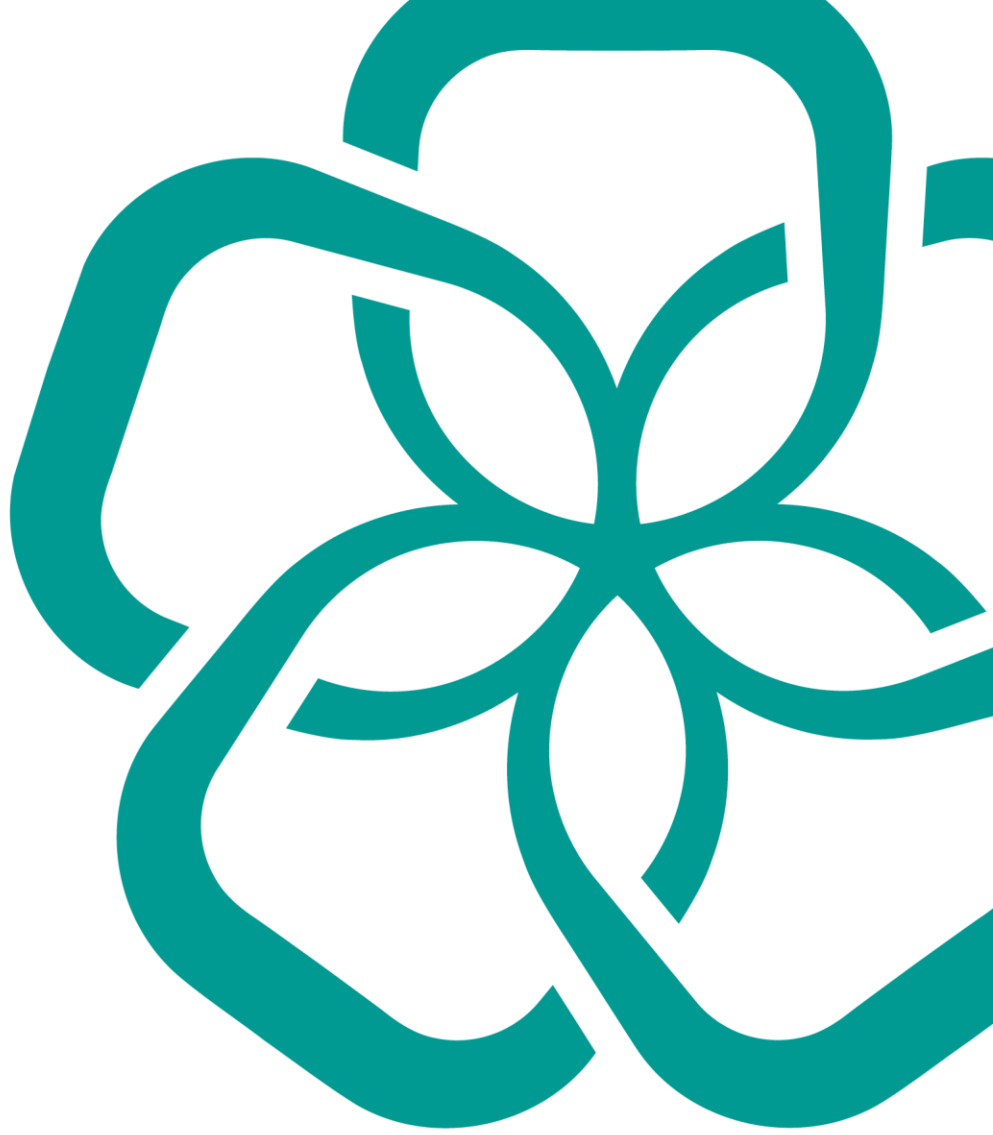




West
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West Yorkshire ‘Home to School’ Transport Policy for Secondary School Pupils

September 2025

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1. Policy Considerations and Objectives

This policy document sets out where the Combined Authority will use its discretionary powers under the Education Act 1996 to provide dedicated home-to-school bus services to secondary schools within West Yorkshire, to support travel for children and young people aged 11-16 years old.

