



## **School Transport for children and young people with Special Educational Needs**

### **Eligibility**

The [School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs \(pdf\)](#) supports the transport to and from school of children and young people with special educational needs in line with the criteria set out in the Department of Education.

To be eligible for school transport under the above Scheme;

(i) The required professional report(s) submitted must meet the Department of Education criteria for attending the relevant setting

and

(ii) the child/young person must be attending the nearest recognised mainstream school or special class/special school, or a unit which can be resourced to meet their special educational needs

### **Application process**

Applications are made by the parent to the school principal using the application form. The principal will forward the Application to the school's [Special Educational Needs Organiser \(SENO\)](#).



The closing date to apply for school transport is the end of April each year, however the Department of Education accepts applications for school transport for children/young people with special educational needs all year round. It is important that applications are submitted as early as possible.

When a child/young person is changing home address and/or school, and still requires school transport, a new application must be completed by the family and the school principal, who will then forward to the SENO.

### **Timeline for transport**

On receipt of an application, the SENO is required to confirm that the criteria for the provision of school transport is met.

Once the SENO has completed their section of the form, they will forward it to the School Transport Section of the Department of Education for consideration.

When the application has been processed by School Transport Section and it has been confirmed that the child/young person is eligible for transport, they are sent to Bus Éireann. Bus Éireann will then advise what transport options may be available.

In some cases, the SENO may advise that they do not meet the criteria under the terms of the Scheme, and the Department will engage with the family in these cases.

#### Eligible children and young people are catered for as follows:

- where Bus Éireann have identified available spaces on existing transport services, children and young people can be accommodated on these services
- where Bus Éireann have identified that there is no service available to accommodate a child or young person, or if their care needs are such that they cannot avail of a school transport service, a Special Transport Grant is offered to families.



- where families cannot avail of the Special Transport Grant, or where they require an individual service, Bus Éireann will endeavor to establish a new service.

Where a new service is sanctioned, this will require that a procurement and vetting process is followed, and sometimes the school may also need to employ a school transport escort. Procurement of a school transport service and the recruitment of a school transport escort can take several weeks to put in place. This is the reason a school should submit their applications as soon as possible to the SENO to prevent delays in the application process.

In some cases, there may be a suitable school transport service already in operation in the area with seats available. These applications are processed immediately, and transport arrangements put in place with families at the earliest opportunity.

When a service becomes available, a member of Bus Éireann staff will contact the family member named on the application form to advise the start date of the service.

## **Tickets**

If families apply during the school year for transport and the child/young person is deemed eligible, Bus Éireann will issue tickets for services as soon as possible after transport has been arranged.

If families apply before the end of April for the following school year, Bus Éireann will issue tickets from July onwards.



## School Transport Escort

A School Principal can seek sanction from the Department of Education to employ a School Transport Escort to accompany a child/young person on school transport, where supporting evidence provided identifies care and safety needs requiring that support.

Sometimes it can take time for the school to source a suitable person, and this can delay the provision of transport. Funding for school transport escorts is provided by the Department of Education, before funding can be provided, the employment of escorts must be sanctioned by the School Transport Section of the Department of Education. Requests for sanction should be sent to School Transport Section at [school\\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

## Special Transport Grant

In some circumstances a parent/guardian may be able to receive a Special Transport Grant (STG) toward the cost of private transport arrangements. A school transport application under the scheme must have been made before a Special Transport Grant (STG) can be considered.

Grants are based on the numbers of days the child/young person attends school following the date of application for school transport.

A Special Transport Grant (STG) may be provided to families of eligible children or young people in situations where:

- Bus Éireann is not able to provide a transport service.
- a child's or young person's behavioural difficulties or medical needs are such as to make the provision of a transport service unsuitable.
- an escort is considered necessary, and the provision of such support is not available.
- the cost of establishing/maintaining a service is considered prohibitive.



With effect from the start of the 2024/2025 school year that the rate of the Special Transport Grant has increased as recommended in the review of the School Transport Scheme which was published in February 2024.

The increased rate is 41.80 cent for the 6,437 kilometres travelled and 31.78 cent per kilometre for each kilometre travelled thereafter.

If a parent/guardian cannot accept the grant and require a service, School Transport Section will request the setup of a new service for the child or young person. A Special Transport Grant Return Form confirming this option must be emailed to School Transport Section at [school\\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

To ensure that payments are processed as quickly as possible, the following schedule of payments applies:

<b>Payment</b>	<b>Period of school year covered</b>	<b>Payments will be processed*</b>
Payment 1	September – October inclusive	November
Payment 2	November – February inclusive	March
Payment 3	March – end of school year	End of school year/during the summer months
Otherwise, one payment will be made to cover the full school year during the summer months		

**\*Note:** Payments can only be processed on this schedule when correctly completed Statement of Attendance forms are returned and parent/guardian submit their bank details.

Parents/Guardians can only receive an STG where sanctioned by the Department, and all the information contained above will be in the sanction letter.

Grants are subject to review and may be varied or withdrawn where circumstances change.



## Special Transport Interim Grant

It is important to note that a school transport service can sometimes take weeks to arrange. Bus Éireann has reported challenges in finding suitable drivers and contractors in some locations. If there is a delay in setting up a service for an eligible child/young person a Special Transport Interim Grant may be available to those families. The grant is based on the number of days a child/young person attends school and is not paid in advance.

The interim grant is offered from the date of application to assist with the cost of private transport arrangements that the family put in place until a transport service is ready to start. Bus Éireann or the School Transport Section in the Department of Education will inform families how to avail of this grant. Queries can be addressed to [school\\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

## Bus Éireann Call Centre

Families can contact Bus Éireann's customer care call centre during the busy summer period on: LoCall 0818 919 910. Operating hours are 09.00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday.

Families can also contact Bus Éireann by submitting a query using the following link: [buseireann.ie/schooltransport](https://www.buseireann.ie/schooltransport)

## Contact details for School Transport Section

If you have any queries regarding the school transport application process, please contact the Section at the details below.

**Webpage (www.gov.ie):** <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/school-transport/>

**Email:** [school\\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

Department of Education

School Transport Section

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