

## **Spare Seats – Questions and Answers**

### **Why has the spare seat charge increased from September 2018?**

Whilst the council continues to offer a spare seat service to families who do not qualify for free home to school travel assistance, it is under no statutory obligation to do so. In recognition of the significant financial pressures which the Council is facing and the associated need to reduce spend and increase income where possible, it has had to take the decision to increase the cost of purchasing a spare seat as a contribution to meeting those challenges. Despite the increase to £230 per term, it still represents very good value for money when calculated on a daily rate and when compared to the cost of purchasing a bus pass from a commercial operator.

### **How will I pay for my spare seat?**

You can send a cheque made payable to Cambridgeshire County Council. Cheques will not be cashed until spare seat applications have been processed. Should your application be unsuccessful, we will return the cheque to you.

### **Why do I have to send a cheque payment for this terms spare seat application?**

We are in the process of switching to a different online applications system, and there will be no functionality to make online payments for the coming months for Pre16 applications.

### **Why am I not eligible for free transport, and what is meant by ‘spare seat’ application?**

You do not meet the criteria for free transport, if you are not attending your catchment or designated school, or if you live under the specified distance (2 miles for primary school, and 3 miles for secondary). Please visit our website for full details: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/transport](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/transport)

### **When will I hear whether I have been successful with my spare seat application?**

You may not hear about your application until the half term holidays after your application is for (i.e. October, February or May). We have to ensure that all entitled pupils and Post 16 students are allocated seat before we process spare seat applications. You must ensure that you have alternative travel arrangements in place for the start of the school term.

### **If my application cannot be considered until a later date in the term, could I pay a reduced contribution?**

Yes, we will consider these on a case by case basis, and you will be informed accordingly for any reduced rates.

**I can see there are seats available on the bus, why has my application been refused?**

The SET Team (Social and Education Transport Team) load the buses for pupils that are entitled for free transport first. These pupils may not use the bus every day, but they are eligible and we have to have capacity available for them should they wish to travel. Some days the buses may look under used, but these 'empty' seats are allocated to pupils.

**Why can't you put on additional capacity for spare seats if there is demand?**

The County Council cannot assist parents that make the choice to send their children to a non-catchment school. We do not have the resources to offer additional capacity for spare seat applicants.

**I had a spare seat in previous terms/years, why has my application been refused?**

Applications for spare seats are dealt with on a first come, first served basis. They are processed in order of the date applications are received into our office. The issue of a 'spare seat' for one term is not a guarantee for subsequent terms or school years.

**When can I apply for the next terms spare seat?**

Applications must be received after the start of the half-term holiday immediately before the beginning of the term for which the application is made. The earliest date in which you can apply for a spare seat is the first Saturday of the May, October and February half terms.

**How long will I have to wait for my bus pass once my application has been approved?**

Your bus pass should be received within 10 days of your application being processed.

**For all information, and a copy of Cambridgeshire County Councils home to school travel assistance policy as well as our online application form, please visit:**

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/transport](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/transport)