

FARE PAYER SCHEME FOR SCHOOL TRAVEL 2023/24

CONTRACTED SCHOOL TRANSPORT (SCHOOL BUS)

Introduction

Spare seats on school transport contracted by the Council are made available to school pupils and post-16 students. Assistance is strictly limited to **existing** contracted school transport.

School

To use this Scheme, you must attend a West Berkshire maintained school or academy, or your nearest school if the school is outside of West Berkshire.

Age

To use this Scheme, you must be aged between 5 and 18 years old* on 1 September 2023.

If you are younger than age 5, the following apply:

- If you start school aged 4, you can be added to the route from the start of the autumn (Term 1), spring (Term 3) or summer (Term 5) after your 5th birthday if there is a spare seat. You would pay the pro rata cost of the seat, if you are not entitled to free transport.
- If a 4 year old would be accompanied on the school bus by an older sibling who attends the same school, we will exceptionally allow them to apply for a seat from the start of the academic year (Reception intake). We will only apply this exception for siblings.

*If you are a post-16 student, please see our Post-16 Statement and 16-19 Travel Guide.

The fee is not discounted for post-16 students. Our Guides will help you find out where travel assistance may be available, including financial support for low income families. [Farepaying School Transport](#)

Guaranteed Seats

There is a guarantee that a seat will be made available on existing school contracted transport for **secondary school students in Years 7-11 attending their catchment school (where it is not their nearest school)**. To qualify, it must be over 3 miles walking distance from their home to the school or less than 3 miles from their home to the school but there is not an available walking route for an accompanied student. The Home to School Transport Policy explains how we assess routes (see Appendix A for more details about this arrangement). The Standard Rate Fee applies.

There is a guarantee that a seat will be made available on existing school contracted transport for **post-16 students** (aged under 19 on 31 August) **attending their nearest or catchment school** (subject to eligibility criteria). To qualify, it must be over 3 miles walking distance from their home to the school or less than 3 miles from their home to the school but

there is not an available walking route for an accompanied student. The Home to School Transport Policy explains how we assess routes. The Standard Rate Fee applies.

To qualify for a guaranteed seat, the student must:

- **Apply on Time during the application window (The guarantee will not apply to late applicants (applications made after Friday 16 June 2023)).**
- **Pay the relevant rate for a Fare Payer seat by Thursday 20 July 2023.**

For all other applicants, a seat is not guaranteed and may not be available.

Fees

Applicants for seats on contracted school transport would be required to pay the Standard Rate of £930 per school year (equivalent to £4.90 per return journey per school day).

Apply on time

It is important that you apply on time.

Guaranteed applicants who apply on time and pay the fee will be offered seats.

The guarantee will not apply to applications made after 16 June 2023 (late applicants).

Where there are more applications than available places from applicants who do not qualify for a guaranteed place, applicant families will be ranked at random from those received by midnight on 16 June 2023, using the unique identifiers and a random number generator. This creates a waiting list for each route. We will allocate seats in the order of the waiting list.

Late Applications (received after midnight on 16 June) will be added to the bottom of the waiting list in order of receipt, unless spaces remain, in which case a space will be allocated.

The Scheme gives priority to West Berkshire residents who apply and pay before the end of the summer term (20 July 2023). If you are crossing into West Berkshire for schooling, you can apply for a seat. Seating capacity will not be provided solely to accommodate applicants living outside of West Berkshire. There is no guarantee that applicants will be able to be accommodated. We will not allocate spare seats until we have established what seating remains available after 20 July 2023. We will advise on likely availability of a seat as soon as we are in a position to do so.

SCHOLAR TRAIN PASSES

Termly and annual scholar rail passes are available on some routes. Applicants must be resident in West Berkshire, aged 5-18 on 01 September 2023 and travelling to an educational establishment.

Train passes are charged at the rate determined by the train company (this is normally at a discounted rate from purchasing daily tickets) which includes the Council's purchasing subsidy, plus a £20 administration fee. Students may also opt to order Plusbus tickets with their rail pass application (www.plusbus.info).

Refunds can only be made available on return of the rail pass and will be equal to the value of any refund offered to West Berkshire Council by the train company.

