

## **Preparations for Suffolk County Council funded School Travel for September**

Suffolk County Council are making preparations to ensure that all pupils who are eligible for SCC funded school travel can be transported to school safely for the start of term. SCC transports approximately 12,000 eligible pupils to school each year, this is roughly 12% of the school population.

The Department for Education has now published official guidance on the measures that need to be in place to ensure that school transport is covid-19 safe.

On vehicles carrying only school children social distancing will not be required. This means the one metre plus rule will not apply on these routes. This will allow SCC to arrange and fund transport for the majority of eligible pupils, approximately 10,000, to school as usual. There will be some other measures in place to ensure pupils safety, for example children need to make sure they wash their hands before and after travelling and no eating and drinking will be allowed on these vehicles. Face coverings are also recommended for children aged 12 and over.

School travel passes are currently being issued. To date approximately 8,000 passes have been sent out to families.

SCC also arranges and funds travel to school for approximately 2,000 eligible pupils on public transport. The government have advised councils to dedicate routes to school children where possible and have announced £40million of funding to help local authorities create extra capacity and allow more students to use alternatives to public transport. Therefore, SCC are undertaking a route by route review of about 90 bus routes with transport operators to determine where routes can be dedicated to carry just school children. SCC is also exploring other options such as providing additional buses and zoning of buses.

For pupils with special educational needs, routes are being finalised and families will be contacted in the next two weeks regarding arrangements for the new term.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to invite parents to apply for spare seats at this stage but once transport arrangements are in place for all eligible pupils it will be reviewed to see if there is the capacity to offer spare seats. SCC has been in contact with the 225 families who have had a spare seat this year and will continue to keep them informed. If a parent has no means whatsoever of getting their child to school, SCC may be able to help by using discretionary power to offer transport arrangements. However, this would only be done where it is clear that this is absolutely essential to enable a child to attend school.

Councillor Mary Evans, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills said;

"I appreciate how unsettling this is for parents who are preparing for September but I would like to assure them that the school travel team are working extremely hard to ensure transport is arranged for all eligible students for the start of term.

"I welcome the announcement that local authorities will receive additional funding this year to provide dedicated transport to eligible pupils. Our priority is to ensure the safety of children on their journeys to and from school and we will continue to update families as we work through the guidance."

For the most up to date information parents can visit [www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel) or [www.suffolkonboard.com/faqs](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/faqs).