

Home to School Transport

St John's School and
Sixth Form College



Guide for Parents – 2016–17

This guide provides information about Durham County Council and St John's School and Sixth Form College's Concessionary Seat scheme. It is intended for parents / carers who already know that their child is NOT entitled to free travel to school or assistance with travelling expenses.

Please read the guidance notes in full as they may have changed from previous versions.

1. What is a Concessionary Seat?

Durham County Council provides transport for pupils who are entitled to free travel between home and school. St John's School and Sixth Form College has entered into a partnership with Durham County Council to ensure school buses continue to be available for pupils who do not qualify for free travel. These places are called Concessionary Seats.

Durham County Council continues to provide free transport where pupils are eligible under its policy. Details can be found at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/schooltransport> or by ringing Durham County Council on 03000 264444 (option 3).

2. How much does a Concessionary Seat cost?

In order to make the scheme as affordable as possible, the scheme offers a variety of fares.

The standard fare is **£513.00** per year, equivalent to **£2.70** per day. However, St John's has agreed to fund a range of discounted rates for households with more than one Concessionary pupil travelling or with a lower family income. To apply for these discounted rates, you must complete the St John's Travel subsidy form on the reverse of the Concessionary Seat application form.

Subsidy Reason	Equivalent Daily Cost	Yearly Cost
Family income less than £24,000	£1.25	£237.50
Family income between £24,000 and £30,000	£1.75	£332.50
Family income between £30,000 and £35,000	£2.25	£427.50
Family income above £35,000	£2.70	£513.00
Second child	£1.75	£332.50
Third child	£1.25	£237.50

For Year 11 and Year 13 students, there will be a reduction from the cost as their Summer Term is typically 20 days shorter than usual.

If you apply 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.

3. How do I apply for a seat?

Simply complete the application form and send it to **Cynthia Swindells, St John's School, Woodhouse Lane, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6JT** as soon as possible. You can apply at any time but to be certain of being allocated to a seat from September 2016, we will need to receive your application by **Wednesday 8 June 2016**. St John's will assess the form for any subsidy and pass it to Durham County Council for processing.

If you are not able to provide evidence of your subsidy rate by this date, you may still apply. You will receive an invoice calculated at the higher rate. You may still supply your evidence later, and your charge can be adjusted.

You will need to apply for a Concessionary Seat at the start of each school year.

4. Can I choose my bus route?

All secondary schools that have transport provided are listed on the Durham County Council website (www.durham.gov.uk/concessionaryspareseats). For your school you can find out what bus route contracts are operating and tell us your first and second preference on the application form. If you do not list your preference, we will choose the most suitable route for you. Please note that your preference may not always be available.

Details of bus routes and times may be changed if this is necessary to meet travel needs efficiently. Seat allocations are not guaranteed, and we reserve the right to move pupils between vehicles or re-route vehicles in order to manage loadings.

If your child is not travelling from their home address, please provide details of the journey they wish to make on a separate sheet and attach it to the form. This will help us to ensure your pupil is allocated to the correct bus.

5. What should I do if I have more than one child travelling?

If you want to apply for Concessionary Seats for more than one child, you will need to fill in an application form for each child.

6. When will I know if a Concessionary Seat is available?

If you apply by **8 June 2016**, Durham County Council will contact you in July 2016 with an invoice for the cost of the seat for the school year.

If you apply after **8 June 2016**, Durham County Council will write to you within three weeks of your application to tell you if we can offer you a Concessionary Seat. If your application is successful, we will send you an invoice for the cost of the seat. This will be calculated from the date the invoice is raised plus three days, to allow for posting time. If the term has started, you will also receive a temporary pass to allow you to travel.

If there is a suitable route but no seat available, your child's name will be added to a waiting list and Durham County Council will contact you if a seat becomes available.

If there is no suitable route, Durham County Council will write to tell you. You may be interested in travelling on a local bus service instead – see **17. How do I find out about alternative local bus services?**

Durham County Council will continue to make further offers throughout the year as we receive applications or seats become available.

7. How do I pay for a seat?

When you apply for a seat, you must state the name of the adult who will pay for any seat that we allocate. If your application is successful, the named adult will receive an invoice from Durham County Council for the total cost of the seat for the school year. The invoice will include a monthly payment plan.

You should pay the first instalment payment against your invoice immediately. Once this is received, Durham County Council will issue a full bus pass for the term.

Your monthly payment plan will show the date you need to make your payment by. This is the latest date to make each payment, and you may wish to arrange your payment in advance of this date.

There are several ways to make your payments, including by telephone, cheque, online, at your local Paypoint, or by standing order. Full details will be given on the back of your invoice.

Please note: we cannot currently accept Direct Debits. We are investigating the possibility of introducing this facility later in the year. If you would be interested in paying in this way in future, please indicate this on the application form.

