

## Hughes, Oliver

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**From:** Hughes, Oliver  
**Sent:** 10 February 2016 16:14  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Freedom of Information  
**Subject:** RE: FOI under the Freedom of Information Act 2014

[REDACTED]

I refer to your request for access to information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, as follows:

1. The origin of the 'Central School' rule and who agreed to this – can I get a copy or a record of the agreement made between Newcestown in County Cork and the Dept. of Education when the following four schools were closed – Mount Pleasant, Murragh, Gurrane and the old school in Newcestown. Also – can we get a record of the agreed changes to this agreement since it commenced
2. The origin of the School Bus Transport scheme (or Transport Scheme for Primary & Post Primary School Children or Free Transport Scheme for Primary and Post Primary School Children) (Are these schemes all the same), and who agreed to this – and a record of changes to these agreements since they commenced
3. The records in relation to the reasons for the changes to both of the above schemes and who signed off on confirming these changes
4. The records on how the EU rule on Irish school transport (2014) or the Farrell Grant Sparks Report (2014) influenced the decision of the Dept. to stop Primary school transport based on the distance of 3.2 kilometres from the nearest school
5. Records of alternative options looked at and records to why have they not been applied

I have made a final decision on your request on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016 as follows:-

1. Files held by School Transport Section on Newcestown NS date back to 1983 and I have searched these records. As I explained during our telephone conversation we do not hold any records of an agreement, if such an agreement exists, between the school authorities and the Department regarding the provision of school transport to Newcestown NS at the time this school was established. The Central/Closed school rule (CSR) for school transport eligibility was a feature of the School Transport Scheme from 1970 until the changes to the scheme were introduced at the commencement of the 2011/12 school year; these changes were announced by the then Government in Budget 2011 along with a number of other changes to the scheme. More detailed information on the CSR is contained on pages 59 and 60 of the Value for Money Review of the Scheme (VFM Report) – I provided you with the link to this publication.
2. Again the origins of the scheme are detailed in the VFM Report – Chapter 2. The Primary, Post Primary and Special Educational Needs School Transport Schemes are also available on the link provided. In general children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school – see individual schemes for further information.
3. The changes to the Scheme derived from recommendations contained in the VFM Review Chapter 7.
4. I am not clear on the specific EU ruling you refer to but the Farrell Grant Sparks Report is also available on the Department's website – this Report was a review of overhead costs and other indirect costs attributable by Bus Éireann for the administration of the school transport scheme, I am not aware that this report had any influence on the changes to the school transport eligibility criteria.
5. The options examined by the VFM Committee are again detailed in the Report.

You may appeal this decision. In the event that you need to make such an appeal, you can do so by writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Your correspondence should include a fee of €30 for processing the appeal. Payment should be made by way of personal cheque, bank draft or postal money order to the accountant the Department of Education and Skills. *(Please note*

*that from 19 September, 2014, the Department of Education and Skills will no longer accept cheque payments from business users in accordance with the Department of Finance Circular 01/2013. For further information regarding payment methods for business users, please email [foi@education.gov.ie](mailto:foi@education.gov.ie) .You should make your appeal within 4 weeks from the date of this notification, where a day is defined as a working day excluding the weekend and public holidays. The making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of staff of this Department.*

Finally, as previously advised the School Authorities may hold records that will assist your understanding of the school transport arrangements for Newcestown NS from the 1970s. If you feel I can be of further assistance please contact me at 057-935468.