

Dear Parent / Guardian

Free School Bus Passes: 2018 Consultation

I am writing to you to ensure that you know of a consultation that is being undertaken over proposals to reduce the number of free school bus passes that are issued each year.

Stockport Council is facing financial challenges which means we have to save £47 million pounds over the next four years. Due to our financial position we have difficult decisions to make when allocating and prioritising public spending. We have already managed savings of over £100 million pounds in recent years, whilst continuing to deliver services and value for money to the residents of Stockport.

To balance the budget, one of the steps the Council is proposing is to reduce the number of free school bus passes that are currently made available by taking these steps:

- Reduce the current entitlement so that only pupils whose parents/guardians are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit qualify for free bus passes. This minimum statutory entitlement is what happens in all other Greater Manchester Councils already.
- Remove faith schools from the qualifying eligibility criteria, in favour of the nearest School to the pupil's home address with places available.
- Remove from the qualifying criteria faith schools outside of the Borough, whose particular offer cannot be provided for within Borough boundaries.

Please be assured that the statutory entitlement for children who are in receipt of Free School Meals whose journey to their school is more than two miles will continue to be able to apply for a free school bus pass. However some pupils who attend a faith school and currently have a bus pass may lose their entitlement if all these proposals are taken forward. The new criteria outlined above is proposed to apply to free school bus pass applications with effect from September 2019.

We are committed to consulting and engaging with Stockport residents and other stakeholders to inform the way we work in the future and to assess any impact these decisions may have. Feedback we receive will be used to shape our approaches to help reduce any negative impacts as far as possible.

The school bus pass consultation is now live on the Council website and here is a link to <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/haveyoursay>. If you need a paper copy of the questionnaire please email to schools.organisation@stockport.gov.uk

Please ensure we receive your views by **25th January 2019**. It is important that we receive your views by this date as all feedback will be pulled together into a report which will then be considered by the Scrutiny Committees and the Council's Cabinet meeting in February.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Bell MA(Ed) BA(hons) Head of Commissioning School Places