

Integrated Transport Unit – Spare Seat Scheme 26/27 Academic Year Arrangements, Terms & Conditions

What is the Spare Seat Scheme?

Gloucestershire County Council contracts several transport operators to run home to school transport on behalf of students who are entitled to free transport provision from the Council. We recommend that anyone applying for the spare seat scheme familiarises themselves with the criteria for free transport entitlement (which can be found at <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/applyforabuspass>) and is satisfied that they do not meet the criteria, prior to applying to the scheme.

If there are seats available on these services after the bulk of ‘entitled’ students have been allocated places, the Council may then offer these seats to ‘non-entitled’ students for a fee.

Under what circumstances are spare seats available?

Spare seats can only be offered on routes arranged by the County Council and operated as a closed contract.

We must confirm that there is excess capacity on a service before we can start offering spare seats, **so spare seat applicants will not be contacted until all entitled pupils have been allocated to routes and this means that applicants may not be contacted until after the start of the academic year. You will need an alternative plan in case you do not get offered a space or do not receive an offer before the start of term.**

When assessing spare seat applications, priority will be given in the following order:

1. Sixth-form students.
2. Students who held a bus pass for the route in the previous academic year.
3. All other applicants.

Within each ‘group’ above, applicants will be given priority based on date of application. The above applies to each batch of applications assessed i.e. if we made an offer in September for a year 7 applicant who applied in July, we would not withdraw this seat to make space for a sixth form applicant who subsequently applied in November.

In the interest of safety, **no pupil should board or attempt to board a GCC vehicle without a valid pass or authorisation email from the Integrated Transport Unit. If you have not been sent an offer, do not send your child to the bus.**

All applications must be made online via our website: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/spare-seat-scheme/>

GCC cannot sell spare seats on the following services, as they are not wholly run by the Council. To check if you can buy season tickets on these services, please go directly to the operator instead. We **DO NOT** sell spare seats on the following:

- Services run by Marchant's Coaches
- Services run by F. R. Willetts to Monmouth Comp, Five Acres, St Peter's High, or the Gloucester Grammar Schools
- Services run by Pulham's Coaches to Churchdown School
- Services run by John Dix Travel to Gloucester Schools
- Services run by Stagecoach West to Newent School. Contact the school for these routes
- Services run by Stagecoach West
- Services to Hartpury College (go direct to College or Public transport)
- Any public transport service (i.e. any service that appears on www.travelinesw.com)

How is the cost of travel calculated?

The price of a bus pass is based on the average cost per seat and will increase in line with RPI each year. We regularly review arrangements to ensure that we provide the most cost-effective service.

Students joining the scheme partway through the year will be charged a pro-rata price for the remainder of the academic year.

How will you contact me to offer my child a place on the bus?

We will contact you by email to offer a place. The message will be sent to the email address detailed on your application, so please ensure you have entered it correctly and that mainstream@gloucestershire.gov.uk is a trusted recipient email in your account, as we have had emails to customers previously filtered to their junk mail.

The offer email will summarise your payment options and state the current yearly cost.

How do I pay?

We take payments via our website and the secure link to pay online will be included in your offer email.

Once an offer is made you will be given the option to either pay the full amount or pay in instalments up until a set date – the end of May for most applicants. Should you choose to pay the cost in instalments, you will need to pay an initial instalment after the offer is made and then the remaining amount in monthly instalments up until the 31st May.

If a monthly instalment has not been paid, we will send one reminder with a cut-off date and if the payment is still not made, we will stop transport. Once we have notified you that transport will be stopped, your child will not be permitted either morning or afternoon transport. This may mean they will be transported to school in the morning but not permitted transport home and will be left at school (as this is a safe environment). In this situation you will need to arrange to get them home.

Please note that if we have not received payment within 7 days of the offer being made, we will assume you no longer require the place and may reallocate it.

If you are joining the scheme from February half term onwards the full amount will need to be paid and the option of payment in instalments will not be an option.

When will the bus pass be issued?

We endeavour to process bus passes as soon as payment is received. The bus pass will then be sent to your home address and can take up to 10 days to be processed. If we cannot get it to you by the start of term, we will send you a travel authorisation email for you to print off so your child can present proof of their entitlement to travel in the meantime.

When will offers be made for future years?

You must re-apply for each academic year by completing a new application form, as the availability of spare seats may vary. Please refer to point 1 (above) for further details of the application procedure.

For how long are passes valid and are there refunds?

A pass will be valid only for the academic year for which it is issued.

If you move from your present address or wish to return your seat, please advise us immediately.

Any refunds will be given only at Gloucestershire County Council's discretion.

While every effort will be made to operate the transport as required, no refund or allowance will be made in respect of any day(s) transport cannot operate or days your child does not travel within their pass's validity.

What happens if the pass is lost?

If your child loses their pass, the loss should be reported to Gloucestershire County Council **immediately**. Even passengers who have paid for a season ticket will be refused transport if they cannot present a bus pass as proof of purchase, so lost passes must be replaced before transport can continue.

A fee is payable if you need to replace your child's pass. To buy a replacement pass please select "Order a replacement school bus pass" from <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/applyforabuspass>

The authority retains the right to refuse to re-issue passes in cases where misuse has been evident.

Are there any other points I should note about the spare seat scheme?

If a service no longer holds any entitled passengers, it cannot be run at the Council's expense. **The County Council also reserves the right to withdraw the facility should it become necessary to amend transport arrangements, including (but not limited to) circumstances whereby the need to arrange transport on behalf of 'entitled' students means that spare seat offers to 'non-entitled' students can no longer be extended.** If your child's travel is terminated because transport has been amended, a pro rata refund will be offered.

You should note that children on home to school services are unsupervised except by the driver, whose main priority is driving the vehicle safely. Therefore, it is imperative that children abide by the [code of conduct](#) and do not distract the driver.

Your child will be picked up and set down at one of the approved boarding points. No service may be diverted to a non-specified/non-approved stop. It is your responsibility to get your child to and from the bus stop if you feel they cannot do so unaccompanied.

All travel is subject to your child displaying a valid bus pass to the driver. Passes are not transferable and may only be used by the pupil named on the bus pass. Please emphasise to your child that it is important to carry their pass and show it to the driver/scan it on the machine (if their route has one) every time they travel.

It is the responsibility of all parents of pupils using home to school transport to make their child aware of the [Code of Conduct](#). By submitting the application, you are confirming that both you and your child understand the requirements set out in this policy.

Some details from your application will be shared with the following third parties to enable bus pass production and distribution:

- The GCC transport operator carrying out the contract for Gloucestershire County Council.
- The Third-Party Company who prints our bus passes.
- The Third-Party Company who will produce our QR codes in the future.

Further information

Should you require further information please contact:

Mainstream Transport Team
Integrated Transport Unit
Shire Hall
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

(01452) 425387

mainstream@gloucestershire.gov.uk

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/spare-seat-scheme/>