



# Home to School Transport Policy

To be applied to all learners entering the 2025-2026 academic year onwards.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg  
(This document is also available in Welsh)

Version 1.1	17/09/2024	JF/SLM
-------------	------------	--------



## **Introduction**

Powys County Council (“the Authority”) has a legal duty to provide learners of compulsory school age with free transport to their catchment school if they live over the statutory walking distance.

Transport will be provided in accordance with the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (“the Measure”)<sup>1</sup> and the statutory guidance issued by Welsh Ministers entitled ‘Learner Travel - Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance - June 2014’ (“the Guidance”)<sup>2</sup> and the local authority’s School Transport Policy as set out below. These arrangements apply to learners who ordinarily reside in Powys or those deemed to be the responsibility of Powys local authority.

Parents may find it beneficial to read this policy alongside the Admissions Information and Arrangements for early years primary and secondary [Applying for a School Place - Powys County Council](#)

**Note: This information is correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change due to alterations in the law or Council Policy. This policy will be subject to periodic review.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2>

<sup>2</sup> Learner Travel - Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance - June 2014, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/learner-travel-statutory-provision-and-operational-guidance-june-2014.pdf>

## **Section 1: Transport for Primary and Secondary Aged Learners (Reception to Year 11)**

### **1.1 Legal duties of the Local Authority**

The legal duties of a local authority in relation to school transport, as outlined in the Measure, are as follows:

We recognise our obligations under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to comply with parental preference regarding choice of school. However, where parents/guardians exercise a preference for a school other than their catchment school, the child/ren **will not** be entitled to free home to school transport. Parents must make their own transport arrangements and are wholly responsible for their child/ren to travel to the school of their choice and all associated transport costs.

#### **We must:**

- Assess the travel needs of learners in our authority area.
- Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending primary school who live 2 miles (3.218 Kilometres) or further from their catchment school.
- Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending secondary school who live 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) or further from their catchment school.
- Assess and meet the needs of “looked after” children in our authority area.
- Promote access to Welsh medium education.
- Promote sustainable modes of travel.

The Measure defines the ‘nearest suitable school’ as one that provides education or training appropriate to the learner’s age, ability, aptitudes, and any learning difficulties they may have. Local authorities determine which school is the nearest suitable school, and in this policy, the term ‘Catchment School’ is used, aligning with the maps created by the School Service. Factors such as faith and the language of instruction are not considered when deciding the nearest suitable school.

Where parents have shared responsibility for a child and the child has dual residency at both parents’ homes, the authority will provide transport from both home addresses, parents must, however, provide evidence that the child/ren live at both addresses and that the child/ren will meet the qualifying criteria in 1.2 below.

### **1.2 Qualifying criteria**

Home to school transport will be provided for learners who ordinarily reside in Powys to attend their catchment school, as defined by the Authority in the School Admissions Information and Arrangements for the year of entry to the school. [Applying for a School Place - Powys County Council](#)

A ‘catchment’ school means the school within a defined geographic area. For details of each catchment, please go to: [\[Link to be updated\]](#)

To be eligible for free home to school transport, the learner must be of compulsory school age and in addition:

- Live over the “statutory distance” from the catchment school. The “statutory distance” is defined as being 2 miles (3.218 Kilometres) for primary schools and 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) for secondary schools. In Section 3 of the Measure distances below these thresholds are referred to as “Walking distances.”
- Although the distance is referred to as the “walking distance” it does not imply that the learner is necessarily expected to walk, but it is the distance within which a parent/guardian is expected to make their own arrangements for the learner’s journey, at their own cost, to and from school.
- Footpaths and bridleways will be considered suitable if they have a stone or tarmac surface. Any other surface will only be considered if it can be walked in normal school footwear.

Note: When determining “statutory distances” we use the Authorities Geographical Information System (GIS) by measuring the nearest available route. This is undertaken starting at the point where the applicant’s address meets the public highway to the nearest available entrance to the school.

Under section 3(7) of the Measure the walking distance should be measured by the “shortest available route”. A route is considered to be available if it is safe (as far as reasonably practicable) for a learner without a disability or learning difficulties to walk alone or with an accompanying adult if the learners age and levels of understanding requires this.

If a route is not ‘available’ and there is no alternative ‘available’ walking route within the respective distance threshold applicable to the learner’s age, which can be used instead as prescribed within section 3 of the Measure, the learner cannot be expected to walk to their catchment school, even though the distance from home to school is less than the distance limit that applies to the learner’s age.

