

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for parents

Home to School Transport eligibility changes from September 2015

Leicestershire County Council is changing its mainstream home to school transport policy for pupils who will start school for the first time or transfer to a secondary school in September 2015. The following questions are to help parents understand these changes.

Why does the Council need 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 a number of academies across Leicestershire.

Academies and free schools can choose to change their age ranges and their admission catchment areas, and a number have already chosen to do this or are planning changes. This means that many admission catchment and transport eligibility areas overlap. 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 schools change in the future. You may already be aware that we need to save over £110 million over the next five years. Although these latest proposals are not expected to save money now, they may reduce the risk of increasing costs in the future by avoiding multiple transport eligibility where schools and academies have overlapping 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.

Full details of these consultations are available [here](#).

What is the new policy?

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

because school transport has always 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 **will generally no longer be 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, 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)

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 e.g. 10+ High Schools: see our website for a list of schools that are in this category)

or

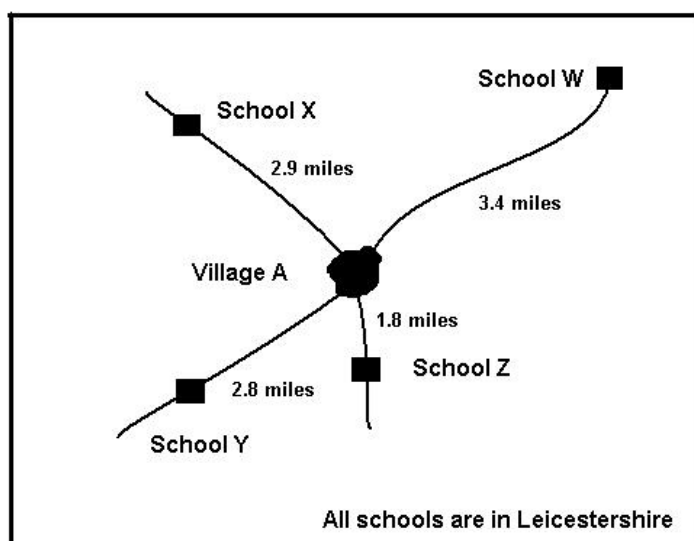
- where there have been no changes to catchment areas or age ranges since May 2012 to continue to provide free transport over the qualifying distances (listed above) **only** to the catchment school in those areas (frozen areas). See below for a list of these schools.

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.

The full new policy is available [here](#).

* - an example of a compatible age range situation is a primary school where children leave at 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 with available space where the distance is more than 2 miles for the first year and 3 miles after that. If you live in a frozen area, transport will be to the frozen school only.

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 2014**) 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 2 miles for primary or 3 miles for secondary) 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 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary.

Frozen high and 11-16 Schools
Heathfield Academy, Earl Shilton
Abington Academy, Wigston
Bushloe High school, Wigston
Brookvale High School, Groby
Gartree High School, Oadby
Manor High School, Oadby

Welland Park Academy, Market Harborough
Ivanhoe College, Ashby
Castle Rock High school, Coalville
Newbridge High School, Coalville
Ibstock College
Shepshed High School
Charnwood College High, Loughborough
Stonehill High School, Birstall
Wreake Valley Academy, Syston
Castle Donington College
John Ferneley College, Melton
Longfield College, Melton
Belvoir High School, Bottesford
Thomas Estley College, Broughton Astley
Leysland High School, Countesthorpe

Frozen upper schools (14+)
William Bradford CC, Earl Shilton
Guthlaxton College, Wigston
Beauchamp College, Oadby
Robert Smyth Academy, Market Harborough
Ashby School
King Edward VII College, Coalville
Hind Leys College, Shepshed
Charnwood College Upper, Loughborough
Countesthorpe College

The Transport Eligibility Area (formerly 'catchment area') for frozen secondary schools can be found on the school search page [here](#).

