

Agenda Item 4: Extra-Curricular School Transport Grants

Current Grants Policy wording:

4.5 School Transport Grants

- a. School Transport Grants will be awarded to fund transport costs on extra-curricular school trips for children qualifying for free school meals (Local Government Act 1972, s.137).
- b. School Transport Grants will only be awarded to schools and will be paid directly to the supplier upon receipt of a valid invoice.
- c. For 2026-2027, the School Transport Grants budget is £10000. This is 2% of our overall budget of £503400.
- d. School Transport Grant requests will be considered at the next scheduled meeting of Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council.

In practice:

- Each Free School Meal (FSM) pupil is allocated £21.50 of funding.
- We must pay the invoices directly as we should not be paying schools.

Example 1:	Example 2:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A school forwards an invoice for a coach costing £60• They state that 2 FSM pupils are on this trip• We should be paying £43 towards this trip, but must pay the full £60• This £17 overspend is taken from their funding pot, despite not being used for FSM pupils• If this pattern continued, it is likely that a significant amount of their funding would not be allocated for the benefit of FSM pupils and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A school forwards an invoice for £400• They state that 22 FSM pupils are on this trip• We should be paying £473 towards this trip, but can only pay £400• We now 'owe' the school £73 from their funding pot, but it is not guaranteed that future trips will balance the amount

Options:

- The Finance & Governance Committee discussed the possibility of us being invoiced separately – i.e. we receive an invoice for the amount we owe (such as £43 in example 1) and the school receives one for the remainder.
 - However, this requires more work on the school and the suppliers, and doesn't solve the issue in example 2.
- The grant could open to cover non-FSM pupils, and the amounts would need to be adjusted to reflect the total amount of pupils in each school.
- The grant could be removed from our grants offering.

The grant budget line also needs to be moved to the 'Section 137' budget, as there is no specific power enabling council to provide these grants.