**What this means:**

- **Eligibility:** The student must be of school age and live beyond a certain distance from the school (2 miles (3.218 kilometres) for primary, 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) for secondary).
- **Walking Distance:** This distance is called “walking distance,” but it doesn’t mean the student has to walk. It’s the distance within which parents must arrange transport.
- **Suitable Routes:** Paths must be safe and walkable in normal school shoes.
- **Measurement:** the shortest safe route is measured from home to school using a system called GIS.

If there is no safe route within the distance the student can’t be expected to walk (See section **1.8 Safety**)

### **1.3 Children Looked After**

It will be for the Authority with parental responsibility for looking after a learner to determine which school they should attend, which might be a school other than the defined catchment school because, for instance, of priority to maintain continuity in their education or contact with siblings and friends. Subject to the Child Looked After meeting the same distance criteria, free school transport will be provided to the school of the authorities choosing.

### **1.4 Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**

The authority will make suitable and relevant educational provision for all children with additional learning needs to ensure they are able to develop to their maximum potential.

The level of transport need is assessed by relevant professionals in the authority’s education department, and this informs the type of transport provided. Transport will then be provided in line with the advice given and reviewed on an annual basis.

To be eligible for free home to school transport, the ALN learner’s catchment school must be:

- The nearest to the learners’ home address and if so,

They are more than 2 miles (3.218 Kilometres) from their home address for primary school (aged 4 -11) or more than 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) for secondary school (age 11 to 19) If a child has an Individual Development Plan (IDP) school transport may be included as part of the non-educational provisions made for the child as part of their plan. If it is, then transport will be provided. However, free transport will not be provided if parents / carers exercise their right to a preference of school which is not the catchment school named in the IDP.

If school transport is not included in a child's IDP, or if a child does not have an IDP, then they may still be entitled to home to school transport under the policy, provided that the school they are attending is the appropriate school, subject to the eligibility criteria being met.

Where the authority arranges transport for learners to attend a special school or specialist centre attached to a mainstream school, it will do so ensuring where possible that the learner(s) will have an appropriate journey time for the school they are attending. There are no specific set journey times, but the learners age, disability or learning difficulty will be considered where possible when arranging their transport.

Passenger assistants may be provided on some vehicles. This will be determined following an initial travel needs application/assessment and risk assessment where necessary.

### **1.5 Method of transport**

For primary aged learners who meet the qualifying criteria, dedicated school transport vehicles will be provided. Wherever required, dedicated school transport vehicles will carry primary, secondary aged and Post 16 learners together and bus passes will be issued. Primary aged learners will not be transported on a public transport service.

For secondary aged learners who meet the qualifying criteria, where public transport is available this will be used as first choice, and a bus pass will be issued. Where no public transport is available, dedicated school transport will be provided.

### **1.6 Schools that are over-subscribed.**

When the catchment school is full and unable to admit a learner, free transport will be provided to the next nearest catchment school that has room to take the child, as long as the home is 2 miles (3.218 Kilometres) or more away from the next nearest primary school, or 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) or more for secondary school learners.

If a learner has been refused a place at a school through an admissions appeal, then free transport will in general be available to the next nearest school that has room to take the child, if the child qualifies for free transport.

### **1.7 Closure of a school/school reorganisation**

When a school undergoes changes through a statutory reorganisation process, such as closure, merger, establishment of a new school, change of language category or change of age range, free home to school transport will be provided in accordance with the arrangements outlined in the notice published as part of the reorganisation process.

This does not affect the parents right to move their child before the change, but transport will not be provided until the change is implemented. If a school closes, free transport to the new school will only start following the closure date, typically at the end of the summer term.

Transport will only be provided to learners meeting the qualifying criteria set out in 1.2 above.

### **1.8 Safety**

The authority is subject to a legal duty to assess the travel needs of learners who walk to school under Section 2 of the Measure. For learners who do not meet the qualifying distance criteria shown in section 1.2, the Local Authority may (subject to availability) provide transport to the catchment school if the route is deemed hazardous.

An appropriate Officer in the Passenger Transport Unit assess hazardous routes, and they will follow the guidance provided in the Learner Travel: Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance June 2014. Until such time as the route has been fully assessed and a decision made by the authority it remains the parents' responsibility to ensure their child attends and is transported to school. The authority aims to complete hazardous route assessments within 10 working days of receiving a request.

Parents must apply, in writing, to the Passenger Transport Unit: [transport.applications@powys.gov.uk](mailto:transport.applications@powys.gov.uk) stating the reasons why they believe the walked route is unsafe.

