

8th January 2018

Dear Parent /Carer,

Home to School Transport: Consultation

On 12 December 2017, Suffolk County Council launched a consultation on proposals to change school and post-16 travel policies. The consultation will run until Wednesday 28 February 2018. Two changes which may directly affect your family if the proposals go ahead are:

- 1. Free travel for 11-16 year olds would no longer be provided, where a student is not attending their nearest school.**
- 2. Subsidised travel for 16-18 year olds would no longer be provided.**

Suffolk County Council is hoping to save money by making these changes from September 2019. The aim of the consultation is to seek views from the public on the three options listed below:

Option 1: Change the policy so that children only get free transport to their nearest school, rather than to their catchment school, which is the current policy. This would mean that children who are currently receiving free transport to a school that is not their nearest would no longer qualify for free transport. Parents would be faced with the choice of organising their own transport or moving their child to a different school, mid-way through their education.

Option 2: Change the policy in exactly the same way as Option 1, but on a year-by-year basis. This would mean that children currently receiving free transport a school which is not their nearest would continue to qualify for free transport until they leave that school. However children joining a new school would only receive free transport if that school was their nearest. Siblings would not qualify for free transport to a school which was not their nearest. Suffolk County Council has estimated that this option would cost an additional £8.8 million.

Option 3: Make no changes to the school travel policy but make savings from other services provided by Suffolk County Council.

One of these options will ultimately be implemented; there is no fourth option under consideration.

If Option 1 or 2 were to be implemented, it would affect students attending Farlingaye High School and all other Suffolk schools in September 2019. The reduction in students qualifying for free transport, even though they live in our catchment area, could reduce the number of students attending the school. As an indication of how serious the impact could be, it is worth noting that we currently have approximately 70 students in Ys 7-11 who, if Option 1 were to be implemented immediately, would lose their access to free transport, unless they chose to leave Farlingaye and to move to their closest school. Were we to lose a large number of students, this would in turn affect our budget and therefore influence many aspects of our provision, including through a reduction in GCSE option choices and extra-curricular enrichment opportunities. It is likely that the negative implications of this change would be even more severe for some other Suffolk schools, several of which fear catastrophic budgetary issues if either Option 1 or Option 2 were implemented.

Therefore, in order to ensure that all children in our catchment area continue to receive free transport to school, and to safeguard the future financial stability of Suffolk schools, the senior staff of Farlingaye School encourage all our parents/carers to strongly oppose Options 1 and 2 and to strongly support Option 3.

I therefore urge you to please complete Suffolk County Council's Questionnaire to make sure that your views are reflected in the official consultation report. You can complete the questionnaire by clicking this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5to16HtoS>

There is also a similar questionnaire seeking views on removing all subsidies for sixth form bus transport. You can complete that form at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/post16HtoS>

More information on the consultation can be found on Suffolk County Council's website: www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel. I also attach a poster which gives the dates of forthcoming consultation events, organised by Suffolk County Council. These events are designed to provide information and to create a forum for members of the local community to ask questions and express their opinions.

Many thanks for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Sievewright
Headteacher
Farlingaye High School