
HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Academic Year 2024–2025

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

Free transport provided by Durham County Council

Durham County Council provides transport for pupils entitled to free travel from home to school. To see details of eligibility and how to make applications, please see www.durham.gov.uk/article/2919/Home-to-secondary-school-transport

Concessionary Seats

St Leonard's School has entered into a partnership with Durham County Council to ensure that school buses can also cater for other pupils ("concessionary seats"). Since September 2023 this arrangement has covered two routes primarily to serve places where using ordinary services would mean using two buses. Where possible sufficient seats will be available from those places.

To offset some of the cost that will fall to the school, a charge will be made for travel.

(Concessionary Seats are not available on local bus services, but pupils may travel on these services by paying the ordinary fare, which is now £1 per journey.)

Costs of concessionary seats

The charge for each passenger allocated a seat will be £741.00 per year, the equivalent of £3.90 per day. You may pay in monthly instalments.

In Years 11 & 13 the charge for a full school year will be £663.00. This is because their Summer Term is typically 20 days shorter.

When applications are made after the start of the school year, the cost of the seat will be calculated at the daily rate for the number of days remaining in the school year.

Is the price fixed?

The Governors of St Leonard's School will review the tariffs periodically. The tariffs given above will apply for the whole of the 2024-25 school year.

How to apply

The best way to apply is online from the section about St Leonard's School at www.durham.gov.uk/concessionaryseats.

You can also apply by completing a postal application. Please contact Passenger Transport by telephone on 03000 264444 (option 3) or by email passengertransport@durham.gov.uk to request a form.

School buses routes

You can request a seat on school bus routes listed at www.durham.gov.uk/concessionaryseats. Note only school buses SL09 (from Bournmoor via Great Lumley and Chester le Street) and SL11 (from Ouston, Urpeth, Pelton, etc) under the school scheme. A limited number of seats may be available under the Durham County Council Standard Scheme on the following routes: SL03 (from West Cornforth via Coxhoe, Bowburn and Shincliffe); SL04 (from Brandon via Meadowfield, Langley Moor, New Brancepeth, Ushaw Moor and Bearpark) and SL15 (from Langley park via Witton Gilbert, Sacriston and Nettleworth).

If you do not choose a route in your application, 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

Applications can now be made for a seat for the 2024-25 school year. To be certain of being considered for a seat for the start of the school year, we will need to receive your application by **14th July 2024**.

If a seat is available, we will notify you as soon as possible after 14th July 2024.

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

Seat Allocation

Concessionary Seats are not guaranteed, and seats will be allocated up to the maximum capacity of the September 2024 network. Seats will be allocated in the following order:

- Pupils who had a Concessionary Seat in the previous school year will be allocated first.
- Pupils in Year 7 applying by 14th July 2024 will be allocated next.
- Pupils in Years 8-11 applying before 14th July 2024 will be allocated next, in order of application.
- Students in Years 12-13 will be offered a seat wherever possible. However, in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to withdraw a seat to accommodate a younger pupil. St Leonard's will decide which Year 12-13 pupils will receive priority and may take into account the alternative journey opportunities for the pupils affected.
- Any application after the deadline of 14th July 2024 will be allocated where possible, in order of application.

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 in Durham County Council's area will always be given priority over those who live elsewhere.

Invoice

Applications must be made by an adult who confirms they will be responsible for paying the charges for a seat.

They will receive an invoice for the total cost for the school year. This will include a monthly payment plan; for transport for the full school year this will be over ten months.

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. Your seat will normally be guaranteed for the school year if your payments are kept up to date.

Withdrawal

If a bus is overloaded, then St Leonard's will work with Durham County Council to resolve the issue. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to withdraw a seat. You will normally be given at least one week's notice if a seat is withdrawn.

Pupils who live outside of Durham County Council's area 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 a refund will be made if you have paid more than the revised amount due.

Behaviour

Travel is subject to Durham County Council's policy for behaviour on school transport (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 will 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 contact us as soon as possible.

Future Years

We are currently planning for applications to continue automatically until the pupil leaves school. This means you will not need to re-apply for transport each year.

- For pupils in Years 7-11, applications will continue until the end of Year 11.
- Fresh applications are required for student entering Year 12. The application will then 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 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.

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, your 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, behavioral issues and general transport information will be sent to the pupil's home address.

What happens if I move address?

You must contact 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 in liaison with St Leonard's School.

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 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:

Integrated Passenger Transport
Durham County Council
Corten House
Dunholme Close
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. Information about local bus services is available 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.

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.

Contact Details

Durham County Council Passenger Transport
Telephone: 03000 264444 (option 3). Email passengertransport@durham.gov.uk

St Leonard's Catholic School
Telephone: 0191 384 8575. Email admin@st-leonards.durham.sch.uk