## **Section 2: Discretionary Travel Arrangements**

The Measure gives local authorities power under Section 6 to make discretionary arrangements for learners who would not otherwise qualify for free school transport. Where the authority grants discretionary transport for learners outside the terms of the policy, parents will be informed in writing that the transport has been granted outside the terms of the policy. The decision to offer discretionary travel does not create a precedent for future applications, it is determined on a case-by-case basis and should not incur any additional cost to the authority.

This discretion will be operated in accordance with the Measure and the Guidance, and this will apply to any arrangements that the authority thinks fit to facilitate the travel of learners to and from a place of education and learning.

### **2.1 Welsh Medium**

For the authority to comply with Section 10 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 which states that each local authority must promote access to education and training through the medium of the Welsh language, the authority will make an exception to the qualifying criteria if your child attends a school providing Welsh language education, and the school isn't their catchment school.

If a parent wishes their child to attend a designated Welsh medium secondary provider rather than a Welsh stream, the provision of transport will be carefully considered.

Free school transport is only available if your child lives over the qualifying criteria distance from the Welsh language provision shown in 1.2.

If the child, changes language preference whilst at the school i.e., Welsh to English, transport will only continue to be provided if in making that change the school remains the learner's catchment school.

### **2.2 Transport for 16-19 learners**

There is no requirement for the local authority to provide school or college transport free of charge to learners after they complete Year 11 (post 16 years of age).

Presently free transport is made available for full-time learners who live 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) or more from their catchment secondary school, or the nearest further education college site within Powys providing education for 16-19-year-olds. The nearest further education college site is defined as the nearest Powys site to the learner's ordinary place of residence; catchment does not apply to further education colleges.

Transport is presently provided to those learners whose ordinary place of residence is within the county of Powys to access the school(s) where their post 16 subjects are being delivered subject to the qualifying criteria being met. The authority does not provide transport to post 16 education establishments outside the county boundary. However, we may aid with travel costs if the establishment attended is the only available place of learning for the student to undertake the course or subjects to meet their educational requirements.

### **2.3 Transport related to pupil referral services.**

Learners who access the pupil referral unit (PRU) or who follow an alternative curriculum may need to travel to different centres for provision during the week. Under these circumstances, the authority will provide free

transport to the centres attended by a learner on a weekly basis, subject to the standard distance qualification criteria set out in 1.2.

Where free school transport is in place, learners accessing the PRU will, where appropriate, normally be expected to travel on mainstream school transport. Other specific arrangements based on an individual learner's need will be decided by the Powys Inclusion Panel.

## **2.4 Transport related to permanent exclusions and managed moves.**

The authority will provide transport for permanently excluded learners or where agreed learners subject to managed moves who meet the standard distance qualification criteria to enable them to attend the nearest appropriate alternative school identified by the authority. This would ordinarily be the next catchment school.

## **2.5 High school induction days**

Year 6 learners who will be transferring into Year 7 in September are able to make use of existing school transport if they meet the qualifying criteria for secondary aged learners (i.e. live more than 3 miles (4.828 Kilometres) from their catchment school) when attending induction days and subject to there being a seat available on the vehicle.

## **2.6 Special arrangements for learners with short-term medical needs**

Consideration will be given to provision being made for all learners with a short-term medical need for transport because the nature of the medical condition severely impacts upon their mobility (e.g., a broken leg), not just those who qualify for transport on distance. In all instances, transport will only be provided if the learner is attending their catchment school.

Requests, supported by evidence of the medical need for transport from a medical professional, should be made in writing to the Corporate Transport Unit or by e-mailing [transport.applications@powys.gov.uk](mailto:transport.applications@powys.gov.uk). Provision will be reviewed on a termly basis or earlier if necessary.

## **2.7 Transport for those who do not meet the qualifying distance criteria.**

Consideration will be given to provision being made for those learners who attend their catchment school but do not qualify for free school transport under the distance criteria. Where public transport can meet their needs, learners will be made aware of this, and they can access the service bus upon payment of the appropriate fare.

Where no suitable public transport provision is in place, the authority may provide a permit for a seat on a dedicated school bus (if one is available) subject to the requirements of PSVAR regulations<sup>3</sup> being met. There will be no alteration to the route or the vehicle size to accommodate these learners, and in addition may be subject to an appropriate fee being paid.

The seat will only be available on a temporary basis and may be withdrawn at any time at the discretion of the authority e.g., when the seat becomes unavailable as it is required for a child who is entitled to free

---

<sup>3</sup> The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR) are designed to ensure that buses and coaches are accessible to disabled people.

