

**PROPOSAL TO CHANGE FREE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT
ENTITLEMENT FOR FALKIRK COUNCIL SCHOOLS**

**A REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION
*1st FEBRUARY TO 17th MARCH 2023***

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1 INTRODUCTION

Background

Falkirk Council Children's Services currently provide home to school transport for:

- Any child under the age of 8 years in full-time education who lives more than one mile from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route.
- Any child who has reached the age of 8 years during a school session and is in full-time education who lives less than two miles but more than one mile from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route. Those children/young people will be granted free transport until the end of the school session.
- Any child who is aged 8 years or over in full-time education who lives more than two miles from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route.

This is more generous than the legislation, which places the responsibility on the local authority to provide transport to school for children who:

- are under 8 years of age and live more than 2 miles from school; or
- are 8 years of age or older and live more than 3 miles from school

Proposal

It was proposed that the Children's Services Transport policy is changed to provide home to school transport for:

- **primary pupils who live more than 2 miles their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route; and**
- **secondary pupils who live more than 3 miles from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route**

Purpose of Consultation

A formal consultation is required for any proposal to "discontinue arrangements for the provision of transport by the education authority for pupils attending a denominational school". This consultation was in accordance with the requirements of this legislation and went further to consult all affected schools, not just denominational. This report documents the formal consultation undertaken on this proposal

Timelines

- The Consultation was undertaken over a 6 week period from 1st February to 17th March 2023
- Education Scotland reported back on the educational aspects of the proposal on 14th April 2023.
- This Consultation Report was published online on 24th April 2023.
- Falkirk Council Education, Children and Young People Executive will discuss the proposal on 30th May 2023.
- If changes to home to school transport entitlement (as proposed or amended) are approved by the Education, Children and Young People Executive, the earliest they will take effect will be from the start of school session 2023/24 in August 2023.

Consultees

During the consultation period, views were sought from a range of stakeholders and interested parties as follows:

- Parents of all children attending (or likely to attend in the coming 2 years) schools that would be affected by the proposal
- Pupils at affected secondary schools

- The Parent Councils of all affected schools
- School staff at affected schools and their trade unions
- Community Councils
- The Roman Catholic Church
- Police Scotland
- Education Scotland

2 RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Summary

There were 1,729 responses to the consultation from 1,713 individuals and 16 groups and organisations. These are summarised in this report and a representative selection can be read in full in [Appendix A](#).

These written responses were mainly received as responses to the online survey but some were also received by e-mail. They are summarised by respondent category in the following table 1 below:

Table 1 - Total number of respondents by category

Type of Respondent	Number of Responses
Individuals	1,713
Groups and Organisations	16
TOTAL	1,729

Analysis of All Individual Respondents

Type of Respondents	Number of Responses	%
Parents	1,334	78%
Staff	88	5%
Pupils	163	10%
Others	128	7%
TOTAL	1,713	100%

Analysis of All Organisation Respondents

Type of Organisations	Number of Responses	%
Parent Councils	9	56%
Community Councils	4	25%
RC Church	1	6%
Trade Unions	0	0%
Other	2	13%
TOTAL	16	100%

Response Analysis

Responses from Individuals

The number of responses to the consultation in favour or not in favour of the proposal (and those that did not express a preference) are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Responses from Individuals to Proposal

	Agree		Disagree		No Preference		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parents	114	9%	1,189	89%	31	2%	1,334	100%
Pupils	11	7%	132	81%	20	12%	163	100%
Staff	19	21%	64	73%	5	6%	88	100%
Others	39	30%	84	66%	5	4%	128	100%
All individual responses	183	11%	1,469	86%	61	3%	1,713	100%

Responses from Groups and Organisations

There were 16 responses from groups and organisations, 1 of whom supports the proposal, 14 that are not in favour and 1 that took a neutral position.

Table 2: Responses from Groups and Organisations to Proposal

	Agree		Disagree		Neutral		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Parent Councils	1	11%	8	89%	0	0%	9	100%
Community Councils	0	0%	3	75%	1	25%	4	100%
RC Church	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	1	100%
Others	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	2	100%
All group responses	1	6%	14	88%	1	6%	16	100%

The full response from each group or organisation can be read in [Appendix A](#) and are summarised below.

Parent Councils

Formal responses were received from 9 Parent Councils, 8 were not in support of the proposals and 1 Parent Council did support the proposal. The main points raised in their written responses were as follows:

Airth Primary School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- The impact this will have on low-income families.
- Unreliable bus service from Letham to Airth
- The distance pupils will need to walk from Letham to Airth Primary School
- Concern about the route from Letham to Airth includes the following:
 - narrow pavement
 - it is a 60mph road
 - poorly kept hedges
 - debris on the pavement
 - flooding along the road
 - safety of families walking along the pavement
- The Airth school bus to Larbert High School will continue due to the distance criteria. Therefore, this still should be utilised and continued to support children attending Airth Primary School.

Head of Muir Primary School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- Safety of children on public buses
- Where is the boundary for entitled and non-entitled children.
- Clarification on whether the route is 'how the crow flies' or the 'safest route' and clarification on what that route would look like.
- Concern over Drove Loan Road as a "safe walking route".

St Andrew's Primary School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- If the proposal is accepted, it will have a disproportionate impact on Catholic families as their children often travel further to attend their chosen school due to the catchment size.
- More parents will take their children to school by car.
- Concerns over "safe walking routes" to school. Such as:
 - The walking route is through parks.
 - Busy roads, speed of cars on the roads.
 - length of time it will take to walk 2 miles with young children.
 - congested town centre
 - lack of gritted streets during the winter months

