

Home to School Transport Consultation

Overview

The Home to School Transport Policy aims to provide guidance for parents/carers, young people and young adults on transport assistance available for pupils aged 3 -25 years of age.

Why are we consulting?

Where Local Authorities are proposing key changes to their local policy on school travel arrangements, a consultation with interested parties should be undertaken

What is the proposed key change to the policy?

Warwickshire County Council is proposing the following change to the definition of a **pupil's Qualifying School (contained in paragraph 2.3 of the draft policy attached below)**. **In all other material aspects, the Policy remains unchanged.**

At the moment, a pupil's qualifying school is defined by Warwickshire County Council to mean only the pupil's closest school to home with a space available for the pupil by the shortest available route (this will be a driving route if the journey is over the statutory walking distance or a walking route if the journey is less than the statutory walking distance). This may not be the priority area school¹ (sometimes referred to as 'catchment school') but will be the one physically closest to the student's home address.

The County Council are proposing to change the definition of qualifying school for a pupil to mean either the closest qualifying school (see paragraph 2.2 of the draft policy) to the pupil's home address, with places available, that provides education appropriate to the age, ability, and aptitude of the pupil and takes into account any special educational needs that the pupil may have, **or** the priority area school in which the pupil resides. This means that some children will have two qualifying schools.

Low-income families would continue to benefit from extended rights eligibility criteria.

The definition for a pupil's qualifying school will continue to take into account any special educational needs that the pupil may have.

The calculation of the qualifying school for a pupil who has gained a place at a selective school will remain unchanged and will include non-selective comprehensive schools which

¹ [Priority area maps for schools](#)

provide schooling for those of all ability levels. As such transport to selective schools will only be provided if it is the closest qualifying school to the child's home, taking into account all relevant secondary schools. The distance from home to school will also need to exceed the relevant statutory walking distance.

Similarly, the calculation of qualifying school for a pupil who has gained a place at a faith school remains unchanged and will include non-faith schools which provide schooling for those of all faiths. As such transport to faith schools will only be provided if it is the closest qualifying school to the child's home, taking into account all relevant schools. The exception to this will be when the pupil is of secondary school age and qualifies under the extended eligibility criteria (see section 3.3). The distance from home to school will also need to exceed the relevant statutory walking distance.

Subject to approval following consultation, it is proposed that this change would be effective from the date the new policy is published (anticipated September/October 2020).

Why is the policy being changed?

A number of changes were endorsed by Cabinet in January 2018 including a revision of the definition of the qualifying school for a pupil ('the nearest qualifying school'). From 1st September 2019 the definition of a pupil's qualifying school was altered to include only the school closest to the pupil's home by the shortest route with a pupil place available, in line with statutory requirements. However, it may not be the school in whose priority area the pupil resides (their 'catchment school') if there is another school closer to home by the nearest available walking route. Previous criteria encompassed the priority school or the nearest school with places available.

Following a review of this change in the definition of a pupil's qualifying school, it is proposed to change the definition to reintroduce the priority area school. A number of factors contributed to the decision to review and propose a change to the definition the qualifying school for a pupil including:

- The revision to the definition in January 2018 was part of addressing non-statutory duties, wide priority areas and the removal in some instances of priority areas altogether. Following the review, the County Council recognise that the number of schools removing priority areas remains small and that within the wide, largely rural, priority areas the revision created a divide in transport assistance eligibility within

certain localities and villages where the nearest school can differ by marginal distances.

- The unalignment from priority areas has created confusion and can prove complex to understand for parents when making a school place application with one priority area school and multiple nearer schools.

When will the consultation take place?

The consultation will run for six weeks from Monday 8 June 2020 to Friday 17 July 2020.

The full timeline is set out in the table below:

Activity	Date
Portfolio Holder Decision to go to public consultation	Thursday 28 May 2020
Public consultation start (6 weeks)	Monday 8 June 2020
Public consultation end	Friday 17 July 2020
Cabinet	September 2020

How can I take part in the consultation?

You can take part in the public consultation in the following ways:

- **Online:** by completing the consultation survey <https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/>
- **By Email:** transportconsultation@warwickshire.gov.uk
- **In writing:** School Organisation & Planning, Saltisford Building 3, Warwickshire County Council, Ansell Way, Warwick, CV34 4UL.

You can request a paper copy of the survey by telephone (01926 742058) or email (transportconsultation@warwickshire.gov.uk) and return it to the postal address above. You can also request an alternative format or language this way.

The closing date for responses to the consultation is midnight on Friday 17 July 2020.

Following the end of the consultation we shall publish the results and this may include quotes of comments which will be anonymous. If you reply to an anonymous survey then no personal details will be captured. If you would like further information, visit our website: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/privacy or contact our Customer Service Centre on 01926 410410

Frequently Asked Questions

Definition of a Pupil's Qualifying School (refer to paragraph 2.3 of the draft policy)

At the moment, a pupil's qualifying school is defined by Warwickshire County Council to mean only the pupil's closest school to home with a space available for the pupil by the shortest available route (this will be a driving route if the journey is over the statutory walking distance or a walking route if the journey is less than the statutory walking distance). This may not be the priority area school (sometimes referred to as 'catchment school') but will be the one physically closest to the student's home address.

The County Council are proposing to change the definition of the qualifying school for a pupil to mean either the closest qualifying school (see paragraph 2.2 of the draft policy) to the pupil's home address, with places available, that provides education appropriate to the age, ability, and aptitude of the pupil and takes into account any special educational needs that the pupil may have, **or** the priority area school in which the pupil resides. This means that some children will have two qualifying schools.