For primary schools - the majority have **NOT** changed either their admissions 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 Leicestershire primary and over 2 miles away:

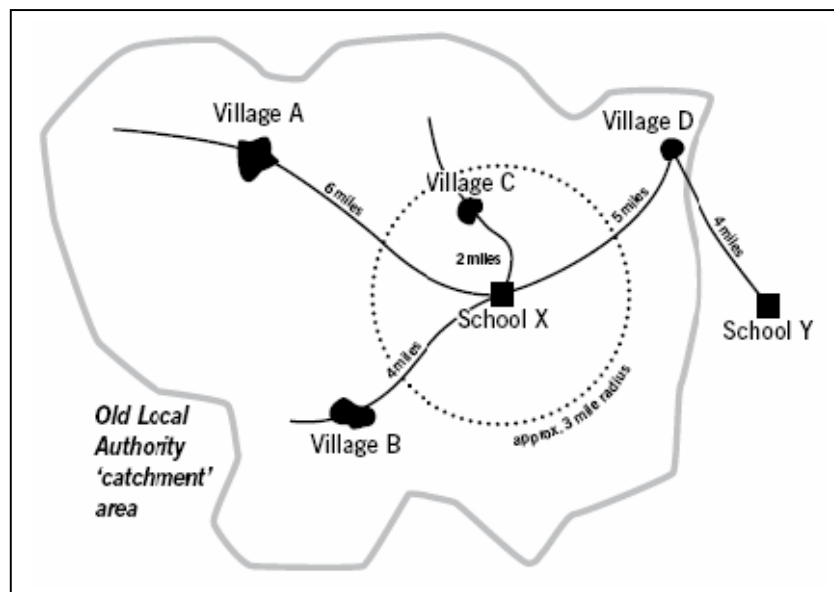
Primary schools (NOT frozen)
Stafford Leys Primary, LFE
Mercenfeld Primary, Markfield
Stanton Under Bardon Primary
Thornton Primary
Glen Hills Primary, Wigston
Fairfield Primary, Wigston
Parkland Primary, South Wigston
Albert Village Primary
Blackfordby Primary
Belvoirdale Primary, Coalville

All Saints Primary, Coalville
Woodstone Primary, Coalville
Hugglestone Primary
Sapcote Primary
Stoney Stanton 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.

Can you give me an example of how the policy will work in future?

The current transport policy (for use up to July 2015) assumes school admission catchment areas and age ranges do not overlap. Therefore, there is no ambiguity about which school a pupil would have entitlement to free transport to (if any). 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 above gives a simple example of the secondary entitlement under the existing policy and how this would change under the new 'nearest Leicestershire 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 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 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 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.

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 2015 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.

For the normal school admissions round, if you have not listed your child's nearest/frozen school as first preference then he/she will have no transport entitlement to the preferred school (on the basis that space would have been available at the nearest school at the time of application and there would have been a reasonable opportunity to secure a place had you made this your first preference).

If parental preference is for your nearest, nearest Leicestershire or frozen school and your child does not have a school place after the normal admissions round the Council will check the availability of space at the next nearest school. If there is a space available at that school the Council will provide transport (over the relevant qualifying distances of 2 or 3 miles) to that school. If there is no space at the next nearest it will check the second nearest and so on until a space is available and then provide free transport. If space is available at a nearer school and you choose not to accept this space and/or prefer another school no transport will be provided.

Late admissions applications (where parents could reasonably have applied on time) may affect children's eligibility to free transport as this is assessed in relation to available places in schools

at the normal time of allocation. Where parents apply late for reasons outside their control, eligibility to free transport is assessed in relation to available places in schools at that time of allocation.

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 will be 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 – please see [here](#) for details of current and future charges.

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).

When would the changes take place and are there any transitional arrangements?

The policy will only affect pupils starting at primary school or transferring to a secondary school in September 2015. Providing no other circumstances change (e.g. change of address or a walking route becomes available at under three miles), if a child is already part way through their education and they currently receive 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 is currently. For 16+ students who qualify 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 after the start of the 2015 academic year, 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 from September 2015 (other than for low income families who qualify under extended rights legislation). More information about this and charges for remaining students is available [here](#).

There are special rules for families on low income and these can be found in paragraph 5 of our policy document [here](#).

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?

Decisions on transport eligibility will be sent to parents directly during April/May 2015 (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 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 there are only a very limited number of spaces available and you should not ‘bank on’ getting a place. 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 by phone on 0871 200 22 33 or on the web at www.travelineeastmidlands.co.uk

Any other queries?

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

Email: TransportAssessments@leics.gov.uk

Post: Assessments Team
Sustainable Travel Group
Leicestershire County Council
County Hall
Glenfield
LEICESTER
LE3 8RJ

Phone: 0116 305 0002

Web: www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport

Please note that the information in this guide is correct at time of going to press. Please note that this is a summary guide – for detailed information on home to school transport eligibility criteria please see the full policy document. STG August 2014.