- pavements with debris
- narrow pavements
- overgrown trees/bushes on paths
- better lighting on Kemper Avenue
- More street patrol officers around the school as there is only one pedestrian crossing at the Laurieston end of the road.
- The length of time it would take an adult to take their child(ren) to school and back home and the impact it will have on employment.
- Children will be attending school wet, cold and tired.
- Graeme High School is near St Andrew's RC Primary School, the additional traffic at both schools will add to the already congested streets at drop off and collection times.
- The overspill of traffic onto Callendar Road which is the main artery road into Falkirk.
- Environmental impact this will have with the additional traffic on the roads around the school.
- There is a one-way system in the housing estate St Andrew's RC primary is in. With the additional traffic, teachers may arrive late to school due to additional cars being in the one-way system dropping children off at school.
- Parking and dropping children off near the school gate without regard of other children on the pavements and local residents trying to get to work.
- The pavements into the school should be widened to accommodate the additional pedestrians.
- Community Police Officers present to direct the flow of traffic on the roads around the school.
- More police personnel walking the streets to make families safe when high school pupils are entering and exiting the school at the same time.
- Concern over alternative transport arrangements:
 - No alternative transport for some pupils.
 - Public bus timetables do not co-ordinate with school day and may not take child directly to school gate.
- Taking away parental choice about where to send their child(ren) to school by not allowing parents to pay for their child to journey on a bus that will take them directly to school.
- The impact this will have on a pupil's ability to complete homework and attend after school clubs.
- Some pupils will need to leave home very early and will return home late which may have an impact on reducing the attainment gap.

St Bernadette's Primary School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- It will significantly impact a large number of children attending the school due to the size of the catchment for the school. Thus, disproportionately impact on Catholic families.
- The removal of free transport will impact on a pupil's ability to attend a Roman Catholic school.
- Lack of pedestrian crossings on the Bellsdyke Road.

St Francis Xavier's Primary School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- The entrance of St Francis Xavier is directly opposite St Mungo's High School. There are already concerns about the volume of traffic, parking and congestion around the roads at both schools and if this proposal is accepted this will double.
- Concern over safe walking routes for some of the pupils.
- There is a legal requirement for baptised Catholics to be able to access Catholic schools in an authority area.
- Safety of pupils walking/cycling to school for the following reasons: unaccompanied pupils due to parent's work commitments; some parents have children at different

schools, walking or cycling to school in the winter and shortcuts using paths deemed unsafe.

- Concern over alternative transport arrangements:
 - No alternative transport for some pupils.
 - Public bus timetables do not co-ordinate with school day and may not take child directly to school gate.
 - The impact this will have on a pupil's ability to complete homework and attend after school clubs.
 - It would be taking away parental choice about where to send their child(ren) to school by not allowing parents to pay for their child to journey on a bus that will take them directly to school.
 - Parents may struggle to pay for alternative transport, at a time where families are already struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- The impact on breakfast clubs as some children may not get to school in time to attend the breakfast clubs.
- There may be an increase in parents taking children to school in a car and the wider impact this has:
 - Increase congestion around schools.
 - Increase in carbon emissions around schools.
 - Safety of pupils around schools
- The need for more school crossing patrols

St Mary's Primary School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- If the proposal is accepted, it will have a disproportionate impact on Catholic families as their children often travel further to attend their chosen school due to the catchment size.
- There is a legal requirement for baptised Catholics to be able to access Catholic schools in an authority area.
- Safety of pupils walking/cycling to school for the following reasons: unaccompanied pupils due to parent's work commitments; some parents have children at different schools, walking or cycling to school in the winter and shortcuts through paths deemed unsafe.
- Concern over alternative transport arrangements:
 - No alternative transport for some pupils.
 - Public bus timetables do not co-ordinate with school day and may not take child directly to school gate.
- The impact this will have on a pupil's ability to complete homework and attend after school clubs.
- Taking away parental choice about where to send their child(ren) to school by not allowing parents to pay for their child to journey on a bus that will take them directly to school.
- Parents may struggle to pay for alternative transport, at a time where families are already struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- The impact on breakfast clubs as some children may not get to school in time to attend the breakfast clubs.
- There may be an increase in parents taking children to school in a car and the wider impact this has:
 - Increase congestion around schools.
 - Increase in carbon emissions around schools.
 - Safety of pupils around schools
- The impact this will have on working parents not being able to accompany children.
- Safety of Children walking across roads which are no longer staffed by school crossing patrols.

Braes High School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- Decrease in pupils attending school as a result of the criteria change.
- The impact on attainment
- There are settlements/villages in the school catchment where families are less likely to have cars available to take young people to school.
- Pupils feel that they are being punished for the successive years of financial mismanagement and that is unfair on them.
- Concern over "safe routes" to school because of behaviour of road users including drivers and delivery vehicles.
- Young people walking to and from school in adverse weather.
- No appropriate bus service which the under 22 bus pass can be utilised.

Falkirk High School Parent Council (supports the proposal)

- Understand the difficult financial position the Council is currently facing.
- Pupils will be able to take advantage of the under 22 bus pass.

St Mungo's High School Parent Council (does not support the proposal)

- Pupils at the school may not have a safe route to walk to school.
- Buses are not regular and pupils may be left waiting in bad weather.
- Pupils carrying PE equipment and musical instruments will have to carry these to walk to school.
- Pupils will have to walk home in the dark in the winter months.
- Public buses may get very busy in the mornings and when pupils are coming home and not allow some pupils on. This will cause safety issues.
- Parents will drive their pupils to school adding to an already busy car park and possibly leading to accidents.
- The extra traffic on the road will cause more damage to the environment.

Roman Catholic Church

One response was received from representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and was not in support of the proposal:

Archdiocese of St. Andrews & Edinburgh (does not support the proposal)

- The proposal will impact Catholic Schools to a greater extent as children often travel further to attend their chosen school.
- There is a legal requirement for baptised Catholics to be able to access Catholic schools in an authority area.
- There are not necessarily safe walking routes for some of these children and young people to walk to their school. Many of the Catholic schools are near busy main roads, and, due to their work commitments, not all parents are able to walk their child(ren) to school, especially if they have children attending both primary and secondary school.
- In many situations, there is no alternative local transport to make it possible for the children and young people to travel to their school. Additionally, even if available, the local bus companies do not run timetables that co-ordinate well with the school day. This will mean that some children will have to leave home very early to get to school on time or they will be regularly late.
- The result of this proposal can only mean that more parents will drive their children to school leading to increased congestion around schools. As a Council, surely you are trying to encourage people to use their cars less, not make decisions that will encourage greater car usage.
- Many children attend breakfast clubs – the proposed reduction in school transport entitlement will mean some pupils will not get to school in time to attend the breakfast

club. A child who has not had a good breakfast in the morning will be tired and less able to concentrate.

