

**CHANGES TO FREE TRANSPORT ENTITLEMENT FOR FALKIRK SCHOOLS**

**A PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**

# 1 PROPOSAL

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<b>Background</b>	<p>Falkirk Council Children's Services currently provide home to school transport for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any child under the age of 8 years in full-time education who lives more than one mile from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route.</li><li>• Any child who has reached the age of 8 years during a school session and is in full-time education who lives less than two miles but more than one mile from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route. Those children/young people will be granted free transport until the end of the school session.</li><li>• Any child who is aged 8 years or over in full-time education who lives more than two miles from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route.</li></ul> <p>This is more generous than the legislation, which places the responsibility on the local authority to provide transport to school for children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are under 8 years of age and live more than 2 miles from school; or</li><li>• are 8 years of age or older and live more than 3 miles from school</li></ul>
<b>Proposal</b>	<p><b>It is proposed that the Children's Services Transport policy is changed to provide home to school transport for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><u>primary</u> pupils who live more than 2 miles their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route; and</b></li><li>• <b><u>secondary</u> pupils who live more than 3 miles from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route</b></li></ul>
<b>Who Would Be Affected?</b>	<p>Home to school transport would no longer be provided for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• primary pupils, aged 8 or under, that live more than 1 mile but less than 2 miles from their catchment school</li><li>• secondary pupils that live more than 2 miles but less than 3 miles from their catchment school</li></ul>
<b>Reason for the proposed change</b>	<p>Falkirk Council are facing severe financial constraints and are required to make urgent budget savings. This proposed change in free school transport entitlement would be in line with the majority of Scottish Councils and result in considerable financial savings reducing the risk to more critical Council services</p>
<b>Outcome of the Proposed Change</b>	<p>It is estimated that 40% of currently entitled pupils (1,174 pupils) would lose their entitlement to free school transport. The number of school bus services would be reduced as a result and no longer available to large numbers of pupils, even on a fare-paying basis.</p>

**Proposal Document**

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**Educational Benefits** Education provision is one of the Council's main priorities. This has been demonstrated in several areas:

- Falkirk's current attainment levels sit well above the national average with several areas featuring in the top quartile of national performance data.
- Continued investment in the school estate, including new build schools, extensions and expansion of our early year's provision.
- The overall quality and condition of our school estate is good.
- Significant investment in ICT equipment and devices for all pupils and staff.

Each year as part of the need to achieve a balanced budget the Council approves a package of budget savings proposals. In undertaking this exercise the Council has over a number of years protected schools from having to achieve the same level of savings required to be found in other service areas. This protection has meant that the focus within schools is firmly on improving learning and teaching.

Given the current financial pressures faced by Local Authorities, including Falkirk Council, if this proposal was not to be implemented it would have an adverse impact on the level of resources that can be allocated to our schools.

It is hoped that if this proposal is agreed that it may encourage more participation in active travel (walking, cycling or wheeling), which has numerous benefits for pupils. Travelling actively to school is a great way to build regular physical activity into young people's lives, with these behaviours typically being carried into adulthood. Physical activity can also benefit mental health and increases mental alertness. Pupils travelling actively will arrive at school ready to learn with an increase in concentration levels which can last for up to four hours.

Encouraging more active travel to school can also reduce traffic around schools, increasing safety and reducing the carbon emissions associated with road traffic.

## 2 CONSULTATION

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<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010</b> A formal consultation is required for any proposal to “discontinue arrangements for the provision of transport by the education authority for pupils attending a denominational school”. This consultation fully accords with the requirements of this legislation and goes further to consult <u>all affected schools</u> , not just denominational.
<b>Consultees</b>	During the consultation period, and in accordance with legislative requirements, views are being sought from a range of interested parties including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• parents and carers of all affected schools and also of any pupils that may attend those schools in the coming 2 years;</li><li>• the Parent Councils of affected schools;</li><li>• school staff at affected schools and their trade unions;</li><li>• pupils at affected schools; and</li><li>• Education Scotland</li></ul>
<b>Consultation Period</b>	The consultation is taking place over a 6½ week period between 1 February and 17 March 2023
<b>Public Meeting</b>	There will be 3 public meeting to discuss the proposal as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grangemouth High School on Tuesday 7 February 2023 at 6:30pm.</li><li>• St Mungo's High School on Thursday 16 February 2023 at 6:30pm</li><li>• Denny High School on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 6:30pm</li></ul> Officers of the Council will be present to discuss this proposal and there will be an opportunity to ask questions at the meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend.
<b>How to Respond</b>	Interested parties are encouraged to complete the online survey at: <a href="https://say.falkirk.gov.uk/">https://say.falkirk.gov.uk/</a> It asks some specific questions regarding the proposal and provides the opportunity to detail any issues of concern. There is also further information on the schools and areas affected by the proposal.  Separate written submissions regarding this proposal will also be accepted by letter or e-mail until <b>Friday 17 March 2023</b> when the consultation period ends.
<b>Contact Details</b>	If you have any queries regarding the consultation process, please email us at <a href="mailto:educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk">educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk</a>  Any written submissions should be sent by email to <a href="mailto:educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk">educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk</a> or if sending by post to:  <b>School Transport Consultation, Falkirk Council Children's Services Suite 1A, Falkirk Stadium, 4 Stadium Way, Falkirk FK2 9EE</b>