denominational schools – so no new transport will be provided (other than for low income families who qualify under extended rights legislation). More information about this and charges for remaining students is available in appendix 3 of the policy.

There are special rules for families on low income and these can be found in paragraph 5 of our policy document.

If your nearest Leicestershire school is a Voluntary Aided Church of England or Roman Catholic school and over the qualifying 2 (primary) or 3 (secondary) miles distance then you will be entitled to free transport to that school. However, if you object to sending your child to a faith school and secure a place at your nearest non-faith Leicestershire school, then transport will be provided to that non-faith school.

When will I know if my child is being offered transport assistance?

For students starting a new school in August/September 2017 decisions on transport eligibility will be sent to parents directly during April/May 2017 (you do not need to apply for free transport if your child is under 16). Decisions on Post 16 will be much later in the summer, please note that families have to apply every year by the end of June for Post 16 transport assistance to be guaranteed for the start of the academic year. Late applications will be processed but there is no guarantee that passes will be available for the start of the autumn term.

Are there any other alternatives if my child is not eligible to transport assistance from the Council?

Yes. The Council operates a farepaying system where spare seats on school buses it provides can be applied and paid for – but note that farepaying places are extremely limited and the Council cannot guarantee that your application will be successful so you are advised to consider alternative transport arrangements in case we cannot meet your request. Further information is on our website at the link below.

Many academies now operate their own buses. Similarly a number of bus companies are providing commercial 'school special' bus services – the school can provide information on these options.

There may also be local bus services that match the journeys that school pupils and students need – Traveline can provide information:



If I am refused transport assistance, can I appeal against the decision?

Yes, an appeals procedure is available if you think the policy has been applied **incorrectly** and details are in Appendix 1 of the policy.

You cannot, however, appeal against a decision solely because you disagree with the policy. If you feel that you have not received the standard of service you expect or that the Council may not be providing an adequate service in a particular area, you can use the Corporate Complaints Procedure which you can find [here](#)

Any other queries?

If you have any further queries please contact us, preferably by email, to:

Email: TransportAssessments@leics.gov.uk

Post: Assessments Team
Transport Operations
Leicestershire County Council
County Hall
Glenfield
LEICESTER
LE3 8RJ

Phone: 0116 305 0002

Web: www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport-for-5-to-16-year-olds

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport-16-to-19-year-olds

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport-appeals