Community Councils

4 responses were received from community councils, 3 against the proposal and one taking a neutral position:

Airth Community Council (does not support the proposal)

- Addresses concerns over children from Letham and Dunmore who would be affected by the changes.
- For Letham children there are concerns over the "safe walking route". This includes the following:
 - The A905 is a busy and fast-moving trunk road with large and heavy rigid bodied vehicles
 - The junction at Burgoyne's Garage is not safe
- For the Dunmore children, there are concerns over the "safe walking route". This includes the following:
 - The A905 is a busy and fast-moving trunk road with large and heavy rigid bodied vehicles
 - The route to Airth Primary School crosses over the A905 at Dunmore and the Parsonage and neither crossing have proscribed safe crossing mechanisms.

Banknock, Hags and Longcroft Community Council (does not support the proposal)

- Clarity requested over where the distance entitlement starts/ends and affected streets.
- And on how the distance has been calculated.

Camelon, Tamfourhill and Bantaskine Community Council (does not support the proposal)

- Concerns on the environmental impact the policy change will have with parents whose children were entitled to use school transport will use their own vehicle to transport children to and from school causing an increase in emissions and causing congestion around the school.
- No suitable walking/cycling route from Tamfourhill to Bantaskin, Falkirk High, St Francis Xavier and St Mungo's schools.
 - Partial cycle route to the area where the former Barr's factory is.
 - Narrow pathway down to Westburn Avenue
- No alternative public bus routes covering any of these schools to give parents the option to pay for child(ren) to get to school.
- Infrastructure to be in place to ensure safe cycle and walking routes are available.
- The impact this will have on parents who are employed:
 - Some parents may have to change start/finish times.
 - Unable to change their working hours so may have to give up work.
 - loss of earnings.
- The proposal could have an impact on attendance and attainment.
- When there is bad weather, parents may be tempted keep children off school rather than walk the distance to and from school.

Grangemouth inc Skinflats Community Council (neutral view on the proposal)

- Assurances that assessments of designated safe routes to school are current and that they will be regularly assessed to take account of any local developments that may impact upon them.
- The proposed changes may encourage more forms of active travel to and from school. That aspiration may require some encouragement and we would wish to see practical proposals to support that aspiration.

Other Organisations

2 responses were made from other groups, both against the proposal:

St Mungo's High School Pupil Council (does not support the proposal)

- The proposal will disproportionately impact Catholic families as their children often have to travel further to attend their chosen school.
- There is a legal requirement for baptised Catholics to be able to access Catholic schools in an authority area.
- A safe walking route is not necessarily available. Some children and young people may take shortcuts through parks or other routes, which could be potentially hazardous to their safety.
- Due to work commitments, not in all cases will parents be able to walk their child/children to school, especially if they have one child attending Primary and another attending Secondary school.
- In some situations, no alternative local bus routes make it impossible for children and young people to travel to their school.
- Where there is an alternative bus route, bus companies do not run on a timetable which coordinates well enough with the school day. This means that some children will have to leave their homes very early or arrive at school late -impacting their attendance and attainment.
- Some local bus services do not necessarily take a child close to the school they attend, meaning they would still have to walk quite a distance to school.
- The proposal states no children could access the remaining buses on the planned reduced school bus service, even on a fare-paying basis. For parents who may be fortunate enough to afford this, this proposal is eroding parental choice.
- This policy would have an adverse effect on the environment:
 - It will result in more parents driving their children to school;
 - increasing congestion around the school and increasing carbon emissions;
 - The increased congestion around schools will also be a potential hazard to those walking or cycling to the school.
- Some young people may not get to school in time to attend the breakfast club. A child who has not had a decent breakfast in the morning will be tired and may struggle to concentrate on their studies which impacts their attainment.
- Although many parents will want to keep their child/children at their present school, in the cost-of-living crisis, many families will struggle, and taking away free home-to-school bus travel, will only add to the financial burden families face.

Bantaskin Residents Association (does not support the proposal)

- The impact this policy change will increase traffic around the Bantaskin area.
- There are no safe walking routes from Tamfourhill as no safe crossing on Windsor Road.
- No safe walking routes from Langlees other than via the canal.
- Westburn Avenue already congested on school days, there are no safe place to park there to drop kids off.
- No cycle lanes on any of the roads around these schools.
- No safe crossing of Glenfuir Road on way up from Camelon.

Public Meetings

A total of 168 people attended the four public meetings that were held during the consultation period:

- *Grangemouth High School (1st February 2023)* - 11 attended this meeting.
- *St Mungo's High School (16th February 2023)* - 60 attended this meeting.
- *Braes High School (21st February 2023)* - 26 attended this meeting.

- *Denny High School (7th March 2023)* - 71 attended this meeting.

The full minutes from these meetings can be read in Appendix B

3 SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSAL

Overall Response

11% of individual respondents (183 responses) to the consultation were in favour of the proposed change in home to school transport entitlement. The full text of many of those responses received can be read in [Appendix A](#).

1 of the 16 groups and organisations that responded were in favour of the proposal and 1 organisation remained neutral.

Summary of Responses in Favour

Some of the main points coming out of the individual responses in favour of the proposal focused on:

- The current budget constraints and how this proposal would contribute to the budget deficit.
- The positive impact it may have on parents/carers, children, and young people's health by encouraging children and young people to walk/cycle to school.
- The positive impact on the environment.
- How it would encourage young people to utilise the under 22 bus pass.
- How it is the parent's responsibility to ensure children and young people get to and from school.
- How the current policy is generous with the transport distance criteria, and the proposal would bring the distance criteria in line with the national criteria.

4 OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSAL

Overall Response

86% of individual respondents (1,469 responses) to the consultation were not in favour of the proposed change in home to school transport entitlement. A sample of the responses received can be read in [Appendix A](#).

14 of the 16 groups or organisations that responded were opposed to the proposal.

