

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday 10 July 2024

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BRAZIL
Re: School Transport Policy and Bus Passes

Recently, a school pupil was refused transport on a school bus as they failed to show their bus pass (left it at school.) Could there be some flexibility within this policy?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

We don't intend to change our existing policy. Devon County Council has a "No Pass, No Travel" policy on mainstream school transport which was originally implemented from the start of the new September term in 2010. This was agreed by Cabinet for that that time and has remained in place since. Prior to the implementation of this policy, the number of unauthorised children traveling on the school buses presented a real problem and impacted on children who were entitled to travel not being able to get to school either in the morning or back home in the afternoon as there was no room left on the vehicle.

We expect that parents or carers will ensure that their child or children have their bus pass and, if required, to accompany their child or children to and from the bus stop, to ensure that they have the pass to allow them to board. We also expect parents or carers to make sure that their child/children know what to do if the transport doesn't arrive.

In schools, there is provision in place if a child loses their pass during the school day. They can obtain a temporary pass from their school reception. This can be used for a short period of time whilst the parent orders a replacement pass from our Transport Coordination Service.

To give some perspective, Devon County Council transports over 15,000 children to and from school every day. The demand for children entitled to travel over the transport networks is constantly subject to change.

If we didn't have a clear 'no pass, no travel policy' it would be very difficult for drivers to ascertain when an entitlement had ended, for example if a family move house during term time and the entitlement ends, but that child lives on the same route. A driver may inadvertently continue to allow that child on board (whose entitlement had ended) thus depriving a child with a legitimate entitlement to travel. Also in some circumstances, children travel on local bus services where, if a pass is not shown, a payment would be expected.