Home to School Transport Policy Update

Changes from September 2027

Important: If your child already receives free home to school transport, this will continue until they leave their current school (Year 6 or Year 11).

If you are applying for a school place for your child, starting or changing school in September 2027 or later, free transport will only be provided to the **nearest suitable school only** from the child's home address, where eligibility criteria are met.

What stays the same?

- The walking distance rules remain unchanged:
  - 2 miles for children under 8 years old.
  - 3 miles for children aged 8 and over.
- Additional support for low-income families will continue in line with national guidance.
- If your child changes school or you move home, a new transport application will be required and eligibility will be reassessed.

What's new?

Important information for Penrith families

For secondary school transport:

- If Ullswater Community College is your nearest school, free transport will be provided there if your child is eligible.
- If Queen Elizabeth Grammar School (QEGS) is the nearest school but your child is not offered a place, Ullswater Community College will be treated as the nearest suitable school for transport purposes.

- If your child is offered a place at QEGS, free transport will only be available if QEGS is their nearest school.

An exemption has also been approved so that Hartside and Kirkstone Passes will not be used when measuring the distance to the nearest school. For affected families, eligibility will instead be based on the nearest school in Penrith.

Reception-aged children

From September 2027, a transport charge will apply to eligible Reception children who are under 5 and not yet of compulsory school age.

Exemptions will apply for:

- Children attending a special school or specialist SEND setting.
- Eligible low-income families.

Post 16 SEND transport changes

A charge will be introduced for all SEND Young People moving into Year 12 in September 2027. This will be the same as the agreed rate for a "spare seat" which will be £867.03 for the 2026/27 academic year and is reviewed annually. Low-income exemptions will apply.

All SEND young people with dedicated, commissioned transport who are moving into Year 12 will also receive an **individual assessment** of their transport needs.

The Council will consider the following travel support options:

- Bus or train pass
- Independent Travel Training
- Personal Travel Budget
- Shared dedicated transport provided in exceptional circumstances only and centralised pick-up points may be used

New online school checker

A new "nearest school" checker will be available from August 2026 at www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk. This will help families identify their nearest school and check potential transport eligibility.

Spare seat scheme

The council's discretionary spare seat scheme will continue where it can operate sustainably. The charge will be £867.03 for the 2026/27 academic year which is reviewed annually, with priority given to post-16 students.

The council's website is in process of being updated to reflect all policy changes.
Please visit www.westmorlandandfurness.govuk and search for school transport for more information.