Summary of Responses not in Favour & Main Issues Raised

The main issues raised in these responses were as follows:

- The main concern among respondents was **the distance and the length of time a child or young person would need to walk to and from school and the negative impact this would have on a young person's education:**
 - Pupils would be required to walk 2-3 miles to secondary taking up to an hour each way.
 - 1-2 miles is too far to expect a young primary child to walk.
 - Pupils would be tired during school from walking the increased distance
 - On many days this would be in poor weather and pupils will arrive at school soaking wet, which affects their health and ability to learn.
 - Young people may be late for school without access to the school bus.
 - Attendance may drop as a young person may not want to walk this distance to school.
 - The knock-on impact that this would have on attainment was also frequently mentioned as a concern.
 - Pupils will be carrying a heavy school bag as well as carrying PE Kits, musical instruments, art work on some days, which would be difficult over the increased distances.
 - The extra time required to walk home would disrupt and prevent extra-curricular activities.
 - It also reduces the time and energy that pupils have to complete homework.
- **Safe Walking Routes** was the next largest concern among respondents. Many respondents highlighted areas where they didn't think the route to school was safe. This included:
 - Details route where it is not safe (see Section 6 for more specific details on routes that are of particular concern)
 - Roadside paths identified as being unsafe due to speed of traffic and volume of traffic
 - Narrow pavements alongside busy roads
 - Lack of suitable crossings
 - Debris on the pavement
 - Paths that are not well-lit
 - Lack of cycle paths
 - Additional volume of parents/carers, children and young people on pavements
- The **safety of pupils** was another concern related to the above. This included the following:
 - Personal safety for pupils walking alone to and from school (including "stranger danger").
 - Walking past other children from other schools (rivalry and misbehaviour).
 - Walking or crossing busy roads, unsafe paths, badly lit routes.
 - During the winter months when it is dark and wet.
 - Pupils may not be seen by road users due to the colour of the uniform.
 - Safety of pupils with additional traffic on the roads.

- Many parents and carers responded saying that they would be **unable to take children to school** because:
 - They have work commitments at these times
 - Their children attend different schools
 - They have no alternative transport arrangements
 - They are a lone parent
 - The parent/carer has a disability
 - The parent/carer has to stay at home for an ASN taxi for another child
- The **lack of public bus services** was raised as an issue. Many respondents felt that there were no available public bus service to take children directly to school, and where there was, the reliability of these public bus services is poor.
- The **financial impact this proposal would have on all during the cost-of-living crisis and the disproportionate impact this proposal would have on lower income families**. This included the following reasons:
 - Paying for alternative transport arrangements
 - Reduced working hours or having to stop working to be able to take young people to and from school
 - Families on lower incomes that would have fewer, if any alternative options for transporting their children to school
- **Additional traffic on the roads and the impact this will have:**
 - To the environment
 - Congestion on the roads around schools and within housing estates
 - The lack of available parking around schools to cater for the increased demand at drop-off and pick-up times
- Many respondents felt that the proposed change would have **an unfair and disproportionate impact on pupils attending denominational schools** because:
 - Proportionately more pupils are affected as the school catchment areas are larger
 - It would discourage parents from choosing denominational schools if school transport was not available
- There was a concern in many areas that **fare-paying capacity on school buses will be removed/reduced**. Some respondents also wanted clarity on whether the under 22 bus pass (National Entitlement Card) could still be used on contracted school buses or on public buses. There was particularly high volume of concern expressed concerning the buses from Hallglen to Graeme High School, Maddiston to Braes High School, Bonnybridge/Longcroft/Haggs to Denny High School, Lionthorn/Slamannan Road to St Andrew's Primary School, Bainsford/Langlees to Falkirk High School and Canalside Drive to Westquarter Primary School, although other services were mentioned.
- The policy change would be **taking away children and young people's independence going to and from school**.
- Some respondents **suggested review of school catchments**
- **Parent/carers may request a placing request to a closer school**.

5 RESPONSE TO THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED

Main Issues Raised & Authority Response

Several issues relevant to the proposal were raised in the survey responses and at the public meetings. The main issues of concern are listed below with the response of Children's Services (The Education Authority).

- **Concerns over the distance and the length of time a child or young person would need to walk to and from school.**

Authority Response: The proposed change in distance entitlement for home to school transport remains within the statutory distances as defined in sections 42 and 51 of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#) and the [Scottish Government School Transport Guidance 2021](#).

Currently 23 (72%) of other Scottish local authorities operate with a higher distance entitlement limit than Falkirk currently have.

If the proposal is agreed, then Falkirk's new policy would be the same as 12 other local authorities and would still remain more generous than a further 5 local authorities.

- **Concerns over the negative impact this additional walking time could have on a young person's education.**

Authority Response: There is nothing to suggest that there are reduced attendance or attainment levels at the majority of Scottish Councils that already apply the proposed distance entitlement policy.

The Authority are unaware of any research that has linked attendance and attainment with the level of discretionary school transport entitlement on offer.

- **Concerns over safe walking routes for pupils**

Authority Response: These concerns are fully addressed in Section 6.

- **Pupils would be at risk walking to school**

Authority Response: Many pupils in Falkirk Council schools are already walking up to 2 miles to school within current entitlement limits (1 mile for those 8 years old and under). The entitlement limits (and the law underpinning these), assume adult supervision on the walk to school. It is for parents and carers to decide when adult supervision is no longer required for their children.

- **Parents/carers would be unable to take their children to school if there was no school bus**

Authority Response: Around 83% of mainstream pupils live within current entitlement limits, and do not use fare-paying school bus services. So, the vast majority of parents/carers already ensure that their children get to and from school safely without any Council assistance.

- **There is a lack of public transport available as an alternative if school buses are removed.**

Authority Response: The Falkirk Council area has an extensive local bus network that covers most communities affected by the proposal to change free home to school transport entitlement. This provides opportunities to use local buses for travel to and from school. These services are not specifically designed to serve the school catchment areas, so pupils may have to walk further to access local bus services.

The provision of local bus services varies from school to school and the frequency of some of these services may not be well suited to the requirements of the school day. Some of the affected schools do not have local bus routes that are suitable for home to school travel.

