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Eligibility for School Transport Assistance (non-special education)



Caregivers are responsible for getting students to and from school each day. However, in some circumstances caregivers face difficulties getting students to and from school because of distance or a lack of public transport where they live. The Ministry of Education provides school transport assistance to help ensure equitable access to compulsory education.

School Transport Assistance may be provided to help students whom meet the eligibility criteria get to school each day. The assistance provided may not cover the whole or the full transport cost.

This fact sheet outlines the School Transport Assistance eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria are applied according to four categories, with each category having a set of criterion:

- › students attending the closest **Mainstream state** or **state-integrated school** that they can enroll at
- › students attending a **Māori Medium School**
- › students attending a **Partnership School**, or
- › any other education settings approved by the Secretary for Education as appropriate.

Students attending state or state-integrated schools

- › To be eligible for School Transport Assistance a student attending the closest **mainstream state** or **state-integrated school** that they can enroll at must meet all of the following criteria:
- › The student must:
- › live at or more than 3.2 kilometres from the **closest school they can enroll at** if they are in years 1 to 8, or
- › live at or more than 4.8 kilometres from the **closest school they can enroll at** if they are in year 9 or over.
- › Suitable public transport is not available anywhere between the student's home and the closest school that they can enroll at. The Ministry is currently working with providers of public transport to determine a mutually appropriate understanding of what constitutes suitable public transport. This is expected to be concluded, including engagement and communication by December 2016 for effect at the start of the 2017 school year. Until that time a public transport service is deemed to be suitable if it meets all of the following criteria:
 - the public transport service travels within 2.4 kilometres of the roadside gate of the student's home, and
 - the public transport service travels within 2.4 kilometres of the closest school they can enroll at, and
 - the public transport service does not require the student to change transport services more than once on a journey, and

What is a suitable timetable?

A suitable timetable:

- › allows morning pickup no earlier than 7.00 am and enables the student to arrive at school before the school's start time, and
- › allows afternoon drop-off no later than 5:00 pm that same day.

Ideally students should not be on the vehicle for any longer than 60 minutes.

There may be some exceptions to this timeframe due to local circumstances such as route length, school starting times, and the number of schools on the route.

What do we mean by 'closest school that the student can enroll at'?

The **closest school that the student can enroll at** is the closest school to the **student's home** that the student can enroll at. For this purpose, unsuitable schools are deemed to be:

- › single sex **mainstream state** or **state-integrated** schools of the other gender to that of the student
- › **mainstream state** or **state-integrated schools** that don't offer the student's current year level
- › **mainstream state-integrated schools** having a **special character** that the caregiver does not identify with
- › **mainstream state** or **state-integrated schools** that do not teach the curriculum predominantly in the caregiver's chosen language (either Māori or English language only)
- › **mainstream state** or **state-integrated schools** with enrolment schemes that prevent the student from enrolling
- › a **mainstream state** or **state-integrated school** from which the student has been stood down, suspended, excluded, or expelled.

Students attending Māori Medium Schools

To be eligible for School Transport Assistance, a student attending a Māori Medium School must:

- › live at or more than 3.2 kilometres from the **Māori Medium School** they attend if they are in years 1 to 8
- › live at or more than 4.8 kilometres from the **Māori Medium School** they attend if they are in year 9 or over.

Assistance for eligible students attending **Māori Medium Schools** is paid directly to the school via central funding. The school is then responsible for providing transport arrangements for its eligible students.

How is distance measured?

For students attending the closest **school they can enroll at**, the shortest public road or public pedestrian route is used to measure the distance. The measurement is taken from the roadside gate of the **student's home** to the closest public road to the school's front gate.

Students not attending the closest school they can enroll at

Sometimes caregivers choose to enroll their child/children at a school that is further away from the **student's home** than their **closest school they can enroll at**. Whilst the Ministry supports caregiver choice, School Transport Assistance is not provided in this instance.

Historically students have been able to transfer their entitlement for School Transport Assistance under guidance called **Transport Entitlement Zones**. Routes reviewed and designed during 2016 and onwards will not be using **Transport Entitlement Zones** as a consideration for route design.

Applying for School Transport Assistance

To apply for School Transport Assistance, the student's caregiver fills out an application form (the School Transport: application for assistance). The application form is available online at www.education.govt.nz/schooltransport or from the Ministry of Education's **service agents**.

The **service agent** uses the application form to assess a student's eligibility for School Transport Assistance and to determine the type of assistance to be provided.

At the end of the assessment process, the **service agent** will write to the student's caregiver about their decision regarding School Transport Assistance.

Reviewing decisions made

If a caregiver would like a decision regarding School Transport Assistance reviewed, they should first discuss it with the school principal or the **bus controller**. If a caregiver would like to discuss the decision further, they should contact their **service agent** or ask their **bus controller** to do so on their behalf.

Can students deemed ineligible for school transport assistance still travel on a Ministry funded service?