You can pay in advance of the monthly instalments if you wish: e.g. in termly or annual amounts.

8. What if I fall behind with my payments?

Durham County Council will continue to issue bus passes for the later terms in the school year if you keep up to date with your payments. If your payments fall behind the schedule, you will not receive bus passes for future terms. You will receive payment reminders for each outstanding monthly instalment. Eventually your seat will be withdrawn and may be allocated to another pupil. You must keep up to date with your payments to continue to travel.

If you continue to have an outstanding debt for a period of travel, then you may ultimately be referred to our debt collection process.

Debts for transport may be offset between school years, and payments for one year must be completed before bus passes for the next year will be issued (in addition to the appropriate payments for the next year).

We may offset overpayments for Concessionary Seats against any other debts you may have with Durham County Council.

9. Who will you contact?

All correspondence regarding payment for the Concessionary Seat will be sent to the adult named on the application form. If you are not the main Parent / Carer of the pupil, you will be responsible for ensuring that the main Parent / Carer of the pupil is aware of any correspondence we send (for instance, if payments fall behind and a bus pass cannot be issued, we will write to the adult named on the invoice only). If a seat is cancelled due to payment issues, we will write to the named adult.

Bus passes and letters regarding allocation of seats will be sent to the pupil's principal home address. Any correspondence regarding general transport issues or behaviour will also be sent to the pupil's principal home address.

10. Will I get a Concessionary Seat in time for the start of the school term?

If you apply before **8 June 2016**, you will receive an invoice in July for you to make your first instalment payment. Once you pay this, you will receive your bus pass. Please bear in mind it may take several days for your payment to reach us, so after you make your payment it may be at least a week before you receive your pass.

11. Will I get a refund if I no longer want my Concessionary Seat?

If you decide that you no longer want your Concessionary Seat, a full refund of any unused portion will be given when you return your bus pass to Durham County Council. The refund will be calculated according to the daily rate of the fare you have been paying. If you have not paid the full amount for the period when the bus pass was in use, you may have an outstanding balance to pay.

12. What happens if I move address?

You must get in touch with Durham County Council if your circumstances change.

If the pupil still wishes to travel on the same bus, we will need to cancel your existing invoice and send a new invoice for the balance still owed to your new address. This invoice will contain a revised payment schedule. You will need to use the new invoice reference for your payments.

If the pupil wishes to travel on a different bus, we will process this as if it were a new application. If a seat is available, we will cancel your existing invoice and send a new one to your new address. This invoice will contain a revised payment schedule. You will need to use the new invoice reference for your payments.

13. My child only travels on the bus on certain days. Will I get a reduction?

Although your child may only be travelling for part of the week, this still means we are unable to offer the seat to any other pupil who may be interested in travelling. As a result we are unable to make a reduction in the cost for a part-time traveller.

14. The bus did not operate one day due to bad weather or other circumstances. Will I get a refund?

The pass you will receive is a termly one, and we will not normally make adjustments for one-off or unforeseen failures to operate.

15. My child will be absent from school for a period. Will I get a discount?

The passes you will receive are for the school year and we will not usually make adjustments for one-off absences. However, we may consider applying a discount and keeping your seat available if the absence is a continuing one and there is reasonable evidence to support it (for instance, medical information). We will assess this on a case-by-case basis. You should inform us on 03000 264444 (option 3) of any special circumstances as soon as possible. Any discount will be calculated on the daily rate of the scheme multiplied by the number of days of absence.

16. What will happen if my child forgets their bus pass?

If a pupil attempts to board the school bus without showing their bus pass, they will usually be taken to school if there are seats available on the bus.

The driver will give the child a 'School Transport – Leaflet for Pupils' slip, which tells the pupil they cannot travel on the bus home from school without a pass. It asks them to take the slip to the school office. The school is able to issue a temporary pass if the pupil is on the list of those authorised to travel.

Pupils who do not have a pass will NOT be allowed to return home on the bus (unless agreed with Durham County Council and the school).

Repeated failures to present a valid bus pass will result in removal of the Concessionary Seat.

17. What should I do if I lose my bus pass?

Replacement bus passes cost £5.00. You can apply for a replacement pass and pay by credit or debit card by calling Durham County Council on 03000 264444 (option 4).

Alternatively, you can send a cheque or postal order for £5.00, made payable to 'Durham County Council', to:

Sustainable Transport
Durham County Council
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UQ

Please include a note of the pupil's name and address.

Durham County Council will post the replacement pass out, and you should receive this within seven days.

18. How do I find out about alternative local bus services?

If no school buses are available, a fare-paying local bus service may be available instead. You can check with Traveline (www.traveline.info or telephone 0871 200 22 33) for details of local bus services your child could use to make the journey. Often, a weekly or termly pass bought from the bus operator will provide best value.