Whilst some bus services would provide adequate provision for pupils to travel to and from school, it is unlikely that current local bus services would have sufficient capacity to be able to accommodate the total number of pupils that could be affected by the reduction in dedicated school buses.

- **An increase in parents/carers driving their children to school would increase traffic congestion, particularly around schools.**

Authority Response: The Council will work with any schools affected (as they currently do) to mitigate the impact of this where it occurs, and to ensure pupil safety.

- **There are environmental concerns surrounding the increased number of cars taking pupils to school.**

Authority Response: If the proposal is agreed and there is a reduction in the provision of school transport as a result, the Council will work with those schools affected to promote and develop Active Travel opportunities and publicise any public transport options that can provide alternatives to car travel. The level of concern expressed by parent/carers and pupils affected suggests that there would be a willingness to minimise car travel where possible.

- **The proposed change would have an unfair and disproportionate impact on pupils attending denominational schools.**

Authority Response: Within the primary sector all 7 (100%) of the denominational schools and 24 of the 41 (59%) non-denominational schools would potentially be affected. Within the secondary sector 1 of the 2 (50%) denominational schools and 6 of the 7 (86%) non-denominational schools would be affected. The secondary figures also include St Modan's Secondary School.

The table overleaf highlights the overall proportion of affected pupils that would be impacted compared to overall pupil numbers as a result of these proposed changes:

		Denominational	Non-Denominational	All Schools
Primary	Total Pupils	1,593	10,202	3,057
	Pupils Affected	148	150	342
	% Pupils Affected	9.3%	1.5%	11.2%
Secondary	Total Pupils	1464	8,438	18,640
	Pupils Affected	194	680	830
	% Pupils Affected	9.3%	8.1%	4.5%
All Schools	Total Pupils	1,593	9,902	21,697
	Pupils Affected	148	874	1,172
	% Pupils Affected	9.3%	8.8%	5.4%

Whilst many of the denominational schools are affected, many non-denominational schools are also affected to a similar or greater degree. The comparative impact on the affected denominational and non-denominational schools is shown below. It shows that the overall impact on schools affected by this proposed change is proportionately higher in the non-denominational schools.

	Denominational				Non-Denominational				Totals
	Remaining entitled		Losing Entitlement		Remaining entitled		Losing Entitlement		
	No. Pupils	%	No. Pupils	%	No. Pupils	%	No. Pupils	%	
Primary	166	53%	148	47%	90	37%	150	63%	554
Secondary	536	73%	194	27%	678	50%	680	50%	2,088
All Schools	702	67%	342	33%	768	48%	830	52%	2,642

Note: The figures above do not include schools where there is school transport but no pupils are affected by the proposed changes (e.g. St Modan's HS)

- **The financial impact this proposal would have on families & disproportionate impact on lower income families.**

Authority Response: An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment that fully encompasses the responses to this consultation, will be considered before any decision is made. This will take full cognisance of any financial impact of the proposal, particularly to low-income families.

Many of those who responded expressed concerns over the potential cost of using public buses for pupils losing access to school transport. This cost, however, will not arise if pupils register for the National Entitlement Card which allows all young people under 22 years of age to travel for free on public transport. This is also accepted on many school bus services where there is spare capacity.

- **The policy change would be taking away children and young people's independence going to and from school.**

Authority Response: Parents are currently responsible to ensure their child gets on to the bus provided. While some pupils will no longer have access to a school bus if this proposal is agreed, there are other ways to travel to school that can be used to prepare children for independent travel (walking/cycling/public transport), once they reach an age where their parent or carer assesses they are comfortable to undertake the journey unescorted. Around 83% of mainstream pupils live within current entitlement limits, and do not use fare-paying school bus services. So, the vast majority of parents/carers already ensure that their children get to and from school safely without any Council assistance and develop their independence over time.

- **Potential reduction in fare-paying capacity on school buses**

Authority Response: This outcome was signalled in the Proposal Document, but it became clear at the public meetings that further details were required to provide information to those who were likely to be affected. This was published during the consultation and can be viewed in [Appendix C](#). It is estimated that circa 600 pupils, currently accessing school buses as fare-payers (largely using the Under 22 National Entitlement Card), could lose their access to a school bus. To make the maximum financial savings, the school bus capacity would be reduced to fit to the number of pupils entitled to school transport based on the revised distances, with subsidised capacity for fare-paying pupils significantly reduced as a result.

6 WALKING ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Main Concerns over Walking Routes to School

The proposed change in transport entitlement distances opens up sections of the pedestrian network not yet fully assessed by the Council as possible walking routes to school. To understand where the key concerns would be, the following question was asked in the consultation survey:

"If you are a parent/carer affected by this proposal and have particular concerns about the route that you would walk with your child to school, please give details"

The responses to this question can be categorised as follows:

1. Routes of major concern from a large number of respondents that will be reviewed whether previously assessed as safe or not.
2. Routes highlighted by a small number of respondents that were considered for further investigation.
3. Routes not currently considered suitable, so are not included in walking route calculations anyway and no review is necessary

Note: Concerns raised over routes that are beyond the current and proposed distance limits were considered outwith the scope of this question, so have not been listed below.

1. Routes of Major Concern (7 routes)

The major areas of concern regarding specific walking routes to school are listed below.

- Drove Loan (Bonnybridge to Denny High School)

Respondents to both the survey and public meetings raised concerns over Drove Loan. Many respondents stated the Drove loan was an "unsafe walking route" for a variety of reasons: pavement too narrow; fast traffic; no suitable crossings, unlight road and debris on the pavement.

Authority Response: This route has long been established as a suitable walking route to school for calculating school transport entitlement. The current 2-mile entitlement boundary for Denny High School pupils living in Bonnybridge is calculated using this as the walking route between Bonnybridge and Denny High School.

The path along Drove Loan was assessed in 2009 when the Denny High School was rebuilt and relocated and walking routes to school were re-calculated. The Drove Loan route assessment was presented and discussed in [a report to the Education Committee in May 2009](#).

