



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

2026/2027

ORGANISATION OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The organisation of the home to school transport provision is undertaken by the School Transport Team. Any enquiries associated with home to school transport should be addressed to the team. Tel: 01685 725000.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

The Education Act 1996 (as amended) sets out the law for the attendance of pupils at school and the 'Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 (the 'Measure') sets out related provisions for learner travel in Wales which are reflected in this Policy.

For pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) there is a statutory duty placed upon Councils to:

"Make such arrangements for the provision of transport and otherwise as they consider necessary, or as the Secretary of State may direct, for the purpose of facilitating the attendance of persons receiving education..., and any transport provided in pursuance of such arrangements should be provided free of charge."

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council intends to provide a system of transportation that will seek to carry pupils safely, comfortably and with dignity. These principles will apply to all services contracted by the Council.

If, as a consequence of reducing class sizes, a pupil who resides within a school's defined catchment area is unable to be admitted to that school, even though it is the parents/carers preferred school consideration will be given, on an individual basis, whether free transport should be provided. Factors to be taken into account will be the distance a child has to travel from home to school; the nature of the journey e.g. difficulty, duration, cost, the availability of a school bus, the availability and frequency of public transport, the child's specific circumstances (whether the child is disabled) and the proximity of other schools.

1. PUPIL, PARENT AND SCHOOL TRANSPORT COMMITMENT

Safety on school transport is the joint responsibility of all parties, including pupils, schools, transport operators and the Council. The Council provides information in line with the Travel Behaviour Code statutory guidance outlining the responsibilities and what is expected of each party. This information is available via the Authorities and Schools websites.

2. PHYSICAL SAFETY

All children must be carried in a safe manner and contractors should ensure that if applicable, the correct seat belt, harness or other appropriate restraint be worn. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that children aged 3-13 years wear a seat belt if fitted. Children aged 14 years and above would themselves be responsible for wearing seat belts if fitted. Where necessary, in addition to the services of a driver, arrangements will be made for the provision of an escort (or escorts) on all transport other than to and from secondary schools. In accordance with normal Department procedures all drivers and escorts will be subject to the customary Disclosure Barring Service which operates in relation to all persons who have day to day contact with children within the Council's area of responsibility.

Contractors will be required to ensure that prescribed safety procedures are always carried out and that their staff are aware of their obligations.

The contractor shall provide a driver and/or escort and will not permit any person to drive the vehicle unless the person concerned has all the necessary licences under the terms of the contract.

The contractor shall enter into a binding written agreement with each and every driver and/or escort which will provide that:

- as far as possible it will be the personal duty of the driver and/or the escort to ensure the good behaviour of pupils while in the vehicle or while entering or alighting from the vehicle and shall report immediately to the Headteacher or designated member of staff of the relevant school any cases of unruly conduct. The driver and or escort shall also ensure that all pupils remain seated whilst the vehicle is in motion;
- pupils whose behaviour, whilst travelling to and from school, is not of an acceptable standard, are liable to have the provision of free transport withdrawn. Any proven incidents of damage to the vehicle may also result in parents being asked to contribute to the cost of any repairs;
- the driver and/or escort shall not use foul language, smoke or carry a lighted pipe, cigar, or cigarette/e-cigarette while children are in the vehicle;
- the driver and/or escort will personally open, close and properly secure the door(s) of the vehicle before and after any passenger enters or alights from the vehicle and will ensure that all operations are carried out in a safe manner;
- all drivers and escorts will be required by the terms of the contract to have attended a course of training provided or approved by the Council, if it is considered necessary; and
- the driver shall wear or carry the appropriate licence/badge issued to him/her whilst undertaking this contract.

3. EMBARKATION AND DISEMBARKATION

The Welsh Assembly Government regards it as good practice that head teachers ensure that there is supervision of embarkation and disembarkation, whether on, outside or near the school premises. The level of supervision will depend on local circumstances and the age of the pupils.

4. PUPIL BEHAVIOUR

Poor behaviour on school transport is a danger to pupils, the driver, escort and other road users. It can also deter operators from tendering for school services. To improve safety on school transport by tackling unacceptable behaviour, the Welsh Assembly Government has issued an 'All Wales Travel Behaviour' Code. The statutory Code promotes safe travel for all learners by setting out standards of behaviour required. The Council therefore works with schools and contractors to encourage good behaviour on transport services.

5. VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

The contractor will provide a motor vehicle which is to the satisfaction of the Authority and in all respects suitable for the purpose of the contract. The vehicle provided will be clean and in good order. The contractor will also ensure that the vehicle complies with regulations made under or by virtue of the Road Traffic Acts and the Public Passenger Act 1981, or the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 or the Road Traffic (Construction and Use) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 1996, for the time being in force or otherwise as may be applicable thereto.

The contractor must comply with any act, regulation or directive now in force, or to be enacted in the future.

Vehicles with over eight passenger seats must be licensed as a Public Service Vehicle, while vehicles with eight or less passenger seats must be licensed as a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle.

Any vehicle provided under the terms of the contract shall at all reasonable times be available for inspection by a duly authorised officer of the County Borough Council, or statutory body.

All buses and minibuses contracted to the Council carrying pupils will be required to display at the front and the back of the vehicle, when in use on contract work, a sign indicating that the vehicle is being used to convey children. The signs will only be displayed whilst the vehicles are contracted to the Council.

6. PROVISION OF FREE TRANSPORT

There is a statutory duty placed upon the Council to provide pupils in full time education with free transport to their nearest suitable school if they reside beyond the “walking distance” to that school. The Council has agreed to define these distances in line with the statutory limits, i.e. 2 miles for primary aged children (3–11 years of age) and 3 miles for secondary aged pupils (11-16 years of age). This is the case even if the school attended is not maintained by the authority, for example, if it is in a neighbouring local authority area.

A system of transport identification passes has been introduced for pupils travelling by coach. This pass must be produced when boarding the appropriate vehicle as contractors have been instructed not to allow any child to travel on a vehicle without one. It is important that this pass is kept safe as there may be a charge for any replacement.

Where pupils attend, as a result of parental preference, a school other than the nearest suitable school, as recognised by this Council, parents/carers will accept full responsibility for transport arrangements. (This will involve making all the necessary arrangements and meeting the cost thereof).

In all cases, the efficient use of resources will dictate the mode of transport subject to any

needs requirements. Transport may be provided by means of a contracted school transport service, Personal Transport Budget or existing public transport services which, together with the size and type of transport (bus, minibus, train, taxi, etc.), will be determined by the need

to deploy resources in an efficient manner.

7. CHANGING SCHOOLS – TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Pupils whose families move to an address outside a school's local designated catchment area will not be provided with free school transport if that move takes place during primary education or years seven, eight or nine of secondary education. Applications made on behalf of pupils who move in years ten and eleven will be considered on an individual basis. Such transport will usually be provided if it can be made available by existing services and represent no additional charge to the Council.

8. POST 16 TRANSPORT

There is no statutory requirement to provide transport for post 16 learners. However, Merthyr Tydfil offers a discretionary transport service to 16- to 19-year-old learners who meet the eligibility criteria. Transport will be provided free to eligible students to The College Merthyr Tydfil. ***With effect from September 2026, any new students attending Coleg Y Cymoedd (Ystrad Mynach & Aberdare Campuses) and Bridgend College (Pencoed Campus) will no longer be provided with transport).***

Transport for post 16 education will continue to Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun (Welsh Medium) & St John Baptist Church in Wales High School, Aberdare providing the pupils attended the faith or welsh school for their compulsory mainstream education.

Please note that Merthyr Tydfil does not provide Post 16 transport to The Lewis School (Formerly Lewis School Pengam / Lewis Girls School)

NEW APPLICATIONS

To be eligible to receive free transport to The College Merthyr Tydfil, post 16 learners MUST:

- reside within Merthyr Tydfil.
- be over the age of 16 and below the age of 19 at the commencement of the academic year.
- be attending a first course of study at The College Merthyr Tydfil for their chosen approved full-time further education programme.
- reside three or more miles away from The College Merthyr Tydfil. This is determined by shortest walking distance.

Eligible students will be provided with either a Transport for Wales train pass or an electronic season ticket via the Stagecoach app. Students will be required to access public transport via the nearest suitable station/ stop depending on the area and the type of season ticket provided. The Council determines the most appropriate transport arrangements for each student.

Applications are to made via the Council's website

www.merthyr.gov.uk/do-it-online/request-or-apply/post-16-transport-application

It is important when you complete the application form to use the student's email address (either personal or college provided) then if required, all correspondence, including how to download the season ticket app will be sent to via email to the address provided.