Currently ineligible students can, at the discretion of the bus operator and under certain conditions, travel on existing Ministry funded transport services. These conditions are that:

- A. there is capacity on the service
- B. they do not disadvantage eligible students (i.e. through timetable changes/seating)
- C. they pay a fare
- D. they/the bus operator has the permission of schools affected by the route to transport the ineligible student/s

Services providers are contractually responsible for making sure all the above conditions are met. The arrangement of travel for ineligible students is considered a private arrangement between the bus operator and the student/caregivers which the Ministry is not party to.

Where can I find more information?

This series of fact sheets and our website www.education.govt.nz/schooltransport are designed to provide you with information about School Transport Assistance you may need. Please read these resources first.

If you still have questions about School Transport Assistance, talk to your school's principal or **bus controller** – they can provide you with the information you need or direct you to the person who can best answer your questions.



Glossary of defined terms

Bus controller

The bus controller is responsible for school bus route administration and safety. Generally the bus controller is the principal or a full-time teacher.

Closest school that the student can enroll at

Used as a reference to replace the term Nearest Appropriate School with no meaning change.

The closest school that the student can enroll at is the closest school to the student's home that is suitable for the student. For this purpose, unsuitable schools are deemed to be:

- › single sex mainstream state or state-integrated schools of the other gender to that of the student
- › mainstream state or state-integrated schools that don't offer the student's current year level
- › schools of a special character that the caregiver does not identify with
- › private schools
- › mainstream state or state-integrated schools that do not teach the curriculum predominantly in the caregiver's chosen language (either Māori or English language only)
- › mainstream state or state-integrated schools with enrolment schemes that prevent the student from enrolling
- › a mainstream state or state-integrated school from which the student has been stood down, suspended, excluded or expelled (during the period of that intervention)

Kura

See Māori Medium School

Kura Kaupapa Māori

See Māori Medium School.

Level 1 Mainstream Māori immersion school

Level 1 Māori immersion schools provide 81% to 100% of tuition in te reo Māori. In Level 1 Māori immersion schools:

- › te reo Māori is the principal language of communication and instruction
- › the principal curriculum is taught entirely in te reo Māori
- › it is expected that all students in the programme will interact freely in te reo Māori.

Level 2 Mainstream Māori immersion school

Level 2 Māori immersion schools provide 51% to 80% of tuition in te reo Māori. In Level 2 Māori immersion schools:

- › te reo Māori is, for most of the time, the language of communication and instruction
- › English is accepted as a temporary language of instruction and communication
- › there is an agreement between the school and parents that the programme will achieve a particular level of immersion over a specified period of time
- › the level of fluency of the teacher will vary considerably, from not very fluent to native-like fluency
- › there is a reliance on Kaiarahi Reo to increase the amount of spoken Māori in the programme
- › it is expected that not all students in the programme will interact freely in te reo Māori.

Level 3 Mainstream Māori immersion school

Ministry School Transport Assistance is not provided to Level 3 Māori immersion schools

Level 4 Mainstream Māori immersion school

Ministry School Transport Assistance is not provided to Level 4 Māori immersion schools

Māori Medium School

A Māori Medium School is a kura, kura kaupapa Māori, wharekura or designated character school providing education in te reo Māori established under Section 155 or Section 156 of the Education Act 1989.

Māori Medium School Funding Programme

Under this programme, School Transport Assistance is paid directly to the school Board of Trustees, which is then responsible for arranging school transport services.

Nearest appropriate school

Replaced in terms use by **closest school the student can enroll at**.

Private school

A private school is registered or provisionally registered as a private school. Private schools are not part of the state network of schools.

Public transport service

This includes buses, ferries, or train services that:

- are registered by the appropriate local or regional council, and
- run regularly and on all school days, and
- are fare-paying services.

All commercial services are required to be registered with the appropriate local or regional council.

School of special character

A school providing an education within the framework of a particular or general religious or philosophical belief as associated with observations of that belief.

A school of special character has been established as part of the state school system under the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. See also state-integrated school.

School's address

A school's address is defined by the Ministry using Geographic Information Software.

Service agent

A service agent is the transport agent contracted by the Ministry of Education to manage and administer School Transport Assistance on its behalf.

State school

Most New Zealand schools are state schools which receive government funding. State schools can be primary, intermediate, middle, secondary, or area/composite.

Generally they accept both boys and girls at primary and intermediate levels (Year 1 – 8), although some secondary schools offer single sex education. Lessons are based on New Zealand curriculum.

For School Transport purposes, state schools and state-integrated schools are considered separately.

State-integrated school

These are schools integrated into the state school system under the provisions of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. Section 34 of the Act makes provision for School Transport Assistance to integrated schools. See also **school of special character**.

Student's home

A student's home address is defined as the point on the closest public road that is closest to the student's roadside gate.

Suitable public transport

The Ministry is currently working with providers of public transport to determine a mutually appropriate understanding of what constitutes suitable public transport. This is expected to be concluded, including engagement and communication by December 2016 for effect at the start of the 2017 school year. Until that time a **public transport service** is deemed to be suitable if it meets all of the following criteria:

- › the public transport service travels within 2.4 kilometres of the roadside gate of the **student's home**
- › the public transport service travels within 2.4 kilometres of the **closest school that the student can enroll at**
- › the public transport service does not require the student to change transport services more than once on a journey
- › the public transport service has a suitable timetable