Later that year, following an appeal from a parent who disagreed with the assessment, an independent assessment was commissioned by a specialist consultant. This assessment confirmed the route as suitable for the calculation of walking distance to school.

With the level of concerns raised during this consultation over Drove Loan, a further assessment will be carried out to see whether there has been (or will be) any material change that would affect the previous route assessments.

- Salmon Inn Road/Gransable Road

Respondents highlighted the Salmon Inn Road and Gransable Road as unsafe. The following reasons were given: speed of cars; volume of traffic; multiple car accidents; narrow path; unsafe crossings and 3 lanes of traffic to cross.

Authority Response: The route along Salmon Inn Road down to the junction with the Polmont Road is already considered unsafe and excluded from the calculation of walking routes to St Margaret's Primary School.

Following concerns raised in this consultation about Polmont Road opening up as a walking route to Graeme High School for secondary pupils living 2-3 miles from school, the Gransable Road junction was assessed by a Roads engineer who concluded that the crossing is unsafe for accompanied children so, unless there is future investment to improve safety at this crossing, it will be excluded from the calculated walking route to Graeme High School.

- Torwood to Larbert Village

Residents from the Torwood area identified the following concerns: lack of pedestrian crossings on the A9; crossing 2 slip roads onto and off the M876, lack of street lighting, narrow pavements and speed and volume of traffic.

Authority Response: Following concerns raised about this opening up as a walking route to Larbert High School for secondary pupils living 2-3 miles from school, this route will be assessed by Roads engineers before a decision is taken on its eligibility as a suitable walking route.

- Bellsdyke Road

Speed of traffic and lack of safe crossings was highlighted by a number of parents of St Bernadette's pupils.

Authority Response: The route along Bellsdyke Road from the Inches/Kinnaird Village/Hill of Kinnaird is currently included in the calculated walking route to school. Following concerns raised, this section will be assessed by Roads engineers to confirm its eligibility as a suitable walking route.

- Redding Road (B805) and Redding Main Street

Respondents were concerned about the following: speed of traffic, volume of traffic, narrow pavements, pavements that haven't been tarmaced, overgrown shrubs and bushes, no safe crossing.

Authority Response: The route to Westquarter PS and Graeme HS along and across Redding Road is currently included in the calculated walking route to school. Following concerns raised, this section (including the route along Livingstone Terrace) will be assessed by Roads engineers to confirm its eligibility as a suitable walking route.

- Maddiston to Braes High School

A number of respondents raised concerns about the safety due to traffic levels and crossings points.

Authority Response: The route to Braes HS down from Maddiston is currently included in the calculated walking route to school. Following concerns raised following the potential withdrawal of the school bus along this route (currently provided for transport-entitled pupils and fare payers), this will be assessed by Roads engineers to confirm its eligibility as a suitable walking route.

- Letham to Airth PS

Concerns were raised by a number of respondents, including the Parent Council, over safety concerns around children walking along the pavement from Letham.

Authority Response: The route to Airth PS from Letham is currently included in the calculated walking route to school and pupils over 8 years old are not entitled to

free transport. Due to the number of concerns raised, this route will be re-assessed by Roads engineers to confirm its eligibility as a suitable walking route.

2. Other Routes highlighted in consultation responses (24 routes)

Of the 24 routes identified, initial assessments concluded that 19 did not require further assessment leaving 5 that would be the subject of further investigation

Routes that would not require further assessment:

The following 13 routes have well lit, well surfaced footpaths of sufficient width along their length with suitable crossing points where required:

- *Glenfuir Road*
- *Summerford and Windsor Road*
- *Longcroft to Denny HS along Glasgow Rd*
- *Glasgow Road to St Patrick's PS*
- *Ronades Road (to St Mungo's HS, St Francis Xavier's PS, and Falkirk HS)* – there is also footbridge at the Merchiston Roundabout end to cross the A9.
- *Kemper Avenue* - this footpath will also be resurfaced in the coming year.
- *Shieldhill Brae (the paths from Shieldhill down to Reddingmuirhead)*
- *Various streets in Slamannan Road area, through Lionthorn/Hallglen to St Andrew's PS*
- *Tryst Road*
- *Muirhall Road*
- *Gilston Crescent to St Margaret's PS* – the only section where there is no pavement (alongside Brechin Drive) can be easily avoided.
- *Station Road to St Margaret's PS*
- *Newlands Road and Brightons Main Street to Wallacestone PS*

The other 6 routes not requiring further investigation were:

- *Bainsford/Langlees to Falkirk HS* – No specific sections were mentioned apart from Rosebank Roundabout (see below) and canal paths, which are not included in walking route calculations. There are numerous options available to walk to Falkirk HS from Bainsford/Langlees on well lit footpaths through a built-up area with ample crossing points.
- *Bainsford/Langlees to St Mungo's HS/St Francis Xavier's PS* - No specific sections were mentioned apart from canal paths, which are not included in walking route calculations. There are numerous options available to walk to these 2 schools from Bainsford/Langlees on well lit footpaths through a built-up area with ample crossing points.
- *Carron Underpass* – There are no road safety issues associated with an underpass. Personal safety issues are not covered in safety assessments because it is assumed that children will be accompanied by an adult.
- *Etna Road* – There is one crossing point on Etna Road at the junction with Thornhill Road that is already excluded from the calculated walking route on grounds of safety. The remaining routes across and along Etna Road are well lit and considered safe.
- *Dennyloanhead to St Joseph's PS* - The pedestrian network from the Dennyloanhead side of Bonnybridge to St Joseph's PS is extensive and on well lit, well surfaced footpaths. No specific hazards have been identified.

- *Greenhill to St Joseph's PS* – the pedestrian network from Greenhill to St Josephs PS has previously been assessed as safe although Reilly Road is already excluded as unsafe for those coming from Upper Greenhill.

