

Home to School Transport Concessionary Seats



Guide for Parents 2024–25

Please read these notes in full as they may have changed from previous versions.

Concessionary Seats

Durham County Council provides transport for pupils entitled to free travel from home to school. Pupils not entitled to free transport may pay for spare seats on suitable school buses if they are available. These are called Concessionary Seats.

Concessionary Seats are not available on local bus services, but pupils may travel on these services by paying a fare.

Some schools have special arrangements charged at different rates. Details of these schemes can be found on our website at www.durham.gov.uk/concessionaryseats.

Summary of costs

The normal charge for a full school year is **£380.00**. You may pay in monthly instalments. This is equivalent to £2.00 per day for 190 days.

For pupils in Years 11 and 13, the charge for a full school year will be **£340.00**. This is because their Summer Term is typically 20 days shorter than usual.

If you apply after the start of the school year, we will charge you at a rate equal to £2.00 per day for the days left in the school year.

How to apply

The best way to apply is online at www.durham.gov.uk/concessionaryseats.

You can also apply by completing a postal application. Please contact us by telephone on 03000 264444 (option 3) or by email at passengertransport@durham.gov.uk for a copy.

Routes

You can request a seat on school bus routes listed on our website at www.durham.gov.uk/concessionaryseats. If you do not choose a route, we will select the most suitable route for you.

Seats are not always available, and we may change bus routes and times in future to meet travel needs efficiently. We may move pupils between routes to manage loadings.

Some pupils may wish to travel from an address which is not where they live (for instance, due to childcare arrangements). Please note this on your application as it will help us to select the most suitable route.

Timeline

You can apply for a seat for the 2024–25 school year from June 2024 onwards.

If a seat is available, we expect to send you an invoice for the 2024–25 school year in late July 2024.

For later applications, we aim to write to you within three weeks of receiving your application.

Seat Allocation

Pupils applying before 14th July 2024 will be considered for available seats in our first round of allocations. If there are not enough seats for all pupils, they will be allocated in the following order. If there are not enough seats for all pupils in a year group, we will select pupils randomly.

Primary	Secondary / Sixth Form
1. Year 6	1. Year 11
2. Year 5	2. Year 10
3. Year 4	3. Year 9
4. Year 3	4. Year 8
5. Year 2	5. Year 7
6. Year 1	6. Year 13
7. Reception	7. Year 12

We will continue to allocate seats each week for later applicants, in the order they are received. If a seat is available, we will send you an invoice (and a temporary bus pass, if term has started).

If no seat is available on a suitable route, we will write to tell you and add your child to a waiting list for a seat. If there is no suitable route available, we will write to tell you.

Students who live outside of County Durham will always be considered for seats after students who live within County Durham.

Invoice

Applications must be made by an adult who confirms they will be responsible for paying for any seat we offer.

We will send you an invoice for the total cost for the school year. This will include a monthly payment plan.

You should pay the first instalment immediately. Once we receive this payment, we will issue a bus pass for one term.

Your monthly payment plan will show the date you need to make your payment by (usually 15th of each month). This is the **latest** date to make each payment, and you may wish to pay earlier. Payments can take several days to reach us.

Failure to maintain payments in line with the instalment plan could result in the withdrawal of the ability to pay by instalment with the whole remaining balance payable immediately.

Ways to Pay

There are several ways to make your payments.

- **Direct Debit** is the easiest way to pay. Both online and paper application forms have space for you to give us your Direct Debit details. If you have paid by Direct Debit in the last year, we can continue to take payments this way, provided your payments are kept up to date.
- You can also pay by other means, including by telephone, cheque, online, at your local Paypoint or by standing order. Details are shown on the back of your invoice.

Payments falling behind

If your payments are not kept up to date, we will not issue bus passes for future school terms. You will receive payment reminders from us. Eventually the seat will be withdrawn and may be given to another pupil on the waiting list.

Withdrawal

If you apply before 14th July 2024, any seat we offer will normally be guaranteed for the school year if your payments are kept up to date.

If you apply after 15th July 2024, we may cancel your allocation of a seat at any time if:

- It is needed for a pupil entitled to free transport
- We make changes to the transport network

You will normally be given at least one week's notice if a seat is withdrawn.

Seats will be withdrawn in reverse order of application. If seats later become available again, pupils who have previously been withdrawn will be given first refusal (in application order).

Pupils who live outside of County Durham may have their seat withdrawn in favour of a student who lives within County Durham.

If a seat is withdrawn, you must make your own arrangements for getting your child to school.

Leaving the scheme early

If you no longer need a Concessionary Seat, please tell us as soon as possible. We will ask you to return your bus pass.

If you leave the scheme early (because you no longer want a seat or your seat is withdrawn), we will calculate how much was due for the period of travel using the daily rate above and cancel the balance of your invoice.

You may still have a further payment to make for the period of travel, or we may owe you a refund if you have paid more than this amount.