1. **Accessibility Requirements:** Vehicles used for home-to-school transport must be accessible to disabled passengers. [This includes features like low floors, ramps, and designated spaces for wheelchairs<sup>1</sup>.](#)
2. **Exemptions:** Some home-to-school transport services can apply for exemptions if their vehicles are not fully compliant. [These exemptions are temporary and require operators to provide alternative accessible transport for passengers who need it<sup>2</sup>.](#)
3. **Compliance Deadlines:** Operators must work towards making their vehicles compliant with PSVAR. [Exemptions are only granted for a limited time, and operators are expected to upgrade their fleets to meet accessibility standards<sup>2</sup>.](#)

In essence, PSVAR aims to make school transport more inclusive, ensuring that all students, regardless of their physical abilities, can travel safely and comfortably.

transport. This could take place at short notice and responsibility for transport then reverts to the parent/guardian, in these instances the appeal process will not be available to the parent. Spare seats will not be made available for those learners who wish to attend a school that is not their catchment school.

## **2.8 Transition Arrangement**

Where there has been a change in the Home to School Transport Policy or where through the School Admissions Arrangements there has been a change to the school catchment areas, then the following transitional arrangements will apply to enable existing learners to complete their education:

- For primary aged learners (ages 4 to 11): Until they complete the end of their primary school, or they leave their school.
- For secondary aged learners (ages 11 to 16): To the end of Key Stage 4 (statutory school age) or leave their school.
- To the end of Key Stage 5 (aged 16-19) for a learner in Years 12-13.

Where either of the aforementioned policies are changed and transition arrangement are put in place for learners, any younger siblings that apply for transport will be considered under the new policy and will not be granted a place on transitional transport with their brother or sister.

DRAFT



## **Section 3: General Transport Matters**

### **3.1 Seat Belts**

In accordance with the Travel Behaviour Code, learners are expected to wear a seat belt.

### **3.2 Provision of passenger assistants on transport**

Passenger assistants are not normally provided on transport to mainstream schools. The need for a passenger assistant on a vehicle to support an individual learner/learners will be decided following completion of a risk assessment by the Authority.

Passenger assistants will be provided on vehicles to supervise learners on their journey to and from certain ALN schools / specialist centres attached to mainstream schools based on the learner's specific needs. In most cases the need will be established during the statementing/review process and will be in accordance with the needs of the learner. For learners that require individual transport, the provision of an assistant is qualified through the transport application form where officers identify the need and, where applicable, with key stakeholders. The requirements will be confirmed by the authority's ALN Manager.

### **3.3 Journey times**

In assessing the travel needs of learners, the local authority will consider the fact that travel arrangements must be safe and reasonable.

In accordance with the Learner Travel Wales Operational Guidance, the authority will aim to ensure that, other than in exceptional circumstances, a learner being transported to their catchment school site will have an appropriate journey time for the school they are attending, and the geographical area in which they live.

### **3.4 Behaviour**

This policy is aligned with the All-Wales Travel Behaviour Code and as such, by applying for free / discretionary school transport learners will be expected to follow the Code.

Parents are, therefore, asked to make themselves and their children aware of the All-Wales Travel Behaviour Code by following these links:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/wales-travel-behaviour-code-a4.pdf>

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/school-bus-travel-behaviour-code-a4.pdf>

### **3.5 Cameras**

CCTV will be installed in some contracted vehicles to ensure the safety of passengers and drivers and to identify individuals who demonstrate unacceptable behaviour. Where CCTV is used, learners will be made aware that recording services are in operation, including details around the confidentiality, use, storage, and retention of images.

### **3.6 Pick-up points**

It is not always possible to arrange the routes of vehicles to pass close to the home of learners. Parents may, therefore, be required to make their own arrangements for their children to get to and from the nearest 'pick-up' point of the vehicle, which is the parent's responsibility. Every effort is made to keep this distance to a minimum and it should not exceed 1 mile for primary learners, 2 miles for secondary and 3 miles for post 16. In these instances, parents should ensure learners are safely escorted to and from vehicles.

### **3.7 Change in school session times**

Under the Changing of School Session Times (Wales) Regulations 2009, where the authority considers that a change in school session times is necessary to make travel arrangements more efficient or effective, or sustainable, it will undertake appropriate consultation to change the time a school's first (morning) session begins and its second (afternoon) session ends.

### **3.8 Safeguarding**

Required safeguarding checks (enhanced DBS clearance) will be undertaken, as a minimum, by operators on all bus drivers, taxi drivers and passenger assistants every 3 years, in some instances this may be more often than 3 years.

All drivers are required to undertake safeguarding training with the authority. Drivers and passenger assistants for ALN learner transport must also complete online training through the NSPCC for Safeguarding and child protection. During the tendering process, all contractors must evidence that they adhere to a safeguarding policy.