Routes where a further assessment will be carried out:

A route assessment will be carried out on the following 5 routes:

- *Dunmore to Airth* – A route assessment will be carried out
- *Rumford to Braes HS* – this will be covered in the Maddiston to Braes HS route assessment
- *Rosebank Roundabout, Camelon (St Mungo's HS, St Francis PS, Falkirk HS)* – All crossing points in the vicinity at and around the Rosebank roundabout will be looked at to determine whether any sections of the path network should be removed from the calculated safe walking route.
- *Benny T's Roundabout* – This was recently reviewed and the South side crossing deemed unsafe. The affected section of the path network has been removed from the calculated walking route to school
- *Jenkinson Drive to Westquarter PS* – This route has already been assessed as safe but will be included in the review of Redding Road (see above)

3. Routes highlighted that are not currently considered safe (11 routes)

Concerns were raised about the following routes, none of which are currently considered safe, therefore not included in the calculation of walking distance to school. School transport entitlement is not calculated using these paths. No review will be necessary for these routes.

- Callendar Park/Woods ((Hallglen to Graeme HS)
- Various canal paths (none are considered suitable)
- Bonnybridge to Denny HS via Golf Course & A883
- Chacefield Woods (to Denny HS)
- Grangemouth Old Town to Beancross PS and Grangemouth HS via the Earls Gate Roundabout (this route is not included due to the Forth-Clyde Way crossing point).
- Airth Woods
- Reilly Road, Bonnybridge
- California to Braes HS
- Fankerton to Denny HS/Denny PS/St Patrick's PS
- B8028 to Braes HS
- Kilns Road/Bleachfield to St Mungo's HS/St Francis PS

7 REPORT BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND

Legislative Duty Under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, Education Scotland (formerly Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) must prepare a report on the educational aspects of the proposal out to consultation.

Summary of Report The report (dated April 2023) can be read in full at the [Education Scotland website](#). Section 4 of the Education Report summarises their findings and conclusions as follows:

“Falkirk Council has identified the need to make financial savings through aligning their school transport arrangements more closely with Scottish Government's School Transport Guidance 2021. They state that if they do not proceed with this proposal, it would have an adverse impact on the level of resources that can be allocated to their schools. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal is in line with national guidance and statutory walking distances. However, almost all stakeholders have raised significant concerns should the proposal be approved. These concerns include whether there are safe routes to school and sufficient public transport to meet any increase in demand. Stakeholders raised concerns about a potential negative impact on pupils' attendance and attainment and on those of Roman Catholic faith. They are also worried that the proposal may disproportionately impact on those families who are already experiencing disadvantage. Should the proposal proceed, the council should work with stakeholders to find ways to mitigate these potential issues. HM Inspectors agree there are potential benefits to more active form of travel to school. However, overall, HM Inspectors do not consider that the council have sufficiently demonstrated that the potential educational benefits from this proposal outweigh the concerns raised by stakeholders. It will be important for the council to undertake equality and poverty impact assessments and consider climate change implications to inform whether to proceed with this proposal.”

Recommendations of HM Inspectors The main recommendations to the Council for further consideration are as follows:

- With reference to the resourcing and financial pressures facing schools: **“The Council may wish to provide further information on the impact of not proceeding in their final report.”**

Authority Response: The report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive (where a decision will be made on the proposal) will include full details of the financial implications. The advice of HM Inspectors is noted in this respect.

- With reference to the educational benefits associated with increased participation in active travel set out in the proposal: **“HM Inspectors recommend that the Council provides clearer evidence to support the proposal before the Council makes its final decision.”**

Authority Response: The report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive will contain further information (and evidence where it is available) on the benefits of Active Travel, to support whatever decision is made. A revised and expanded Education Benefits Statement is attached as Appendix D.

- **“HM Inspectors agree with the Council that they should fully re- assess, re-organise and plan the future provision of school bus services ahead of a proposed implementation date.”**

Authority Response: If the proposal is agreed, the provision of revised school bus services will be fully planned, arranged and communicated to the affected school

communities before any proposed implementation date. If necessary, a phased approach can be recommended/taken to allow for this.

- With reference to:
 - concerns over safe walking routes;
 - potential impact on pre-school and after-school activities;
 - concerns over potential bullying on route to school;
 - concerns over pupils arriving at school too tired to learn;**“HM Inspectors recommend that the Council work with stakeholders to mitigate these concerns”**

Authority Response: Work to mitigate concerns over safe walking routes is already ongoing and will be complete before any proposal is implemented. Any decision to go forward with this proposal will be accompanied by an ongoing commitment to work with schools, pupils and their families to mitigate the other concerns highlighted by HM Inspectors.

- **“It will be important for the council to undertake equality and poverty impact assessments and consider climate change implications to inform whether to proceed with this proposal.”**

Authority Response: Both of these important considerations will be fully covered in the report to the Education, Children and Young People Executive who will decide on this matter.

- With reference to concerns that lack of public transport will lead to increased absenteeism and lateness, and suggestions that a revision of school start and finish times should be considered: **“If the Council takes forward this proposal, they need to consider further potential impact on all stakeholders.”**

Authority Response: If the proposal is agreed, then Children's Services will monitor attendance closely at all of the schools affected by reduced school transport availability. If there is any measurable disruption to attendance as a consequence, then the Authority will work quickly with the affected school to mitigate and resolve. Revised start and finish times can certainly be considered if likely to be effective in resolving this.

- With reference to concerns expressed by the denominational school community and Roman Catholic Church: **“HM Inspectors recommend that the Council work closely with the Diocese and families from denominational schools to alleviate their concerns prior to making its final decision.”**

Authority Response: The Authority will meet with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church/Community to discuss these concerns before any final recommendations are made.

APPENDIX A: Written Responses

A full transcript of the written responses is available as a separate document:

APPENDIX B: Minutes of Public Meetings Held

The minutes of the 4 public meetings held during the consultation are available as a separate document:

APPENDIX C: Potential school bus service reductions

NOTE: this document was published during the consultation at the request of stakeholders.

- The table below gives an estimate of the number of pupils that would lose entitlement to free bus transport following proposed changes to the qualifying distance criteria.
- It also identifies those services that may be withdrawn should this proposal be accepted.
- Included is the estimated number of pupils not currently to free school transport who use these services on a 'fare paying' basis (including the use of the U22 concession card) who would also be affected by the withdrawal of these services.