Behaviour

Travel is subject to Durham County Council's Behavioural policy (available at www.durham.gov.uk/schooltransport). Any seat may be withdrawn if a pupil does not behave appropriately on the vehicle.

Debt

If you have a debt that remains outstanding, this may ultimately be passed to our debt collection process to pursue.

Payment for one school year must be completed before any bus passes for another school year are issued. We may transfer payments you make between school years to pay off outstanding debts.

We may offset overpayments for Concessionary Seats against any other debts you may have with Durham County Council.

If you are having difficulty paying or need more information on your payments, please get in touch with us as soon as possible.

Future Years

Applications made will continue and roll forward automatically until the pupil leaves school. This means you will not need to re-apply for transport each year.

- For pupils in Years 0-6, applications will continue until the end of Year 6.
- For pupils in Years 7-11, applications will continue until the end of Year 11.
- For pupils in Year 12, applications will continue until the end of Year 13.

If you do wish to apply for one year only, please note this on your application.

We will write to you each year in June to confirm if a seat is available. If the Concessionary Seat scheme changes from year to year, we will inform you of this. You can tell us at any time if you wish to cancel your application. We will send you a new invoice each year if a seat is available.

If you leave the scheme early at any time and later wish to re-join, you must re-apply as if it were a new application.

Frequently Asked Questions

I have more than one child. How do I apply?

You should complete an application for each pupil. We will treat each application separately. The same charge will apply for all pupils.

If you are only interested in seats if all your children can be allocated, please make a note of this on your applications.

If a seat is withdrawn for one child, the other children may usually continue to travel.

Can I apply for a Concessionary Seat on a school taxi?

Yes, but seats may not be available and will depend on the nature of the route and the needs of other passengers. Seats will only be available from existing pick-up points.

If we allocate a seat, you may speak to the taxi operator directly about the route. We will provide contact details.

We do not usually issue passes for taxis, but you must still keep up to date with your payments or the seat will be withdrawn.

Can I apply for a Concessionary Seat on a vehicle to a different school?

In some cases, pupils at one school may ask for a seat on a bus to a nearby school. We will try to accommodate these requests. Transport will only be available on days when the main school is open.

Who will you contact?

Correspondence regarding payments will be sent to the adult named on the application. If this is not the pupil's main Parent / Carer, you will be responsible for sharing any information with them.

Bus passes and letters about seat allocation details, behavioural issues and general transport information will be sent to the pupil's home address.

What happens if I move address?

You must get in touch with us immediately.

- If you wish to keep your seat on the same bus, you can do so.
- If you wish to apply for a seat on a different bus, we will handle this like a new application. A seat will be allocated if one is available.

In both cases, we will need to cancel your invoice and send a new one to your new address. This will contain a new payment schedule. You will need to use the new invoice reference for your payments.

Can I pay for my child to travel only on particular days?

Although you may only need travel on certain days of the week, we will still charge the same amount as it means we are unable to offer the seat to another pupil.

The bus did not operate one day due to bad weather or a breakdown. Will I get a refund?

We issue termly passes, and we will not normally make adjustments for one-off or unforeseen failures to operate.

My child will be absent from school for a period. Will I get a discount?

We issue termly passes, and we will not normally make adjustments for one-off absences. However, in special circumstances we may apply a discount and keep seats available if there is reasonable evidence to support it (for instance, in cases of a hospital admittance). We will assess this on a case-by-case basis.

You should inform us of any special circumstances as soon as possible. We will calculate any adjustment as the daily rate of the scheme multiplied by the number of days of absence.

What will happen if my child forgets their bus pass?

Pupils without a pass will usually be taken to school if there are seats available. The driver will give the child a slip which tells the pupil they cannot travel home without a pass. It will direct the pupil to the school office, where a temporary pass may be issued if the pupil is authorised to travel.

Repeated failures to present a valid bus pass will result in removal of the Concessionary Seat.

What should I do if I lose my bus pass?

Replacement bus passes cost £6.50. You can apply and pay by credit or debit card by calling 03000 264444 (option 3).

Alternatively, you can send a cheque or postal order for £6.50, made payable to 'Durham County Council', to:

Transport Services
Durham County Council
Corten House
Durham
DH1 5WB

Please include the pupil's name and address.

How do I find out about local bus services?

If no school buses are available, a local bus services may be available instead. Local bus services are available on our website at www.durham.gov.uk/busmap. You can also get details from the national Traveline service at www.traveline.info or 0871 200 22 33.

Some bus operators offer season tickets which may provide best value. You should speak to bus operators directly about these.

General Data Protection Regulation

You can view our GDPR Privacy Notice at www.durham.gov.uk/dataprivacy. (in the section 'Roads and Transport', click the link to the PDF '*Privacy notice - Integrated Passenger Transport.pdf*').

This includes information on how and why we collect and use your data, and our data retention and sharing policy. It also explains what your rights are regarding your data.

Passenger Transport Contact Details

Telephone: 03000 264444 (option 3)

Email passengertransport@durham.gov.uk