Students who have previously received free transport to either Coleg Y Cymoedd (Ystrad Mynach & Aberdare Campuses) and Bridgend College (Pencoed Campus) and have enrolled on to the next year of the same course or are progressing to the next level of the same course of study will continue to receive free transport as long as they are under 19 years of age on 1st September 2026.

9. MONITORING AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

All vehicles will be available for random checks by the Traffic Commissioner, or other appropriate body, when required. Any complaints received by the Council from parents concerning services or vehicles will be investigated immediately. In the event of a complaint being upheld, action will be taken in accordance with the conditions outlined in the contract.

The Council will, on unspecified days, undertake random checks on contracts to ensure that they are being complied with. These checks will take place at least once per school term. Performance indicators will, inter alia, relate to punctuality and client satisfaction.

Parents are notified whenever there are changes to travel arrangements or changes when contracts are renewed.

10. TRANSPORT FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS, A DISABILITY AND/OR A MEDICAL CONDITION

Many pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and/or a disability will not have specific transport needs, and their entitlement will be the same as for other pupils in mainstream schools across Merthyr Tydfil and Wales. In these cases, the general school transport policy for Merthyr Tydfil will apply (See sections 6-8, and 11).

Consideration will be given for free transport for pupils living within the 2-mile (Primary) and 3-mile (Secondary) criteria on an individual needs' basis for pupils with ALN and/or a disability when requested. If a pupil cannot walk to school (either with the support of an appropriate adult or independently depending on their age/ability) because of the nature of their Additional Learning Needs or disability, the council must consider providing free home to school transport even if the distance is less than the statutory limit. In these cases, a decision will be determined by the ALN Panel taking into consideration all factors presented at the time.

The local authority will also consider whether the designated walking route that pupils would be expected to take is 'available' i.e. that it is reasonably safe. If agreed, the specific

transport provided will be determined by the local authority in accordance with the individual's needs.

There is no legal obligation for the council to provide free transport to a school for children under the age of five, but consideration may be given to pupils identified with ALN who are attending a specialist placement.

It is the Council's policy to support inclusive education and in line with the ALNET Act and the ALN Code, individual needs will be met as locally as possible to the child's home. In making decisions about any placement the council will take this into consideration along with any transport issues.

For some pupils, dual placement is appropriate to enable them to attend their local school, while also accessing the necessary resources or expertise within a more specialist setting. When the authority determines that dual placement is appropriate consideration will be given to whether transport should be provided as well as the organisation of sessions to minimise transport costs, consistent with the child's educational and additional learning needs.

Home to School Transport is normally allocated and reviewed at least annually. All transport for pupils with learners with ALN, and/or a disability will be subject to regular review, and the specific period of review will be determined in each case by the local authority but will be at least annually.

It is the responsibility of the pupil's parent/carer to inform the local authority of any changes to the pupil's needs and/or disability so that the ongoing requirement for transport can be reviewed.

If parents decline an offer of a placement at an appropriate school for their child's needs and prefer their child to attend an alternative appropriate school, parents become responsible for both providing transport to school and the financial cost for this. No support from the Transport Service will be provided in these circumstances.

At least five school days, are required to set up transport arrangements for pupils with ALN and/or a disability once a decision has been made at the ALN panel.

11. TRANSPORT TO VOLUNTARY AIDED SCHOOLS

Pupils attending the nearest voluntary aided school of the parent's denomination receive free transport if the distance to school is in accordance with the Council's agreed policy

12. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR 'NON AVAILABLE ROUTES'

The Council may exercise discretion to vary its service. It is recognised that occasions will arise where routes are considered to be 'non available'. In these circumstances the Council reserves the right, where a route is considered 'non available', to provide free school transport below the discretionary limits as recommended by the appropriate officers. As a matter of policy, routes that are considered 'non available' will be reviewed biennially. The Council will have regard to the following criteria in arriving at such decisions:

- that there is no available bus service along the route between the home and the school;

and

- that the degree of danger involved is such that escorting parents and children are at risk from traffic.

A route is considered to be available if it is safe (as far as reasonably practicable) for a learner without a disability or learning difficulty to walk the route alone or with an accompanying adult if the learner's age and levels of understanding requires this.

If the road is deemed as un-adopted then it is deemed as private and transport will not go down this road. It is the parent's responsibility to then get their child to the pick-up point.

13. FARE PAYING PASSENGERS

The Council has made the decision that it will no longer make spare capacity available to children who reside within the discretionary limits (see "Provision of Free Transport" above) to purchase seats.