Low-income families would continue to benefit from extended rights eligibility criteria.

The definition for the qualifying school for a pupil will continue to take into account any special educational needs that the pupil may have.

For those pupils who have achieved the relevant entry criteria for a selective school, the policy remains unchanged and that school will only be considered as their qualifying school if it is the closest qualifying school to the pupil's home address and there are no nearer non-selective schools capable of educating the child.

Similarly, transport to faith schools will only be provided if it is the closest qualifying school to the child's home, taking into account all relevant schools. The exception to this will be when the pupil is of secondary school age and qualifies under the extended eligibility criteria (see section 3.3).

Subject to approval following consultation, it is proposed that this change would be effective from the date the new policy is published (anticipated September/October 2020).

Q – My child currently receives free transport to school, will this affect me?

A – No, not unless your child’s circumstances change, such as a change in address, and you reapply for transport on or after the publication of the new policy. The assessment of your application would be against the new policy.

Q – My child has an EHCP and attends a special school, will these proposals affect me?

No, transport will continue to be provided to the nearest suitable school as named on the EHCP or as identified by SENDAR.

Q – What about transport to selective schools?

Currently, transport is not automatically provided to those attending a grammar school. It must be the closest qualifying school to the home address, and non-selective schools are taken into consideration when assessing what the closest qualifying school is for each pupil. Under the new proposal this will not change.

Q- Would you consider an out of county school to be my child’s qualifying school?

We wouldn’t ordinarily consider out of county schools during the assessment process, however if your child has gained a place at a school outside of Warwickshire then we would provide transport to this school if it was the closest qualifying school to your child’s home address.

Q – My child is due to start school in September 2021, does this change apply to them?

A – Yes, this policy change could be applicable if transport assistance is required to your child’s school

Q- What if I can’t get my child into the closest school?

A - If your closest school has no spaces then we would consider the next nearest school with spaces to be your closest qualifying school.

Q – What happens if I move house after the publication of the new policy?

A – Anyone who has a change in circumstances on or after the publication of the new policy (such as a house move) would be subject to a re-assessment. Therefore, if the school your child attends is no longer considered to be the closest school with space available or your new address is not located in your child’s school priority area then free transport would cease.

Change to Home to School Transport Policy – Scenarios

Definition of a Pupil’s Qualifying School (refer to paragraph 2.3 of the draft policy)

At the moment, a pupil’s qualifying school is defined by Warwickshire County Council to mean only the pupil’s closest school to home with a space available for the pupil by the shortest available route (this will be a driving route if the journey is over the statutory walking distance or a walking route if the journey is less than the statutory walking distance). This may not be the priority area school (sometimes referred to as ‘catchment school’) but will be the one physically closest to the student’s home address.

The County Council are proposing to change the definition of the qualifying school for a pupil to mean either the closest qualifying school (see paragraph 2.2 of the draft policy) to the pupil’s home address, with places available, that provides education appropriate to the age, ability, and aptitude of the pupil and takes into account any special educational needs that the pupil may have, **or** the priority area school in which the pupil resides. This means that some children will have two qualifying schools.

Low-income families would continue to benefit from extended rights eligibility criteria.

The definition of a pupil’s qualifying school will continue to take into account any special educational needs that the pupil may have.

For those pupils who have achieved the relevant entry criteria for a selective school, the policy remains unchanged and that school will only be considered as their qualifying school if it is the closest qualifying school to the pupil’s home address and there are no nearer non-selective schools capable of educating the child.

Similarly, transport to faith schools will only be provided if it is the closest qualifying school to the child’s home, taking into account all relevant schools. The exception to this will be when the pupil is of secondary school age and qualifies under the extended eligibility criteria (see section 3.3).

Subject to approval following consultation, it is proposed that this change would be effective from the date the new policy is published (anticipated September/October 2020).

Todd is 7 and attends his local primary school, which is further than the statutory walking distance (2 miles). As this is the nearest school to Todd, Todd is still entitled to transport assistance.

This policy change does not affect Todd.

Martha will start secondary school in September 2021. Martha is within the admissions priority area for School X, but actually lives closer to School Y which is the closest school to Martha's home address. Both schools are over the statutory walking distance. Martha would receive transport assistance to either School X or School Y.

This policy change means that Martha will be entitled to free transport assistance to School X or School Y.

Carlos is 11 and attends his local special school, which is further than the statutory walking distance (3 miles). As the nearest appropriate school to Carlos, as stated on his EHC plan, Carlos is still entitled to transport assistance.

This policy change does not affect Carlos.

Amanda is 14 and currently receives free transport to her priority area secondary school. Her family plan to move house in October 2021 but will still be in the priority area for her school. However, there is a closer school to her home address with space in her year group.

As there has been a change in Amanda's circumstances she is now reassessed under the new criteria. She will remain entitled to free transport assistance due to the new address being in the priority area for her school.

This policy change means that Amanda will remain entitled to free transport assistance to her current school as it is her priority area school.

James is due to start secondary school in September 2021. His priority area school is under the statutory walking distance and deemed safe to walk. James would not be entitled to free transport assistance to his priority area school.

This policy change does not affect James

Kate is 13 and currently receives free transport to her priority area secondary school (which is also the closest school to her home address). Her family plan to move house in January 2021 after the publication of the new policy to an address outside of her current school's priority area.

As there has been a change in Kate's circumstances she will need to be reassessed under the new criteria. She may no longer be entitled to free transport assistance if the new address is not in the priority area for her current school and/or her current school is not the closest qualifying school to her new address with space in her year group.

This policy change does not affect Kate