



School transport: a guide for parents and carers



Introduction

More than 7000 pupils in East Sussex travel to and from school every day on transport organised by East Sussex County Council. We work closely with schools and transport operators in order to provide children with a service that is both safe and reliable.

We aim to create a safe and comfortable travelling experience for all passengers, which includes schoolchildren, but that can only happen if everyone knows what is expected of them.

During school journeys, the vast majority of children in East Sussex behave in a mature and responsible manner, aware that they are actually representing their school.

However, there are occasions when behaviour doesn't live up to expectations, and it's at these times when all those involved – schoolchildren, drivers, transport operators and parents/carers - should be aware of the implications.

The County Council, schools, police and transport operators take any incident of bad behaviour or vandalism very seriously. Schools have the power to discipline children for their behaviour away from school premises which is likely to include detention and could even lead to a permanent exclusion.

Parents and carers are reminded that they are ultimately responsible for their child's behaviour on school transport.

This leaflet contains information about the school transport service that will be of interest to parents and carers. We have also produced a pupil's guide to school transport which parents and carers should read together with this leaflet.

Who provides school transport?

The Passenger Transport Team at the County Council coordinates the school transport service. You can contact them using the details at the end of this leaflet.

Why use school transport?

School transport is a safe way for your child to get to school. It can also be cheaper than driving them by car. By reducing the amount of traffic near schools, the roads become safer and the exhaust fumes that cause breathing problems for some children are also reduced.

Children enjoy travelling together, particularly by bus. Being in a group helps them develop good social skills and being able to use some of their energy also means that they are able to concentrate better when they get to school.

Most schools now have a School Travel Plan that promotes other options to driving to school including walking, cycling and catching the bus. Ask your child's school about their arrangements for cycling if you would like your child to ride their bike to school.

You can find out more information about ways to help reduce congestion and using sustainable ways of travelling from our TravelChoice website at www.travelchoice.org.uk

Getting to school

Is your child eligible for free or assisted school transport?

If you want to know more about the eligibility criteria for free school transport you should contact our Schools Admissions and Transport Team using the details at the end of this leaflet.

If your child goes to a school in East Sussex but lives in another county, you must apply to that local council for help with transport.

If your child is eligible for free or assisted school travel our Schools Admissions and Transport Team will ask the Passenger Transport Team to make the arrangements. We will usually arrange school transport on existing public transport services if these are available. If these are not available we hire school transport.



Travel passes

If your child is eligible for free or assisted transport, we will provide them with the appropriate pass or passes. These are as follows.

Freedom Pass



The Freedom pass can be used on most public buses in East Sussex. It lets your child travel to and from school, as well as in the evenings and weekends, free of charge (during term times only). Some operators do not accept the Freedom Pass. In these cases we will issue an alternative pass.

Travel Permit



Travel permits are issued if we have given your child a place on a vehicle we hire for school transport. Travel permits are only valid for journeys on these vehicles to and from school.

Rail Season Ticket

If your child needs to travel by train for all or part of the journey to school, we may give them a Scholar's Rail Season Ticket. The Passenger Transport Team will let you know which stations your child is able to use with this ticket.



Your child will need a passport-sized photograph before they can get the ticket, and will also need some other form of photographic identification when they collect the ticket. Tickets need to be collected from the station shortly before or on the first day of term. Tickets will run out at the end of each school term, and your child should hand them back to the railway station.

The rail company will automatically re-order the ticket and it will be available for your child to collect from the start of the new term. The rail company will cancel the ticket if you do not collect it, and you will have to order a new ticket. If this happens, the ticket may be delayed. Freedom bus ticketIf your child does not qualify for free or assisted school transport, they can still travel for half price with a Freedom weekly bus ticket. For more information visit our website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/publictransport

The first day

If your child has to travel by bus and is worried about using it for the first time, it may be useful to take them on a practice journey before the start of term. This will help them know where the bus stop is and how long the journey will take.

It is always a good idea for your child to get to the bus stop 10 minutes earlier than their bus is supposed to arrive, to make sure they don't miss it.

- If your child is starting secondary school (year 7) or starting a new school in September, we will contact you before the start of term and give you information about what travel arrangements our Passenger Transport Team have made.
- If your child has moved schools during term time, we will contact you as soon as possible (after they have registered with their new school).
- If your child is continuing at the same school (for example, in Years 8 to 11) they can normally collect their travel passes from school on the first day of term. You can get more information about travelling to and from school in our leaflet 'A pupil's guide to school transport'. If you would like a copy of this leaflet, please contact our Passenger Transport Team, or download it from our website at [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/passenger transport](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/passenger_transport).