This policy is separate to the statutory duty for local authorities to provide free travel to school support for eligible children.

This policy excludes travel to primary schools and post-16 education. The Combined Authority currently provides a number of primary school services, which are a legacy of a Government back scheme, and permits post 16 students who are in sixth form at secondary schools to use services that are provided for 11–16-year-old students if there are spare places available. The Combined Authority has no obligation to provide primary school services or make places available on secondary school services to post-16 students and either can be withdrawn at the Combined Authority's discretion, subject to engagement with stakeholders.

The policy also excludes pupils with additional access requirements, for example SEND pupils, who are eligible for additional support through their respective local authority.

In summary, the Combined Authority's policy is that in principle:

- Those who can walk, wheel, or cycle to school should be encouraged to do so.
- Those who cannot walk, wheel or cycle should be able and feel confident to use public transport services to get to school.
- Those who are unable to use public transport services should have a dedicated 'home to school' bus service available to get them to the nearest, suitable secondary school at the cost of an equivalent conventional service (or for free if eligible under law), subsidised by existing budgets and funding mechanisms.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Enable secondary school aged children and young people to independently travel to school.
- Remove barriers and improve access to education in a fair and equitable way across West Yorkshire.
- Ensure the cost of travel to school is affordable for all passengers.
- Enable sustainable travel behaviours and encourage people to travel using alternatives to the private car.
- Support positive wider outcomes for school age children and young people including safety, good health, and customer satisfaction.

To ensure the policy is fit for purpose, it aims to meet the following Critical Success Factors in that it:

- Allows local authorities to meet statutory requirements under the Education Act 1996.
- Establishes an affordable and financially sustainable level of services for both local authorities and the Combined Authority.
- Is value for money in terms of cost per passenger and impact on the public transport network.
- Ensures bus operators have capacity to deliver.
- Is aligned with the requirements of the West Yorkshire bus franchising programme.
- Meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in that no-one is discriminated against based on any protected characteristics.

The policy will be applied in the majority of cases when considering school transport applications, but the Combined Authority will consider each application on its individual merits and may, at times, allow exceptions to the general policy.

2. Provision of Home to School transport for secondary-school pupils (aged 11-16 years)

2.1. Nearest, suitable school

The policy applies to children and young people who are travelling to their nearest, suitable school only.

Definition of 'nearest' school

The Department for Education (DfE) does not provide a single, universal definition for "nearest school," but rather guidance for specific purposes, such as for free home to school travel.

Therefore, as a general rule, a child or young person's 'nearest school' will be defined primarily as the school closest to their registered home address, calculated by a straight line.

Acknowledging variation in road and public transport networks across the region, due flexibility will be given for pupils not attending the nearest school calculated by a straight line if it is easier to travel to a different school more quickly or if there is another school a similar distance away.

Definition of 'suitable'

Department for Education statutory guidance¹ defines a suitable school as follows:‘

A suitable school for school travel purposes is a qualifying school that is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have. It

¹ Travel to school for children of compulsory school age: Statutory guidance for local authorities, Department for Education (January 2024)

should also be suitable for the child's sex, for example a girls' school could not be considered the nearest suitable school for a boy.'

'Suitable school' does not mean the most suitable school for an individual child. Schools are able to meet a wide range of needs. The nearest secondary school to the home of a child of secondary school age, for example, will almost always be their nearest suitable school (provided it would be able to admit them).

Qualifying schools are:

- community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools;
- academies (including those which are free schools, university technical colleges, studio schools and special schools);
- alternative provision academies;
- community or foundation special schools;
- non-maintained special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- maintained nursery schools (where attended by a child of compulsory school age); and
- city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts.

Consideration of schools with a designated religious character

Under this policy, schools with a designated religious character are considered to be the same as any other school, in that the Combined Authority will consider provision of school travel support if it is a child or young person's nearest, suitable school.



