

Special Educational Needs

Travel Assistance: A guide for parents/carers of children and young people with a Statement of Special Educational Needs

This webpage explains how Wiltshire Council can help with your child's travel arrangements if they have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

When can Wiltshire Council help with my child's travel to school/ college?

Pupils of compulsory school age (5-16)

Wiltshire Council will provide travel assistance for pupils of compulsory school age who have a Statement of SEN and:

- are attending the nearest appropriate school to their home as named in Part Four of his/her statement
- **and** the distance between their home and their school, measured by the nearest walking route, is more than two miles (for pupils up to the end of the school year in which they have their eighth birthday), or more than three miles (for pupils from the beginning of the school year in which they have their ninth birthday)

Low income families

Wiltshire Council will provide travel assistance for pupils from low income groups (i.e. the child is entitled to Free School Meals or the parent is receiving Working Tax Credit at the maximum rate), who are of compulsory school age and have a Statement of SEN and:

- are attending the nearest appropriate school to their home as named in Part Four of his/her statement
- **and** the distance between their home and their school, measured by the nearest walking route, is more than two miles (for pupils up to the end of the school year in which they have their eleventh birthday)

or

- are over 11 and attending one of their three nearest qualifying schools
- **and** the distance between their home and their school, measured by the nearest walking route, is more than two miles but not more than six miles

Assistance with home/ school travel may also be given to pupils living nearer to their school, when an individual's needs make this essential. Each case will be considered on its merits.

All school travel is subject to regular review. For children and young people with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, it should be included as part of their Annual Review.

Pupils who are over compulsory school age (16-19)

A subsidised travel scheme is available for students continuing in full-time education (either in school or college) beyond the age of sixteen, who are unable to travel independently using mainstream services. There is no free travel available, and the level of contribution required is linked to the student's household income with reduced rate travel available for families on low income.

Wiltshire Council may provide assistance through this scheme for students who:

- live three miles or more from their school/ college
- **and** attend a full-time course at their designated school or college, or at a specialist college where funding has been approved by the YPLA/EFA
- and is aged over 16 but under 19 at the start of the course

It is important to note that although a student may have a Statement of SEN (or may have had one whilst at school), this does not automatically entitle the student to support with travel.

To apply for travel assistance, please contact the SEN Transport Officer on 01225 713308 for an application form.

How is travel assistance provided?

The decision whether to offer assistance with transport is made by the Statutory SEN Service and you will be notified of this when your child's school place is finalised. If your child is eligible for assistance, you will be sent an application form to complete. This will form part of the health and safety risk assessment which is made before your child travels.

Travel arrangements will then made by the Passenger Transport Unit, who will provide you with full details of the arrangements before your child travels. Any transport provided for pupils of compulsory school age will be free of charge.

There are various types of assistance, such as:

- season tickets for public transport services
- contract transport provided by Wiltshire Council, using coaches, minibuses, taxis or voluntary drivers
- expenses given to parents who use their own transport (normally paid only when there are no places available on contract vehicles or when suitable transport provision is not available)

Once transport is agreed, it may not always be possible to provide the same vehicle operator, driver or passenger assistant. However, we will try to keep any changes to a minimum. The Passenger Transport Unit will keep you informed about any changes to your child's transport arrangements.

When is travel assistance provided?

If your child attends a day school then transport will be provided at the usual start and finish times of the school day. If transport is shared with pupils from another school then a short waiting time may be necessary.

If your child attends a termly boarding school, transport will be provided at the beginning and end of term only. This will be a maximum of 12 journeys for the six term year.

When is Wiltshire Council unable to provide travel assistance?

Wiltshire Council provides assistance for journeys from home to school only, and are unable to provide assistance for journeys:

- where you have expressed a preference for your child to attend an alternative school rather than the nearest appropriate school
- to medical appointments i.e. dental or hospital
- if your child is sick and or excluded from school and has to be collected from school part way through the day (or returned mid-week if attending a residential school)
- to or from a location that is not your normal home address, e.g. a childminder's or friend's house
- undertaken outside the usual start/finish times of the school day
- when a child is placed in a 52 week placement
- when the driver continues the journey without your child because he has waited more than three minutes at your house. Under these circumstances an additional journey will not be provided and transport for that journey becomes your responsibility

Are passenger assistants provided?

