# Teen pupil raises alarm over school transport policy changes



At a recent Richmond area committee meeting held at County Hall in Northallerton, a 15-year-old pupil, Oscar Kendall, shared his concerns regarding proposed changes to the school transport policy implemented by North Yorkshire Council. Accompanied by concerned parents and armed with a petition, Oscar highlighted the significant impact these changes could have on his education, potentially forcing him to restart his General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) studies.

Oscar, who has been granted permission by both his headteacher and his mother to attend the meeting, expressed his worry that his family’s recent move from Whaw in Arkengarthdale to Reeth would affect his free transport eligibility to Richmond School. The new policy stipulates that the council will only pay for transport to a pupil's nearest school, which, in Oscar's case, appears to be Wensleydale School in Leyburn—approximately four miles from his new residence. This shift, he argued, could disrupt his current coursework as Wensleydale does not offer all the GCSE courses that he is currently studying at Richmond.

Oscar articulated the gravity of his situation, stating, “Changing of schools during my GCSE coursework would be detrimental to not only my current education but future career aspects.” He further emphasised that the council's decision to impose additional financial burdens on families, particularly with regards to transport to their local catchment school, was “unwarranted and unfair.”

The council's policy change has sparked widespread concern among parents. Carol Livingstone, a parent at the meeting, voiced her apprehension about hundreds of mothers potentially feeling compelled to abandon their careers to facilitate the school runs necessitated by the new transport rules. She remarked, “And let's just be clear about this, it is mostly mums that will suffer from this decision,” directing her question towards female councillors, challenging their support for the policy.

Despite claims from council officials that the policy alteration could generate savings of approximately £4.2 million, Richmond councillor Stuart Parsons contested this figure, projecting a potential financial loss for North Yorkshire schools of £4.7 million annually. He noted that about 750 pupils' closest schools would fall beyond the boundaries of the county.

Amanda Newbold, the assistant director for education and skills, defended the policy change by describing the previous 'catchment' criterion for free travel as a discretionary practice. She clarified, “The concept of catchment does not appear in the Department for Education guidance for home-to-school travel,” pointing out inconsistencies in catchment areas across various schools within the current education system. She assured attendees that individual circumstances, such as Oscar's, would be factored into reassessments of eligibility for transport.

The council members concluded the meeting without committing to any immediate actions regarding the petition, as the transport policy is scheduled for discussion in an extraordinary meeting called by opposition councillors from the Liberal Democrats. Councillor Roberta Swiers, who chairs the authority, has approved this discussion, which is set to take place on May 21.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport> - This URL provides information about North Yorkshire Council's school and college transport policies, which are central to the concerns raised by Oscar Kendall and other parents regarding changes to the transport policy.
* <https://sendiassnorthyorkshire.co.uk/transport-to-school-or-college/> - This URL explains the eligibility criteria for free school transport in North Yorkshire, including factors such as distance and special educational needs, which are relevant to Oscar's situation.
* <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport/school-transport-reception-year-11-children> - This URL details the eligibility criteria for free school transport for children from reception to year 11, including the statutory walking distances and considerations for special needs, which are pertinent to the concerns about the policy change.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the original article about Oscar Kendall's concerns regarding the school transport policy changes in North Yorkshire.
* <https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/publications/travel-to-school-for-children-of-compulsory-school-age> - This URL provides Department for Education guidance on travel to school for children of compulsory school age, which includes information on eligibility criteria that Amanda Newbold referenced during the meeting.