

From: Correspondence Unit <education-correspondenceunit@corr.cloud.gov.ie>
Sent: 23 November 2023 12:36
To: Mary Boyle
Subject: DES-CU-04651-2023

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Ms. Mary Boyle

mary.boyle@dublincity.ie

PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Our Ref: DES-CU-04651-2023

23rd November 2023

Dear Ms. Boyle,

I refer to your recent email to the Minister for Education, Ms. Norma Foley TD, regarding a school bus system for students in the Dublin area.

The School Transport Scheme is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department of Education. In the 2022/23 school year, over 149,000 children, including over 18,000 children with special educational needs, were transported on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country.

In addition, school transport scheme services are being provided in the current school year for over 5,400 children who have arrived to Ireland from Ukraine.

The total cost of the scheme in 2022 was €338.9m.

There has been an overall increase in both applications and tickets issued for the 2023/2024 school year in comparison to the 2022/2023 school year.

Under the current terms of the scheme, pupils at primary level are eligible where they live no less than 3.2 kilometres from and are attending their nearest primary school. At post primary level, students who live no less than 4.8 kilometres from and are attending their nearest post primary school/education centre are deemed eligible. Any pupils/students who do not meet these criteria are deemed not eligible, or otherwise known as concessionary applicants, and are allocated a ticket based on the availability of a seat when all eligible children have been catered for.

Temporary Alleviation Measures at post-primary level are being continued for the current school year. Under these measures, which were initially introduced in 2019, transport will be provided where there is a route in operation and where capacity exists for concessionary post-primary pupils who are eligible for transport to their nearest school and are attending their second nearest school and who applied and paid on time.

As you are aware, the Department undertook to complete a review of the School Transport Scheme. The review has been conducted with a view to examining the current scheme, its broader effectiveness and sustainability, and to ensure that it serves students and their families adequately.

The steering group is due to issue a final report which includes recommendations on the future of the school transport scheme. The review will then be brought to government shortly. Once approved, the review will be published.

The current tickets used when boarding school transport are paper based. Bus Éireann undertook a smart ticketing pilot to improve the customer experience for pupils and parents using Bus Éireann school transport services.

The pilot will allow the capturing of information about the bus journey, stopping locations and details of distance travelled. The trial will also support future development of school transport services by capturing data on travel patterns.

Yours sincerely

Stephen O'Brien

Private Secretary