2.2. Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling

Those who can walk, wheel, or cycle to school should be encouraged to do so.

This applies primarily where:

- The pupil lives within a maximum of a 1.5-miles/2.4km (urban) or 1.8-miles/3.0km² (rural) walk to their nearest, suitable school and are physically capable of undertaking the journey because:
 - there is a suitable walking route, and
 - they do not have any mobility limiting disability that would prevent them from walking, wheeling, and cycling the required distance; and have the mental capability, confidence, and maturity to undertake the walk.

The walk is expected to be capable of being undertaken unaccompanied by an adult therefore:

- To be suitable the walking, wheeling or cycle route to school must have the following critical factors along the whole route:
 - Paving
 - Street Lighting
 - Suitable Crossings³

² Walking distances defined by 'How Far Do People Walk, WYG (2015)', Urban and Rural Classifications from DEFRA Rural Urban Classification (RUC 2021).

Suitable maximum walk derived by taking 800m(Urban)/1000m(Rural) walk times by three (equivalent to walk to and from bus stop plus a short walk)

³Defined by volume of traffic and type of crossing. Framework for assessment from Road Safety GB 'Assessment of Walked Routes to School'.

Suitable School defined by Education Act 1996 Schedule 35B para15 (1)-(7)

2.3. Public transport

Those who cannot walk, wheel or cycle should be able and feel confident to use public transport services to get to school.

Pupils will be considered capable of utilising a public transport service to travel to their school when the following criteria are met:

- The pupil lives within a reasonable distance along a suitable Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling path to a Public Transport stop. Reasonable distance is considered 800m of the pupils dwelling for an Urban environment and 1000m for a Rural setting.⁴

Where;

- Said Public Transport Stop must have a public transport service (Bus, Train, or Mass Transit option in future) that will take the pupil to within walking distance of their nearest suitable school or to a connecting service that will do so⁵,

and;

- Said public transport service will arrive at a time when children have access to the school building, taking account of the time taken to walk from the public transport stop or up to half an hour before the start of the day, and depart at a time after school during which the school building is still open, taking account of the time taken to walk to the public transport stop or up to half an hour after the end of the school day.

Two stage journeys and connecting services

Any two-stage journey must have an interchange point that is deemed appropriate such as being located in a public place such as a bus / rail interchange or well-lit and suitably paved high street / town centre setting.

These will be judged on a case-by-case basis as required but will not involve interchanging services on heavily trafficked roads or neighbourhood streets, which would be unable to support the demand required for higher numbers of pupils changing service.

Interchange points must be within 800m of each other and meet the safety requirements set out in Section 2.2.

Interchange times must leave at least 10 minutes from the expected arrival time of the first service and departure time of the connecting service plus any walking time between interchange points. This means, for example, that, if the walking time

⁴ , Distances defined by 'How Far Do People Walk, WYG (2015)', Urban and Rural Classifications from DEFRA Rural Urban Classification (RUC 2021)

between interchange points was 15 minutes, the total time between alighting from the first service and boarding the second service would need to be a minimum of 25 minutes.

2.4. Dedicated home to school bus services

Those who are unable to use public transport services should have a dedicated 'home to school' bus service available to get them to the nearest suitable secondary school at the cost of an equivalent conventional service (or for free if eligible under law), paid for through existing budgets and funding mechanisms.

A dedicated bus service may be provided or an existing service continued to a secondary school where the children and young people using it:

- are in Years 7 to 11,
and;
- are attending their nearest, suitable school within West Yorkshire
and;
- cannot suitably travel there via the public transport
and;
- do not live at a home address that is within a reasonable active travel distance of the school (criteria as described in previous sections).

A school service may be provided or continue to operate which collects pupils from a suitable bus stop within walking distance of their registered home address and will arrive at their nearest school with adequate time before the commencement of the school day. This service will be provided as long as there is not a suitable alternative journey available using active modes or general public transport.

