

FAO: School Principal

Dear Sir/Madam,

Changes to SSTS applications and the introduction of the School Opal card.

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) gives eligible students free or subsidised travel between home and school, on the approved train, bus or ferry services.

From term one 2016, Transport for NSW will be issuing School Opal cards to students eligible for travel under the School Student Transport Scheme via a new online application process.

The introduction of the new School Opal card and online application form will provide significant benefits for schools:

Automatic renewal

Most parents, guardians and students won't need to apply for a School Opal card if they have already been given a school student travel pass and will automatically receive a School Opal card in 2016.

However, parents, guardians and students will need to apply if the student:

- is just starting school and has not had a pass before
- is in a transition year (i.e., year 2 to 3, or 6 to 7)
- is changing schools, including going between primary and secondary school
- or, if the student's personal details have changed (e.g. address).

Reduced distribution

While School Opal cards will automatically sent to schools for existing pass holders for distribution for travel in term one, all new applications received for travel from the start of 2016 will be sent directly to the student's nominated address.

Online application form

Schools will no longer need to keep the SSTS application form as parents, guardians and students can go online from 2 November 2015 to complete their application form, print it out and return it to the school.

Fewer forms

Schools will only need to endorse a single application form for each student's eligible address and send it to a single address (Locked Bag 5085, Parramatta 2124) even if they are applying for multiple services.

Simplified replacement process

Schools won't need to endorse additional applications for lost, stolen or damaged passes, as parents, guardians and students simply need to visit www.transportnsw.info/school-students or call 131 500 to order a

new School Opal card. Schools can continue to follow their current processes for students who have lost their pass.

Online eligibility assessment

The new online application portal will automatically assess eligibility based on distance rules.

Same eligibility rules

The eligibility rules for subsidised school travel remain the same for travel inside and outside the Opal network. Students may need to live a minimum distance away their school:

- Years K-2 (Infants) there's no minimum distance.
- Years 3-6 (Primary) 1.6km straight line distance or 2.3km walking distance or further.
- Years 7-12 (Secondary) 2.0km straight line distance or 2.9km walking distance or further.

Schools can find out more about the School Student Transport Scheme at transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/schools

How you can help?

- Display the enclosed poster on the school noticeboard.
- Distribute the flyers to students and parents.
- Encourage applicants to go online to apply for 2016 travel in the Opal network via your communication channels. The application is available at transportnsw.info/school-students. Paper forms that have already been completed and submitted to Transport for NSW or a transport operator will be processed and do not need to be resubmitted.
- Responsibly dispose of any remaining blue SSTS application forms.
- Add digital tiles and banners to add to your website when they arrive via email.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Passes and Schemes on 02 9891 8900 or 1800 227 774.

Thank you for your support.

Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW

Fact sheet: The School Opal card

Who's eligible?

To be eligible for a School Opal card, students need to be NSW residents and may need to live a minimum distance away from their school:

- Years K-2 (Infants) there's no minimum distance.
- Years 3-6 (Primary) 1.6km straight line distance or 2.3km walking or further.
- Years 7-12 (Secondary) 2.0km straight line distance or 2.9km walking or further.

Students completing secondary studies at TAFE, boarding school students and students temporarily in Australia may also be eligible for a School Opal card. The eligibility criteria for these students is available at transportnsw.info/school-students.

A School Opal card is provided to eligible students who need to travel within the Opal network. Paper travel passes are issued to eligible students who need to travel outside the Opal network.

Who needs to apply?

Most students or parents won't need to apply for the School Opal card. The School Opal card will be sent to a student's school automatically at the beginning of the new school year in 2016.

However, a new application is required if:

- The student is just starting school or has not had a pass for travel before.
- The student is progressing from Year 2 to 3, or Year 6 to 7.
- The student is changing schools, including going between primary and secondary school.
- The student's personal details have changed (e.g. address).

Applications must be made by a parent or guardian for children aged 15 years and under. Applications must be made by the student if aged 16 years or older.

How to apply

Step 1 Complete the application at transportnsw.info/school-students.

Step 2 Print, sign and submit the form to the school for endorsement.

Step 3 The school will then forward the application to Transport for NSW for processing. Once approved, Transport for NSW sends the School Opal card to the home address given in the application.

The application may take several weeks and the applicant's email address is required.

If the student doesn't qualify for free travel

They may be eligible for a Term Bus Pass which offers travel on buses between home and school at a discounted rate for the whole school term.

Apply at transportnsw.info/school-students.

Find out more

For more information on the School Opal card and the School Student Travel Scheme (SSTS), please visit transportnsw.info/school-students.