Frequently asked questions

What is the County Council's role in organising school transport?

Our Passenger Transport Team works closely with other departments in the County Council, as well as schools and transport operators, to arrange school transport throughout East Sussex.

We spend around £8million on school transport each year and move about 7000 pupils. About 60% of the money is used to transport children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and takes into account the additional support a child may need during the journey.

What happens in bad weather?

If there is bad weather overnight (such as very heavy snow), it may not be easy for you to find out whether school transport is running. Please listen to local radio for updated information.

If the school is shut, do not send your child to the bus stop. Sometimes schools may close because the weather has made driving conditions difficult and the transport operator has decided that it is too dangerous to run their vehicles.

Even if schools stay open, the weather may delay the vehicle or it may not be possible to reach a pick-up point. Please make sure that your child knows what you want them to do if their transport doesn't arrive.

If you decide to take your child to school yourself because of bad weather, make sure that you can collect them in the afternoon, because school transport may still not be running.

If bad weather is forecast during the day and it could cause problems for vehicles during the journey home, the school (in partnership with the Passenger Transport Team and transport operators), may decide to close early to make sure your child can get home safely on school transport. Please make sure that your child knows what to do in these circumstances.

What happens if my child misses their bus home?

Your child is responsible for making sure that they are on time. If they miss the bus, you may need to make other arrangements for them to get home, so please make sure that your child knows how and where to contact you.

If they go to after-school classes, sports activities or they are in detention, you may need to arrange their travel home.

What happens in an emergency?

Drivers are responsible for the safety of their passengers. If there is an emergency, your child should listen to instructions from the driver, who will decide whether they should stay on the bus or leave the vehicle and wait in a safe place.

Please make sure that you have the phone number of the operator who provides the service, in case you need to contact them.

Does my child have to wear a seat belt?

Seat belts are fitted on coaches used for school transport and, by law, children under 14 have to wear them throughout the journey. Drivers do not have to check that your child is wearing a seat belt.

The law does not require seat belts to be fitted on public buses. We recommend that children sit down when seats are available.

What happens if we move?

If you move house you must tell the Children's Services Department your new address as soon as possible; this will allow them to make new travel arrangements. If you delay telling the Children's Services Department your new address you will be responsible for getting your child to and from school until new travel arrangements have been made. In some circumstances your child may no longer qualify for help with transport.

If your child receives a rail season ticket, you may be charged for any portion of the pass they do not use if you do not contact our Passenger Transport Team at least two weeks before you move house.

What happens if my child has lost or damaged their bus pass?

Your child is responsible for making sure that they have a valid pass or ticket to travel on buses. Drivers may refuse to let them on the vehicle if they do not have a valid ticket.

If your child has lost or damaged a Freedom Pass or Travel Permit, they will need to replace it. Your child can get a temporary pass from their school but they will have to pay £5 to replace the original. This can be paid by a cheque made out to 'East Sussex County Council'. We will then produce a replacement pass and your child can collect it from the school.

If your child loses the pass for a second time in the same school year, a replacement will cost £10. If your child loses their pass for a third time, a replacement will cost £20. We will ask the school to look into why your child keeps losing their pass.

What happens if my child has lost or damaged their Scholar's rail ticket?

You should contact the ticket office at the train station and ask them for a replacement ticket. The rail company will charge you for this. This is outside the control of the County Council.

What happens if my child doesn't qualify for free transport?

In East Sussex, all children under 16 can benefit from discounted bus fares. If your child does not qualify for free school transport, they can buy a seven-day Freedom bus ticket until they leave school.

Your child can buy a Freedom bus ticket on most public buses throughout East Sussex if they show the driver a Choice ID card. Application forms for Choice ID cards are available from schools or the County Council. They can also be downloaded from our website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/publictransport.

Does the County Council have a disciplinary procedure for bad behaviour on school transport?

Our leaflet 'A pupil's guide to school transport' explains how we expect children to behave on public transport. Together with schools, police and operators, the County Council treat bad behaviour and vandalism very seriously, and schools have disciplinary procedures in place to deal with these incidents. This may include taking away certain privileges in schools, lunchtime detention and, for more serious incidents, exclusion from school (this can be permanent).

