**School Transport**

**Request for Vacant Seats for Session 2023/2024**

All Education Authorities are required to offer any vacant seats on school transport to pupils who live on a route, but within the specified walking distance of their school. All such requests are granted on the basis that should any children move into the area who are entitled to school transport, those seats may have to be relinquished.

The Authority is asking for any parents and carers who wish to make a request for a vacant seat for their child(ren) to come forward with that request between **28 August 2023 and 8 September 2023.** All requests must be made online by completing the ‘Vacant Seat Requests’ form which will be found on the Shetland Islands Council’s website on the link below from 28 August 2023:

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/schools/school-transport>

If you are unable to complete the form on line please apply by letter and send to:

Transport Planning Service

Shetland Islands Council

6 North Ness Business Park

Lerwick

Shetland

ZE1 0LZ

The School Transport Policy sets out the process whereby vacant seats will be allocated. In the event that more applications are received than the number of vacant seats on any given route, then priority will be given as follows:

* To those children referred by Social Work or Health professionals;
* To those attending their catchment area school over those attending an alternative school by parental choice;
* Amongst those attending their catchment area school, to those who live furthest away;
* Amongst those attending an alternative school by parental choice, to those who live furthest away.

Please note that it is not possible to grant seats on Public Service buses which are used to transport school pupils; however non-entitled pupils may travel as members of the public and pay the appropriate fare.

The allocation of any available vacant seats will be done when the children are back to school after the summer holidays. This is to allow officers time to work with bus operation managers to identify capacity on the school bus network and identify where there are vacant seats following the return to school in August. Parents will be notified in writing whether or not their application has been successful in September. Children will not be allowed to travel on school transport vehicles without a valid pass.

**Parents and carers who successfully applied for vacant seats for their children for the current school year MUST re-apply.**

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