If it is felt that there may be a risk to the health or safety of your child or other children on the contract vehicle, or if the parent/ carer requests a passenger assistant, an assessment of need will be carried out. If appropriate, an adult carer will be provided.

Passenger assistants are not allowed to administer medication and are required to stay in or close to the vehicle at all times. They are not expected to leave the vehicle to accompany children into their homes. If a passenger assistant is suddenly taken ill and it is not possible to find a replacement, the transport may have to be cancelled. If this happens, every effort will be made to let you know promptly.

What do we need to do, if we move house?

If you move house, even temporarily, your child's entitlement to transport will need to be reassessed. Please notify Statutory SEN Service (on 01225 718095) well before your moving date to ensure that your case is re-evaluated.

If you fail to advise Statutory SEN Service in good time, you will be responsible for your child's transport to school until new arrangements are made. (Please note that ten working days must be allowed for the Passenger Transport Unit to make new arrangements).

Are special seats or harnesses provided?

If appropriate, a safety seat assessment will be undertaken before your child travels. If it is recommended that your child needs a special seat or harness, this will be

provided by the Passenger Transport Unit. This equipment is the property of Wiltshire Council.

How will the LA ensure my child's safety?

We will take every precaution to ensure your child's safety while travelling on the vehicle. In particular we will ensure that:

- all passenger assistants and drivers have received enhanced CRB clearance checks
- all drivers, passenger assistants and operators are aware of their duties and responsibilities, particularly in the event of an emergency
- all passenger assistants receive appropriate training and are familiar with safety and emergency equipment
- whenever possible, you are informed in advance of any changes in transport arrangements

Please be aware that if there is no one at the drop-off point or at home to meet your child, and you have not provided us with an emergency contact nearby, we will contact Social Services or the police for assistance.

To further ensure your child's health and safety, your child must not:

- smoke on school transport
- eat or drink on the vehicle
- stand up in the vehicle whilst it is moving

You may be held responsible for any damage caused by your child and be asked to reimburse the operator accordingly. Persistent disruptive or violent behaviour may mean that transport has to be withdrawn.

How can we help?

You can play an important part in ensuring the smooth running of your child's transport arrangements by:

- making sure that your child is ready five minutes before the home pick-up time. Drivers are advised only to wait three minutes before leaving and continuing their journey
- informing the transport operator as soon as possible if your child is ill or unable to attend school for any reason
- advising your passenger assistant if you are aware of any problems affecting your child on a particular day
- ensuring that your child is aware of appropriate behaviour whilst travelling to and from school
- advising the Passenger Transport Unit and Statutory SEN Service of any changes of address that may affect transport arrangements
- providing us with a name, address and telephone number of a person who can take responsibility for your child in an emergency if you are not available
- contacting the operator if you have waited more than 20 minutes after the usual pick up time and no transport has arrived

My child doesn't qualify for the assistance outlined above – is there any other help available?

If your child does not qualify for travel assistance, it may be possible to pay for a spare seat on a contracted school vehicle, collecting your child from an existing pick-up point. These places can only be offered where spare seats are available and this is not normally known until after the start of the school year.

A charge is made for spare seat places. These are not guaranteed and can be withdrawn at short notice to provide a place for an entitled child. You would then be responsible for your child's transport arrangements.

To find out more about the spare seat scheme, please contact the Passenger Transport Unit on 01225 713455. If your child does not qualify for the assistance outlined and you would like to discuss your particular circumstances, please contact the SEN Transport Officer on 01225 713308.

If you require further information about travel assistance for pupils with SEN, please look on our webpages at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/schoolseducationandlearning/specialeducationalneeds/seninfoforparents/senleaflets.htm> or contact SEN Transport Officer on 01225 713308.

If your child already receives travel assistance and you need to discuss their arrangements, please contact the Passenger Transport Unit on 01225 713000.

If you require copies of leaflets about SEN, please contact Wiltshire Council or the Parent Partnership Service (SENSS) at the addresses given below. Alternatively, visit our websites.

Statutory SEN Service, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 8JB

Telephone: 01225 718095

Website: www.wiltshire.gov.uk

SENSS, ask, Elmsgate, Edington Road, Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire BA14 6HP

Telephone: 08457 585072

Email: info@askwiltshire.org

Website: www.askwiltshire.org

Information in this publication can be made available in other formats and languages on request. Please contact Wiltshire Council on 01225 713000 or by email: customercare@wiltshire.gov.uk