

Terms and conditions of “spare seats” on Carmarthenshire County Council School Transport

Carmarthenshire County Council has resolved to make spare seats available on its school transport buses in the following circumstances:

- Spare seats will only be offered from October each year, for the duration of that academic year.
- Spare seats will NOT be made available on or where there is an existing fare paying school service operating to and from school, or where there is other suitable public transport available.
- Spare seats will only be offered to children of statutory school age.
- Applicants must be residing in Carmarthenshire (i.e. Council Tax for registered home address is paid to Carmarthenshire). This address must be registered as the pupil’s home address with the School.
- Applicants must be attending the nearest or L.E.A. designated catchment school.
- Applicants must reside within the “statutory walking distance” of, but at least 1 mile from, the school.
- Allocation of a spare seat is made ONLY for the duration of the current academic year and will not automatically result in the concession being offered in future years.
- The Authority reserves the right to withdraw this concession for any reason with 7 days prior notice should the spare seat cease to be available (eg where the seat is required for a pupil eligible for free transport, or if the existing school transport arrangements need to be amended for any reason).
- Spare seats cannot be made available where doing so would incur additional cost for the Authority.
- Spare seats will be available only on dedicated contract vehicles operated on behalf of Carmarthenshire Council, where the contract between the Authority and the Contractor requires a vehicle seating 9 or more passengers, i.e. public service vehicles. Taxis and private hire vehicles (i.e. below 9 passenger seats) are not included in the scheme. Spare seats will be available only on mainstream vehicles, and not in respect of vehicles provided for pupils in special circumstances (eg to Specialist Schools or Units).
- Applications for spare seats will only be accepted from parents or guardians. The Authority will not enter into any arrangement with a School or other organisation for the utilisation of spare seats.
- The number of spare seats on each vehicle will be determined by the County Council and will not be open to negotiation. Seats will be determined to be available only where the number of Travel Passes issued to eligible children is less than the contracted seating capacity of the vehicle.

Note: Not all available spare capacity on a vehicle can be made available as “spare seats” as a seat will sometimes be required for staff purposes (such as driver route training, carrying out or reviewing route risk assessments, or for passenger assistants or monitoring staff). Spare seats must be on a vehicle serving an existing route and no additional vehicle mileage should be incurred.

In some instances it may appear that a school bus has a number of spare seats available but this may not actually be the case, and these apparently spare seats cannot necessarily be made available for other passengers. For example, each child registered to travel and to whom a Travel Pass has been issued must be allocated a seat, as “3 for 2” seating and standing is not permitted on dedicated school contract vehicles. Some pupils, however, may only use the vehicle occasionally but the seat must be available for when they do travel.

Also please note that for operational reasons contractors sometimes use vehicles with greater seating capacity than is required under the contract, however any such surplus seats cannot be made available as “spare seats” as contractors cannot guarantee that this additional capacity will always be available.

Please note that the County Council does not currently charge for spare seats.

The allocation of spare seats will be prioritised on the following basis:

- Priority for spare seats will be given to children who are currently in receipt of free school meals. Proof of eligibility of free school meals for the current academic year MUST be provided along with this application – retrospective submissions of proof will not be considered. Seats will be allocated in order of pupil’s age, with the youngest children receiving priority.
- Any spare seats remaining after allocation to recipients of free school meals will be allocated to remaining applicants, again allocated in order of pupil’s age, with the youngest children receiving priority.

Applications for spare seats must be made using the online form, and must be received by the County Council by 12 noon on the last Friday in September. Applications will be determined according to the above criteria based on spare capacity as at the first Friday in October and Travel Passes will be issued to successful applicants in the following weeks.

Details of the route to be used will be supplied with the Travel Pass. If a Travel Pass is lost or damaged the Authority must be contacted on 01267 234 567 immediately in order to make temporary arrangements for travel (where possible) and to order a replacement pass. A charge will be made for replacement Travel Passes.

The provision of free transport is made on the understanding that pupils will behave in a manner which has respect for fellow pupils, property and the safety of all. All parties involved in the provision and use of school transport must abide by the “Home to School/College Transport Code of Conduct”, copies of which are available at carmarthenshire.gov.wales/schooltransport or from the Authority on request.

Travel Passes must be presented to the bus driver at the start of each journey made. Transport may be refused if the pass is not shown. Travel Passes are not transferable, and are valid only for the learner named on the pass and for the journey(s) shown on the pass. Misuse or fraudulent use of a Travel Pass is treated very seriously, and may result in the learner being subject to the school/college’s disciplinary procedure in addition to losing their right to travel.

If any details change from the original application form, you must contact the Authority’s Passenger Transport Unit immediately, so that the details can be amended and eligibility for transport reassessed if necessary. If a new Travel Pass is required as a result of such change, the existing pass must be returned along with the application.

If the Travel Pass is no longer required, please return it to the Authority’s Passenger Transport Unit as there may be other learners wishing to take up the allocated seat.

Spare seats may be withdrawn at any time during the academic year, without specification of reason, at 7 days notice. Pupils selected in such circumstances will be prioritised by age, oldest first, children in receipt of free school meals will retain priority. Where this concession is withdrawn, the Travel Pass must immediately be returned to the County Council. Failure to do so will render the pass holder invalid to benefit from this concession in future years. Following the withdrawal of a spare seat responsibility of the child’s journey to and from school will revert to the parent.

The Authority’s decision on the allocation of spare seats is final and there is no Right of Appeal.