School	Localities Affected	Estimated Pupils losing distance entitlement	Estimated Fare Paying (U22 Card) Pupils using Services	School Bus Services that may be withdrawn
Airth PS	Letham	10	10	602 Letham
Antonine	Bonnybridge	0	5	175 Dennyloanhead
Bantaskin PS	Tamfourhill	12	23	197 Tamfourhill
Beancross PS	Grangemouth Old Town	39	0	188 Old Town
Bo'ness Academy	Kinneil, Maidenpark	0	20	661 Jamieson Ave
Braes HS	Maddiston, Shieldhill	51 50	89 0	641 Maddiston 142 Shieldhill
Comely Park PS	Lionthorn/Slamannan Rd	14	16	179 Lionthorn
Denny HS	Bonnybridge, Dennyloanhead, Longcroft, Haggs	68 31 47 43 70	7 44 0 0 0	611 Gateside Ave 612 Bonnybridge Rd 618 Longcroft 169 Greenhill Rd 171 Reilly Rd
Falkirk HS	Bainsford, Langlees, Lionthorn, Slamannan Rd	0 45 77	40 30 0	149 Lionthorn 194 Bainsford 195 Langlees
Graeme HS	Redding, Polmont, Hallglen, Lionthorn	38 70 55 18 0	12 0 15 22 50	621 Polmont Park 622 Gilston Park (one bus) 623 Canalside Drive 628 Lionthorn 628 Hallglen
Grange PS	Charles Snedden Estate	7	**	661 Jamieson Avenue
Grangemouth HS	Grangemouth Old Town	34	0	174 Old Town
Sacred Heart PS	Grangemouth Old Town	7	0	188 Old Town
St Andrew's PS	Redding, Laurieston, The Bog, Hallglen, Lionthorn	6	**	697 The Bog
St Bernadette's PS	Larbert	30	15	601 Larbert
St Mary's PS	Bo'ness	0	5	661 Jamieson Avenue
St Francis PS	Langlees, Bainsford, Middlefield, Camelon, Tamfourhill	20 20	10 20	186 Alexander Ave/Langlees 671 Ochiltree / Tamfourhill
St Joseph's PS	Bonnybridge	9	**	175 Dennyloanhead
St Margaret's PS	Polmont, Gilston park	42	23	625 Polmont Park
St Mungo's HS	Camelon, Tamfourhill, Stenhousemuir, Larbert, Carronshore, Laurieston, Hallglen, Lionthorn	11 ** 60 48 26 45	29 22 15 12 0 15	186 Alexander Avenue/Langlees 671 Ochiltree / Tamfourhill 677 Larbert Cross 679 Lionthorn 681 Hallglen Other services that may be reduced
Wallacestone PS	Wallacestone Brae	6	**	627 Newlands Rd
Westquarter PS	Canalside Drive, Jarvie Road	37	43	608 Canalside Drive
Total		*1149	604	33 bus services in total

*As this table is focussed on specific bus routes, the estimated pupils losing entitlement is less than the total number referred to in previous documents. **less than 5 pupils

Falkirk Council Place Services, March 2023

APPENDIX D: Education Benefits Statement

NOTE: This is an updated Education Benefits Statement produced in response to the request from Education Scotland that the Council provides clearer evidence to support the proposal before a decision is taken.

Policy and Legislative Background

This proposal will provide a range of educational benefits and enhance the Council's efforts to meet obligations enshrined in:

- the Education (Scotland) Act 1980;
- the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000;
- the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003;
- the Equality Act 2010;
- the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014; and.
- School Transport Guidance 2021

The proposal is aligned with UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 3 which affirms that 'in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'.

The Scottish Government is committed to a long term vision for active travel that encourages promotes walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing in preference to single occupancy car use for movement of people, and encourages efficient and sustainable freight.

Benefits of active travel

- The World Health Organisation reported that walking for 30 minutes or cycling for 20 minutes on most days reduces mortality risk by at least 10%.
- Active commuting is associated with an approximate 10% decrease in risk for cardiovascular disease and a 30% decrease in type 2 diabetes risk.
- Cancer-related mortality is 30% lower among bike commuters.
- The Scottish Health Survey of 2021 identified 28% of children at risk of being overweight. An active lifestyle combined with a healthy diet can help to reduce this.
- Improve focus – in one study, brain activity in the areas of focus and attention were increased following a period of walking. Walking to school can therefore improve focus on school activities.
- Walking has been found to improve people's mood and develop creativity
- Building relationships with those you walk with. Whether it be a group of friends or family, spending time walking together can help build relationships as people talk about their day or other things that are on their mind.
- Reducing the number of people taking car or bus journeys can help to improve our air quality.
- Increased social cohesion – for those children that do not have the required sense of road safety to walk unaccompanied, parents or carers may have to accompany their children on the journey to and from school. In other local authorities, many parents have benefitted from sharing this with a group of other parents whose children live near them. This has reduced the impact on individuals, led to increased connections with neighbours, and an increased sense of community.
- A walking survey in 2021 found that participation was lower amongst residents of the 10% most deprived areas.

Dis-benefits of active travel

- Journey time – for some, the journey to school time will increase if not travelling by bus. This may result in an earlier start to the day for some, as they plan for their journey taking longer.
- Inclement weather – weather in the West of Scotland is frequently inclement, resulting in families having to equip children and young people for wet and windy weather. This may increase financial pressure on households.
- Some benefits are only realised if children and young people swap the passive bus journey for an active means of getting to school

Eco-Schools Programme

The Eco-Schools Scotland programme encourages schools to engage with children and young people to develop opportunities for active travel. The programme promotes:

- encouraging and enabling parents and children to walk, cycle and use public transport
- setting up a working group with school, parent, local authority, community, police, and transport representatives to run a school travel or 'safer routes to school' project
- writing and implementing a school travel plan
- running an effective road safety awareness programme for pupils
- raising awareness of the damage caused by transport to the environment and people's health, and
- providing adequate support and information about travelling to school for pupils and staff who wish to walk, cycle or use public transport.

Affected schools will be encouraged to revisit their school travel plan to encourage an increased uptake of active travel.