PUBLIC BUS TICKETS

Please note, these are not available through this scheme and applicants should contact the public bus operator directly for details of tickets available.

HOW TO APPLY FOR TRANSPORT

Applications should be made online - application forms are available on the West Berkshire Council website at www.westberks.gov.uk/schooltransport **from 17 April 2023**. Applicants will receive email confirmation that their application has been received and their unique identification number. If you do not have computer access, please contact us for advice on how to proceed on 01635 503494.

It is a condition of the pass that:

- You can only use it on journeys to and from your school/college between Monday and Friday.
- You must make your way to the boarding point. The Council's decision regarding the nearest boarding point is final. Parents are responsible for ensuring their children's safety between home and the boarding point.

Invoices will be raised for the amount owed.

You must either make full payment or agree to an instalment plan. Either full payment or the first instalment of an agreed payment plan must be made before the pass is issued.

Please be aware that failure to keep to your agreed instalment plan may lead to withdrawal of transport and/or legal action.

WITHDRAWAL OF PLACES AND REFUNDS

The Council reserves the right to withdraw any non-guaranteed places if the seat is required for a pupil entitled to free or guaranteed transport; the contract or route ceases to operate; the contract is re-routed; or seating capacity is reduced. The order of withdrawal will be in order of allocation ("last in, first-out" principle).

If a pupil does not follow the Behaviour Code, the seat may be withdrawn for behaviour reasons and no refund would be made.

www.westberks.gov.uk/schooltransport

A refund will only be made in the following circumstances:

- if the Council withdraws a Fare Payer seat
- you leave the school/college
- you move permanent address
- you become entitled to free transport

West Berkshire Council operates a 6-term year. The refund for school transport will be calculated for the remaining complete terms.

Refunds for train passes can only be made available on return of the rail pass and will be equal to the value of any refund offered to West Berkshire Council by the train company.

No other refunds will be given.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Council may take exceptional circumstances into account. There is no automatic entitlement, and the phrase “exceptional circumstances” primarily refers to the circumstances of the student rather than those of the parent. Parental work commitments would not be considered “exceptional”. A request for support should explain relevant personal and/or family circumstances you believe should be considered and what support you are seeking.

Please send your application to: pupiltransport@westberks.gov.uk

Within 20 working days of the application, the Service Manager will review your application. We may ask for additional information. The decision of the Service Manager is final.

FEEDBACK

If you believe that the Council’s Fare Payer Scheme is not objective, clear and fair, please email. We will take comments into account when we undertake the annual review of the Scheme. As this is a discretionary scheme, the Council’s decision on the content of the Scheme is final.

CONSULTATION

The Council consults before making changes to its transport policies for pupils and 16-19 students. This includes the Fare Payer Scheme. The consultation appears on the Council’s consultation finder and information is provided to schools to pass onto to its families to make them aware of the consultation.

Appendix A

Removal of secondary catchment transport provision (Council decision: September 2015)

Guarantee of a seat

The Council removed the discretionary free criteria to provide transport for secondary students to their catchment school in September 2015. The Council will continue to provide school transport to the catchment school for secondary school students in Years 7-11 who would previously have qualified **under the requirements for the catchment rule, and subject to meeting the relevant criteria**. A fee applies.

The guarantee is subject to these criteria:

- You must be attending your catchment school
- Your catchment school must not be your nearest school
- It must be over 3 miles from your home to the school or less than 3 miles from your home to the school but there is not an available walking route for an accompanied student. The Home to School Transport Policy explains how we assess routes.
- You must apply on time for a Fare Payer place, during the application window.
- You must pay the fee for a Fare Payer seat

This guarantee of a seat applies to the 2023/24 academic year. The policy for future years has not been determined.

This change meant:

- Students could qualify for free transport to their *nearest* secondary school (e.g. under the distance or low income criteria, if this applied to their circumstances).
- Students wishing to travel to their catchment school, if this is not their nearest school, could apply for a Fare Payer place on the school bus, under the rules of the Fare Payer Scheme – a fee is payable.

The change applies to all new transport applications for the academic year 2016-17 onwards.

It applies to new students when they start secondary education or existing students if they change their home address.