A similar service will be provided that collects pupils at the end of the day within a suitable walking distance from their school which will generally arrive before the school closes for the day but after the end of the school day. This service will be provided as long as there is not a suitable alternative journey available using active modes or conventional public transport.

Where an alternative suitable journey is available in the AM but not PM or vice versa, a dedicated school bus will be provided for that time of day in which there is no alternative available.

A value for money criteria will also be applied:

Services will be considered for withdrawal or lower cost alternatives put in place where the average subsidy per passenger trip exceeds £2.35 (As of 1 September 2025 - will be inflated in line with contract price inflation on 1 September each year thereafter), based on data for a minimum of 40 days operation. Typically, the number of passengers required to achieve this would be:

- Double deck (Up to 85 capacity) 66+
- Single deck (Up to 70 capacity) 58+



Exclusions

The Combined Authority will not normally fund a service:

- Where the statutory responsibility to provide transport lies with the local council or another body. The Combined Authority will however assist in organising such services where funding is available from the school, local council, or another body, subject to payment of a management fee*.
- Where this is due to a reorganisation of school sites, changes in opening times or where school holidays differ from the local council's adopted holidays. The Combined Authority will however assist in organising such services where funding is available from the school, local council or another body, subject to payment of a management fee*.
- Where this is due to the withdrawal of funding by the local council or another body. The Combined Authority will however assist in organising such services where funding is available from an alternative source, subject to payment of a management fee*.
- Where parents have chosen a school which does not already have a school bus service or public transport links from the area in which they live unless **it is their nearest suitable school at time of application**. The Combined Authority will however assist in organising such services where funding is available from the school, local council, or another body, subject to payment of a management fee*.
- Where the school is a fee-paying school.
- Where the school's admission criteria are based on academic selection.
- Where the subsidy would exceed £2.35 (as of 1 September 2025) per passenger trip.
- Where this would operate to a school outside of West Yorkshire.
- Where this would transport students from outside of West Yorkshire.

*The management fee will be 5% of the gross contract value unless otherwise agreed.

The Combined Authority does not have a blanket view on all services and will hear appeals from pupils, parents / carers, schools, and other stakeholders on a case-by-case basis. The process is set out in **Section 4**.

3. Other considerations

3.1. Statutory free travel

Free travel for pupils is a statutory duty for local authorities. As the Local Transport Authority, the Combined Authority provides home to school transport on their behalf. The Combined Authority will provide free travel (through either a bus pass for the general network, or provision of a dedicated school bus), whichever represents best value for money or is specifically requested by the relevant local council.

If you wish to apply for free travel, please contact your Local Authority:

- **Bradford Council:** www.bradford.gov.uk/education-and-skills/travel-assistance/assistance-with-travel-to-home-school-and-college/
- **Calderdale Council:** www.calderdale.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/home-school-transport
- **Kirklees Council:** www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/schools/school-transport.aspx
- **Leeds City Council:** www.leeds.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-transport
- **Wakefield Council:** www.wakefield.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools/school-travel-and-transport

3.2. Process for reviewing home to school transport provision

The Combined Authority's Education Transport Team will review the provision of home to school transport, including the provision of dedicated bus services to secondary school, in accordance with this policy on an annual basis.

The Combined Authority will consult with parents/carers, schools, and other stakeholders before removing school services, or sections of route on school services that are in use.

3.3. Secondary School Pupil Allocation Criteria

Where the number of applications for a place on a school bus exceeds the number of available places, the following criteria will apply and will be ranked as follows:

1. Children eligible for free travel or assistance with travel expenses under local council policy, if received by 30 June of the year in which the school year begins.
2. Children with additional needs/requirements who may not be eligible for assistance (evidence may be required), if received by 30 June of the year in which the school year begins.
3. Children who are not eligible for assistance but for whom there is no 'reasonable' (as defined in the Combined Authority's guidelines) public transport alternative, if received by 30 June of the year in which the school year begins.
4. Other children living along the line of the route (within 1km) by age (exact date of birth - priority will be given to the youngest children), if received by 30 June of the year in which the school year begins.



