



School Transport for children with Special Needs

General Information

This information is to help parents, schools and representative groups regarding School Transport services provided for children with special needs.

Bus Eireann operate the school transport service on behalf of the Department of Education & Science.

More detailed information regarding school transport arrangements for children with special needs can be obtained from Department of Education & Science, School Transport Section, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly Tel: 0506 24351/2/3/4/5/6.

Who qualifies for special transport?

Children with special needs enrolled in Special Schools or Special Classes in Primary Schools.

How can I get transport arranged?

The school Principal applies through the school Inspector, to the School Transport Section of the Department. Application should include child's name, address, date of birth and the name of special school or class that she/he is attending.

In the case of special schools for children with Hearing and Visual Impairment, application for transport is forwarded directly to the Department by the school Principal.

Transport in some instances may be sought on a weekend basis for children attending residential schools.

On receipt of an application School Transport Section contacts Bus Eireann and ask that the particular child/children be included for transport service.

Am I guaranteed a service?

Every request for school transport for a special needs pupil is passed to Bus Eireann by the School Transport Section. Bus Eireann then check with the relevant local transport office to see whether the pupil can be facilitated on an existing service. If this is not possible, the introduction of a new service is investigated. Consideration is given to pick-up, set-down times, distance and cost factors.

The Department of Education & Science endeavours to provide suitable transport for all pupils attending special schools and special classes.

How will I know that transport has been arranged?

The local Bus Eireann office will confirm actual transport arrangements for parents/guardians through School Management.

What if transport cannot be provided?

When special transport cannot be provided, a transport grant is payable to the parents/guardian of the child to assist with the cost of making private transport arrangements. A transport grant is paid

- if the child has to be brought to a specific pick-up point to meet a special transport service
- if the child requires a supervised transport service and it is not possible to provide this service
- if there is no special transport service available for a special needs child travelling home from a residential school at the weekend.

The rate of grant payable depends on the mileage involved and the amount paid is subject to school attendance.

If it is not possible to provide a transport service, the School Transport Section will write to the Parents enclosing a transport grant application form.

How to apply for Transport Grant:

Applications should be made at the end of each school year, by the Parents, to the School Transport Section. Payments generally issue before the start of the next school year.

Transport Grant rates applicable from 1 September, 1999 are as follows:

Schedule of Transport Grant:

Distance:	€ Amount Per Annum:
0 – 0.5 miles	€140.00
0.6 – 1.0	€195.00
1.1 – 1.5	€255.00
1.6 – 1.9	€305.00
2.0 – 2.5	€370.00
2.6 – 3.0	€420.00
3.1 – 3.5	€470.00
3.6 – 3.9	€535.00
4.0 – 4.5	€585.00
4.6 – 5.0	€650.00
5.1 – 5.5	€700.00
5.6 – 5.9	€750.00
6.0 – 6.5	€815.00
6.6 – 7.0	€865.00
7.1 – 7.5	€930.00
7.6 – 7.9	€980.00
8.0 – 8.5	€1030.00
8.6 – 9.0	€1095.00

9.1 – 9.5	.....	€1145.00
9.6 – 9.9	.....	€1210.00
10.0 – 15	.....	€1400.00
15.1 – 25	.....	€1755.00
25.1 +	.....	€2100.00

Can I appeal the approval of a transport grant?

Yes! In 1997, The Department of Education & Science secured limited funding for use in individual exceptional cases to make transport arrangements. Such appeals can be made in cases

- a) if the Department is not in a position to provide a transport service due to excessive cost,
- b) where the maximum level of grant offered does not cover the assessed cost of the journey involved,
- c) following investigation of an appeal, the Department is satisfied that the child’s parents/guardian are not in a position to transport the child, or that the circumstances of the family are such that hardship would be involved by requiring the family to pay for private transport.

“Hardship” factors considered, in addition to shortage of money, include family circumstances, school transport needs of other children in the family, availability of family car at times required, etc.,

Where appeals are found to be cases of genuine hardship, special services can be arranged. Such special services will be subject to a ceiling of 63c per mile.

Any appeal should be made in writing to the Special Education Section, Department of Education & Science, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Tel: 0506 – 24351/ / 24352/24353/24354/24355 or 24356.

HARNES & ESCORT PROVISION

Can I apply for a harness?

The Department of Education & Science have some resources which can be made available to special schools and classes for the provision of a harness for special needs children travelling on special transport services.

Application for such provision can be made by a parent/guardian or school management to the Special Education Section Athlone.

What about an Escort?

An amount of money is made available annually for an escort scheme. This facilitated provision of escort funding to special schools for children with physical disabilities and to the special schools for children with hearing/visual impairment to fund escorts on week-end transport services.

Application for an escort grant for a special transport service can be **made** by the school management to the School Transport Section.

OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES:

Special Class arrangements:

- Parents/ guardian and school management should note that transport arrangements on a service for children with special needs can only be made for the period of enrolment in a special class. In the event that the pupil returns to mainstream, special transport arrangements will not be made and normal transport criteria apply. For example, children are generally enrolled in specific speech & language classes for a two year period. Following such a period a pupil may return to his/her local school or remain in mainstream in the school where special class is cited. Either way, an application for transport, if eligible, should be made in this instance to the Department's School Transport Section, Tullamore.

Special transport arrangements for Traveller children:

The Department of Education & Science Special Education Section provides 98% grant-aid towards the cost of approved special transport services operated to cater solely for Traveller children.

Such services are organised and managed by local voluntary bodies such as the St. Vincent de Paul, Traveller Support Groups etc. and cater for Traveller children attending Traveller pre-schools, Traveller special schools, primary schools and in some cases, post-primary pupils in mainstream education.

- The grant-aid is approved where:
 - a) the Department is satisfied that the service is necessary and can be provided at a reasonable cost and
 - b) all other options have been explored e.g., can the children be included on an existing schedule service.
- Factors such as the number of children availing of the service, the number of journeys and the total mileage each day, are taken into account when deciding on each application for grant-aid.

What if your child is a special needs pupil who is integrated into mainstream primary or post-primary school and requires transport?

In such instances, you should contact the School Transport Section, Department of Education & Science, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Tel: 0506-24351/2/3/4/5/6.