### **3.9 Adverse weather**

During periods of adverse weather, the authority or contractor may suspend free transport provision. Every effort will be made to contact parents/guardians to inform them of school closures. Where learners need to be transported home earlier than the normal closing time, the school will contact parents/guardians to inform them of the school's closure to ensure the safety of learners after they leave the school.

Where parents/guardians transport learners who would normally travel on home-to-school transport to school in the morning they are responsible for collecting them at the end of the school day. Where learners are transported using public transport the authority will liaise with the operator in relation to collection of students where the school has closed early, these pupils may need to wait for the next available service bus.

### **3.10 Payments to parents/guardians**

In remote areas where it would not be viable for the authority to provide transport to qualifying learners, agreement may be sought from parents/guardians to transport their child/learner to/from school on payment of an agreed fuel allowance rate. Such cases will be considered on an individual basis and arrangements will be reviewed regularly.

### **3.11 Complaints**

All complaints regarding home-to-school transport from learners, parents/guardians, members of the public, drivers, etc. will be investigated.

Any concerns or complaints regarding learner behaviour, drivers, passenger assistants or vehicles should be made, as soon as possible after the incident, to both the school and the Passenger Transport Unit, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LG, by emailing: [transportcomms@powys.gov.uk](mailto:transportcomms@powys.gov.uk).

### **3.12 Contract Compliance**

In addition to statutory vehicle safety checks, the authority will, on unspecified days, undertake random checks on authority-contracted vehicles to ensure that contracts are being complied with.

### **3.13 Bus Passes**

All mainstream learners meeting the qualifying criteria set out in 1.2 above who have applied for and receive free school transport will be issued with an NFC enabled pass. This pass must be shown every time the learner accesses the school bus i.e., AM/PM. [Apply for school transport - Powys County Council](#)

It is the responsibility of the parent and learner to ensure the learner carries a valid pass. Failure to produce a pass may result in the learner not being able to access the school bus. This pass identifies the learner's entitlement to travel and assists the department in planning transport more effectively when reviewing vehicle capacity and use.

On unspecified days monitoring checks may be carried out by transport staff to ensure compliance with the carriage and use of passes by learners. Learners failing to show a valid pass will not be left at the side of the road. Lost/damaged passes can be replaced by contacting the Passenger Transport Unit, a fee may be applied for replacing lost passes.

Students who access dedicated ALN transport are not issued with passes.

### **3.14 Appeals procedure**

Entitlement to free transport will be determined by an officer in the Passenger Transport Unit, based on the information provided in the transport application and/or in accordance with this home to school transport policy. If a request is denied parents/guardians will be informed of the reason for the decision.

If a parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the decision of the Passenger Transport Unit, they may challenge it using the appeal process described below. Before submitting an appeal, please ensure your concern relates specifically to the application of the transport policy, rather than an issue that should be addressed by the school or school service. If you are at all unsure, please contact the Passenger Transport Unit by emailing: [transport.appeals@powys.gov.uk](mailto:transport.appeals@powys.gov.uk)

- **Stage 1:**

In the first instance, parents should put in writing the details of an appeal with any supporting evidence. This appeal should be sent either by letter or email to the Passenger Transport Manager, Corporate Fleet & Transport, Passenger Transport Unit at County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LG / [transport.appeals@powys.gov.uk](mailto:transport.appeals@powys.gov.uk). Confirmation of receipt of the appeal will be sent to the parent within 5 working days and a formal response will be sent to the parent within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal.

- **Stage 2:**

If the parent/guardian is not satisfied by the decision of the Passenger Transport Manager Corporate Fleet & Transport, an appeal can be made within 14 working days of the date of the stage 1 appeal response letter in writing to the Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling. Confirmation of receipt of this second appeal will be sent to the parent/guardian within 5 working days. The parent/guardian will be invited to an appeal hearing. The appeal will be decided within 4 weeks/20 working days of receipt, by the Head of Highways, Transport and Recycling and where possible/applicable prior to the start of the Autumn term, unless agreed otherwise by both parties. The Head of Highways, Transport and recycling will make the final decision on the outcome of the appeal, parents will be informed either at the appeal hearing or as soon as possible thereafter but within the 4 weeks/20 working days timeframe.

The decision at all transport appeals is heard and decided upon on a case-by-case basis. If following the Stage 2 process you remain dissatisfied, you may raise your complaint with Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ or <https://www.ombudsman.wales/>

There is also a right of appeal on a point of law by way of Judicial Review. This right must be exercised within 6 weeks of the decision.