5. Other children by age (exact date of birth - priority will be given to the youngest children), if received by 30 June of the year in which the school year begins.
6. Children who are the subject of applications received after 30 June of the year in which the school year begins or received in year (in the order set out above).

3.4. Fares

Fares will be charged on the basis that dedicated 'home to school' bus services will be provided at the cost to the passenger of no more than travelling on an equivalent public bus service.

Flat fares (the same fare regardless of distance travelled) will be charged on all dedicated school bus services provided by the Combined Authority. Prices will be changed whenever there is fare change affecting comparable fares on the public transport network.

Children and young people who are eligible for free travel are exempt from paying a fare as their travel is funded by their local authority. Details of who is covered by this arrangement can be found on the respective local authority websites.

3.5. Seatbelts

Seatbelts will not be a requirement on contracted secondary school services. This is to ensure consistency with the public transport network.

3.6. Passenger Assistants

Passenger Assistants will not be provided on secondary school services. This is to ensure consistency with the public transport network.

3.7. Standing passengers

Standing passengers are permitted on buses used on contracted secondary school services up to the maximum specified on the vehicle. This is to ensure consistency with the public transport network.

3.8. Non-Combined Authority funded services

Combined Authority-funded services are the primary providers of home to school transport in the region, however, were a service to be curtailed due to not meeting policy the Combined Authority would welcome and facilitate the provision of a commercial service to replace the existing one.

This could include services that fall outside of the West Yorkshire Concessionary Travel Scheme and, therefore, might charge higher fares or offer alternative payment methods. Subject to agreement with the relevant the local council, this may include council funded services.





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4. Our Appeals Process

The Combined Authority will review home to school transport provision to secondary schools on an annual basis, in line with this policy.

We recognise there may be instances where a parent or carer believes this policy has not been applied appropriately to a child or young person's travel to school requirements.

Our Appeals Process aims to provide a clear pathway for parents and carers to ask the Combined Authority to review the application of this policy. This is likely to arise where:

- It is believed not all information has been accurately considered in the initial assessment (such as safety or suitability of walking, wheeling, cycling or public transport routes)
- There has been a change to a school service or the wider public transport network
- There is a change in a child or young person's circumstances (such as a new home or school)
- There are concerns around the suitability of the nearest school to a child or young person's educational needs

This is not the appeals process relating to statutory eligibility for free school travel, which is managed by local authorities.

Furthermore, the Appeals Process is distinct to the consultation and engagement that will be conducted by the Combined Authority ahead of any proposal amendment or removal of a dedicated school bus service.

4.1. Your right to appeal

You have a right to appeal a decision made by the Combined Authority in regard to the provision of home to school transport for your child, in accordance with this policy.

Travel support provided above statutory minimum levels is provided at the discretion of the Combined Authority, however we will consider appeals and respond to them on an individual case-by-case basis. The route to appeal is described in the following sections.

4.2. Process for appeals

A two-stage process will be applied to any appeal made against our application of this policy to a child or young person's travel to school requirements. This is set out in the following section of this document.

Figure 1: Our Appeals Process



Stage 1 Review:

1. In the first instance, a parent or carer should contact our Education Transport team via email at educationcustomerservices@westyorks-ca.gov.uk to notify us of your request for review. This should provide your:
 - Child's name, date of birth, name of school
 - Home address
 - Assessment of why you believe the policy has been wrongly applied to your child's home-to-school travel requirements
 - Any other relevant information
 - Preferred means of communication
2. Your request will be reviewed by our Education Transport team. If we can meet your request without additional contact, we will generally respond within 5 working days. If we require further information, you will be contacted by your preferred contact method.
3. At this point your case will be logged as a Stage 1 Review and you will receive a reference number which must be included in all further communication on the same issue.
4. The Combined Authority will reply to a Stage 1 Review within 28 working days with a review outcome. This will detail our assessment of your case. Note: on occasion the Combined Authority may require longer to provide you with a satisfactory response, if this is the case you will be informed within the first 15 working days.