The County Council will support a ban from school transport, if the school feels that this is an appropriate punishment.

If your child continually misbehaves or endangers the safety of school or public buses, they will lose their place on school transport and you will be expected to make your own arrangements to take your child to and from school.

In certain circumstances, transport operators have the right to refuse to allow a child on a bus who causes a problem or puts other people in danger. If your child damages a vehicle, you may have to pay the repair costs.

Any form of bullying is unacceptable and schools, transport operators, and the County Council work together to prevent it.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, you should contact your child's school or call East Sussex County Council's anti-bullying team for more advice on **01323 747081** or email antibullying@eastsussex.gov.uk

If you want to discuss any bad behaviour that takes place on the vehicle that your child travels on, you should contact your child's school in the first instance.

Does the County Council monitor the performance of bus operators?

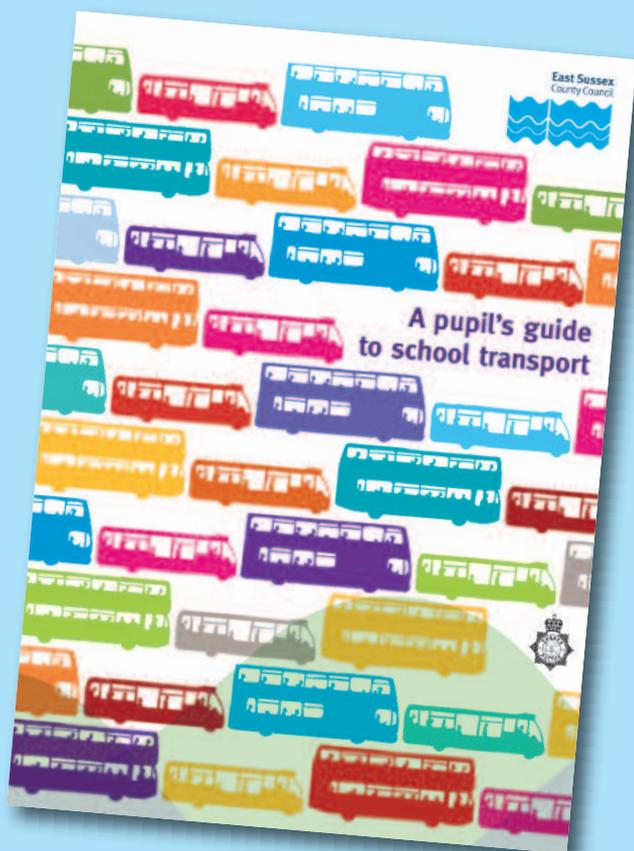
We work closely with schools and vehicle operators to maintain and improve standards of service on all school transport.

Any operator that provides a school transport service must have the correct licences and appropriate public liability insurance.

Operators providing hired school transport to and from school have to make sure that all drivers are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

All operators have to work within the law and are regulated by the Traffic Commissioner and the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA).

The County Council has a team of inspectors who monitor and report any concerns about any of our transport contracts, and take action when needed. In more serious cases, this may involve VOSA or the police.



Useful contacts

Make sure you know the name of the bus operator that provides your school transport in case you need to phone them. This should be in the letter that you received from the County Council which contained your child's bus/rail pass.

School Admissions and Transport Team

0345 6080190

For issues about whether your child is eligible for free or assisted school transport.

Passenger Transport Team

0345 6080190

For issues about travel arrangements.

School travel plans

01273 481542

Anti-bullying Team

01323 747081

Bus Operators

Arriva (Kent and Sussex)

01622 697000

Beeline Travel

01323 500404

Brighton and Hove Bus and Coach Company

01273 886200

Coastal Coaches

01797 253176

Countryliner

01444 246693

C & S Coach Travel Ltd

01435 866600

Hams Travel

01580 879537

J G Coaches

01435 862435

Kingfisher Travel

01273 400711

L J Edwards

01323 440622

Metrobus

01293 449191

Nolloths

01424 420579

Phoenix Mini Coaches Ltd

01424 729729

Rambler Coaches

01424 752505

RDH Services

01273 479819

Regency Travel

01273 477333

Renown Coaches

01424 210744

C D Smiths & Sons

01797 363334

Stagecoach in East Sussex

08702 433711 08456 002299

Victoria Coaches

01273 510710

Wise Coaches

01323 844321

Train Operators

Southern Railways

08451 27 29 20

South Eastern Railways

0845 000222

TRAVEL CHOICE .org