



PRIMARY SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCHEME

1. Introduction

The following is intended to provide detailed information on the Primary School Transport Scheme. It contains information under the following headings:-

- **Purpose of the Scheme**
- **Eligibility Criteria**
- **Application Process**
- **Level of Service**
- **Charges**
- **Grants**
- **Concessionary Transport**
- **Appeals Board**
- **General**

2. Purpose of the Scheme

The purpose of the Scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote i.e. 3.2 kilometres (kms) or more from their nearest school.

School transport services are operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (Department).

3. Eligibility Criteria

Children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kms from and are attending their nearest national school as determined by the Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Distance eligibility will be determined by Bus Éireann by measuring the shortest traversable route from the child's home to the relevant school.

A minimum number of 10 eligible children residing in a distinct locality, as determined by Bus Éireann, are required before consideration may be given to the establishment or retention of school transport services, provided this can be done within reasonable cost limits.

For school bus operating purposes a "distinct locality" is a cluster of eligible children who reside in the same general area, in the same general direction from the school attended, as determined by Bus Éireann taking cognisance of the local road network. A service to convey a group of children whose homes are at scattered points in a school district would not be considered.

4. Application Process

The parents/guardians of a child wishing to avail of school transport services, for the first time, are required to submit a completed Application Form for Primary School Transport to their local Bus Éireann office; details of local Bus Éireann offices are available on the Department and Bus Éireann websites.

Parents/Guardians of eligible children who are already availing of school transport will be contacted by Bus Éireann in advance of the new school year regarding school transport for that year.

A seat on a service will not be guaranteed in the event that parents/guardians of children submit late applications or make late payments after the deadline published on Bus Éireann invoices, regardless of eligibility status under this Scheme.

5. Level of Service

Bus Éireann is responsible for the planning and timetabling of school transport routes. Bus Éireann endeavours, within available resources, to ensure that each eligible child has a reasonable level of school transport service in the context of the Scheme nationally.

Where practicable, and subject to considerations of cost and logistics, routes are planned to avoid an eligible child having to travel more than 2.4 kms to or from a pick up/set down point or to have travel and waiting times in excess of 1.5 hours per day. Routes are planned on the basis of the locations of children who are eligible for school transport only.

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that children are brought safely to and collected safely from Bus Éireann designated pick up and set down points.

School transport services for eligible children will generally operate during the 'Standard School Year' and will facilitate a child's attendance during normal school opening and closing times only.

6. Charges

The appropriate annual charge for each eligible child must be paid.

Eligible children who hold valid General Medical Service Scheme cards are exempt from school transport charges.

Charges are levied and bus seats are allocated on a school year basis.

7. Grants

An eligible child for whom no transport service is available may, following an application for transport within the prescribed time limits, receive a Remote Area Grant (RAG) towards the cost of private transport arrangements. The RAG is also payable for eligible children who may have to travel 3.2 kms or more to or from a designated pick up/set down point.

This grant is payable annually at a fixed daily rate, to each eligible family, regardless of the number of children from the same family, travelling to a particular school.

Grants will only be considered for the school year in which an application for transport is received; grants will not be paid retrospectively.

Grants are subject to periodic review and may be varied or withdrawn where circumstances change e.g. where school transport becomes available.

8. Concessionary Transport

Children who are not eligible for school transport, under the terms of the scheme, may apply to Bus Éireann for transport on a concessionary basis subject to the following conditions:-

- a Transport Application Form is completed and submitted to Bus Éireann;
- there is a suitable service, as determined by Bus Éireann, operating into their school of attendance;
- there is spare capacity on the service;
- routes will not be extended or altered, additional vehicles will not be introduced, nor will larger vehicles or extra trips using existing vehicles be provided to cater for children travelling on a concessionary basis; no additional State cost will be incurred;
- the appropriate annual charge is paid; Medical Card waiver is not applicable

The availability of concessionary transport may vary from year to year, is not available on public scheduled services, and cannot be guaranteed for the duration of a child's primary school education cycle. Where the number of applications for transport on a concessionary basis exceeds the number of seats available, Bus Éireann will determine the allocation of the tickets.

9. Appeals Board

The Terms of Reference for the School Transport Appeals Board are available on the Department's website.

The School Transport Appeals Board examines and determines appeals against the school transport application process regarding the provision of school transport services and/or grant aid under the terms of the School Transport Schemes.

The Board does not examine cases deemed by Bus Éireann to involve serious misconduct or behaviour which poses a threat to the safety and well being of children and/or the driver or to the safe operation of the service generally.

An appellant who is dissatisfied with the determination of the Board has the right to raise the matter with the Ombudsman for Children.

10. General

Any changes in the circumstances under which transport or a grant payment was approved must be notified to the Department immediately.

The fact that children have availed of transport services or a grant, contrary to the terms of the scheme, in no way confers on the recipients a continuing right to this facility.

There may be circumstances where an eligible child with a diagnosed illness or physical disability cannot avail of normal school transport services. In such cases the Department is guided by the Chief Medical Officer and children may be eligible for a Special Transport Grant.

This scheme may be amended or updated from time to time to reflect operational, budgetary or other changes.

Queries regarding this scheme should be addressed to:

School Transport Section,
Department of Education & Skills,
Portlaoise Road,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly.

Phone No. 057- 9325466/7.

This scheme and associated documentation are available on the Department's website at www.education.ie

January 2012