Stage 2 Appeal:

5. If you are not satisfied with our resolution you can request for this to be escalated to a Stage 2 Appeal, where an Independent Review Panel of other Combined Authority officers will review it.
6. You will have 28 calendar days to lodge your request for a Stage 2 appeal from the date provided on the proposed Stage 1 resolution unless there are exceptional circumstances. This should detail why you believe the Stage 1 Review outcome has not appropriately considered your child's travel to school requirements in line with this policy.

7. As with a Stage 1, the Combined Authority will confirm receipt of your request within 5 working days and try to resolve your request within 40 working days wherever possible.
8. A final decision will be provided. This will detail our assessment of your case and why the Stage 2 Appeal was upheld or changed the assessment of your case following the Stage 1 Review.

Further action:

Whilst there is no statutory right of appeal against this decision, any party who is dissatisfied with the **process** by which the decision was reached may have recourse to refer to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman may investigate allegations of maladministration leading to injustice. Contact details are as follows:

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Tel: 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983
Online: www.lgo.org.uk

If you do decide to contact the Ombudsman, you are advised to enclose a copy of all correspondence with the Combined Authority for administrative purposes to indicate that you have had an opportunity to present your case to a review panel.

You may also apply for a judicial review via the High Court if you consider the decision of the independent appeals panel to be flawed on public law grounds.

Further information regarding the appeals process can be found in a separate document that is available upon request.

4.3. Restrictions

The Combined Authority process for appeals is on a case-by-case basis. This means that we will hear from parents or carers if they believe we have not appropriately applied this policy to your child's home to school travel requirements. It is not the process for reviewing the provision of a service(s) in their totality.

The Combined Authority shall accept requests for a service from stakeholders based within West Yorkshire. These requests will be tested against the policy detailed in previous sections and the Combined Authority will provide a dedicated school



service if it meets the requirements, including value for money. However, appeals against a Combined Authority decision must be made on an individual pupil basis.

4.4. Petitions

If you prefer to appeal against the decision as a group, you will be required to petition the Combined Authority using the Petition Scheme set out in the Authority's Constitution. Details are available via the following link:

<https://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s41531/Part410PetitionsScheme.pdf>

Submission Process

1. Gather Signatures:

Collect signatures from people who are resident or working in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area.

2. Prepare Your Petition:

Draft your petition, ensuring it includes a clear subject, a statement of the action you want, and the organiser's contact information.

3. Submit the Petition:

Submit the petition to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority at

customerfeedback@westyorks-ca.gov.uk

4.5. Other appeals, queries, and complaints

If you believe your child is eligible for statutory free school travel, but this has been refused:

Free travel for pupils is a statutory duty for local authorities. As the Local Transport Authority, the Combined Authority provides home to school transport on their behalf. The Combined Authority will provide free travel (through either a bus pass for the general network, or provision of a dedicated school bus) upon the recommendation of your local council.

If you wish to appeal decisions about eligibility for free travel, please contact your Local Authority:

- **Bradford Council:** www.bradford.gov.uk/education-and-skills/travel-assistance/assistance-with-travel-to-home-school-and-college/
- **Calderdale Council:** www.calderdale.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/home-school-transport
- **Kirklees Council:** www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/schools/school-transport.aspx



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- **Leeds City Council:** www.leeds.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-transport
- **Wakefield Council:** www.wakefield.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools/school-travel-and-transport

If you would like to make a complaint about transport or other Combined Authority services:

We are committed to providing high quality services for all members of the public, businesses, and organisations. As the local transport authority, the Combined Authority is the accountable body for Metro. More information about how to make a complaint is available online at: www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints.



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Find out more
westyorks-ca.gov.uk

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Wellington House
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds
LS1 2DE

All information correct at time of writing



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