

School Opal card

Frequently asked questions

For schools staff

Application

1. When do applications for 2016 commence?

Online applications for School Opal cards for travel in 2016 will be accepted from 2 November, and are accepted all year round for travel in that school year. The application form can be found at www.transportnsw.info/school-students.

2. Is the School Opal card replacing the School Student Transport Scheme?

School Opal cards will be provided to eligible students as part of Transport for NSW's School Student Transport Scheme, one of the most generously subsidised travel programs in Australia, providing more than \$550 million to fund around 80 million trips taken by NSW school students to and from school annually. Through this scheme Transport for NSW helps get students to school and home safely, and helps keep cars off the road at peak periods.

3. Will parents, guardians and students need to apply for the School Opal card for 2016 if they hold a current 2015 school travel pass?

Most students who already have a school student travel pass don't need to apply for the School Opal card. A card will be automatically issued and sent to the student's school at the beginning of the school year in 2016.

An application is only needed if the student is eligible for SSTS travel, is travelling between home and school within the Opal network, and:

- has not had a travel pass before
- is moving from Year 2 to Year 3 (change to the minimum walking distance eligibility)
- is moving from Year 6 to Year 7 (change to the minimum walking distance eligibility)
- is changing school or campus
- is changing address
- as a result of a new shared parental responsibility situation.

4. Who should apply for the School Opal card?

Parents, guardians and students should apply for the School Opal card if the student is travelling between home and school within the Opal network and meets the SSTS [eligibility criteria](#) and:

- has not had a travel pass before
- is moving from Year 2 to Year 3 (change to the minimum walking distance eligibility)
- is moving from Year 6 to Year 7 (change to the minimum walking distance eligibility)
- is changing school or campus
- is changing address
- as a result of a new shared parental responsibility situation.



5. What is the application process for a School Opal card?

Applicants will need an email address to complete the form.

Step 1. Parents/guardians (or students aged 16 or over) first fill in the online application form at www.transportnsw.info/school-students.

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

Step 3. The school will then forward the application to Transport for NSW for processing. If the application is approved a School Opal card will be sent to the address given in the application form.

The application process may take several weeks. Students will be informed of the outcome of their application by email.

For the 2016 school year, the previous (blue) paper application form is no longer applicable, but any paper form already submitted prior to the end of the 2015 school year will be accepted by Transport for NSW.

6. What is the application process for travel outside the Opal network?

Parents, guardians and students cannot apply online at this stage and should obtain a paper application form available from their school or TAFE.

A separate application must be lodged for each part of the journey taken with a different transport operator. For example, a journey on a bus and a train requires two applications; however, a journey on two separate services run by the same operator requires only one application.

If the application is successful, the school travel pass(es) will be issued by the transport operator and sent to the schools for distribution.

7. What is the application process for students travelling both inside and outside the Opal network?

Students travelling inside and outside the Opal network will need to follow the application process for both a School Opal card and a school travel pass. Schools should send the endorsed School Opal card application form to Transport for NSW and the endorsed Application Form for Subsidised Travel and Update of Student Details to the appropriate operator.

8. What travel pass will a student receive if their school is within the Opal network, but home isn't? Or vice versa?

Eligible students will need to make two applications, an online application for the transport operator(s) in the Opal network and a paper application form for each transport operator outside the Opal network (forms are available at your school or TAFE). They will receive both a School Opal card for travel within the Opal network, and a school travel pass for travel outside the Opal network.

9. What elements of the application form are schools required to endorse?

Schools are only required to endorse the enrolment status and home address of the student. Schools are not required to endorse the nominated transport mode and operator. Transport NSW is responsible for managing SSTS compliance.

10. Where should schools send the application forms?

School Opal card: From 2 November, schools should send all completed applications for travel within the Opal network to Transport for NSW.

**Transport for NSW
Parramatta Office**
Locked Bag 5085
Parramatta NSW 2124

Outside the Opal network: Schools should continue to send all completed applications for travel outside the Opal network to the appropriate transport operator.

11. Can schools complete the application on behalf of parents, guardians and students?

No. Parents, guardians and students over 16 years of age will need to complete the application themselves as they will be required to accept the terms and conditions of the School Opal card or their school travel pass.

Eligibility

12. Who is eligible for a School Opal card or school travel pass?

To be eligible students need to live at least a minimum distance away from their school:

- Years K-2 (Infants) there's no minimum distance
- Years 3-6 (Primary) 1.6km radius or 2.3km walking distance or further
- Years 7-12 (Secondary) 2.0km radius or 2.9km walking distance or further
- TAFE students (under 18 years of age at 1 January of the year of application and enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 20 hours a week, and is not employed) 3.2km walking distance or further.

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

Before applying, customers should visit www.transportnsw.info/school-students to see if the student may be eligible.

13. Have the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) eligibility rules changed with Opal?

No, eligibility rules have not changed.

14. Will eligibility be assessed as part of the online application process?

Yes. When a parent, guardian or student completes the application form online, they will be advised if they are eligible based on distance. They will also be provided with recommendations for other products, such as the term bus pass, Child/Youth Opal card or on how to apply for an exemption or review.

15. Are there any alternatives to the School Opal card?

Students who are not eligible for SSTS passes may be eligible to purchase a term bus pass by going online at www.transportnsw.info/school-students or they can acquire a Child/Youth Opal card from over 2000 retailers, online at opal.com.au or by calling 13 67 25 (13 OPAL).

16. What is the difference between a Child/Youth Opal card and a School Opal card?

The School Opal card is provided to eligible students under the School Student Transport Scheme which provides subsidised public transport travel for eligible students between home and school.

The Child/Youth Opal card is available for children for use on weekends and school holidays. It can also be used by children not eligible for School Opal card or a term bus pass for travel to and from school. It is available for children aged 4-15 years inclusive and fulltime NSW/ACT students aged 16 years and over. Child/Youth fares are priced at 50% of full fare adult Opal rates, rounded down wherever necessary.

17. What is a term bus pass?

The School Student Term Bus Pass is a subsidised travel pass for travel between home and school on school days. It is offered to primary school students residing within a 1.6km radial distance from the school attended or secondary school students residing within a 2.0km radial distance from the school attended. Applications for term bus passes within the Opal network can be made online at www.transportnsw.info/school-students and to operators for travel outside the Opal network.

18. How does TfNSW calculate the distance from home to school? What tool will be used for this calculation?

Transport for NSW uses a geographical mapping tool to determine the radial and walking distances between a student's school and home.

19. How will shared parental responsibility arrangements be managed?

School Opal cards can be enabled for travel to multiple eligible addresses, for example, to support shared parental responsibility arrangements. A student will only be required to travel with a single School Opal card although two applications will be required advising of the separate addresses and possible multiple transport operators. The policy on travel passes for students who reside at multiple addresses remains unchanged and parents and guardians will be able to make these applications online at www.transportnsw.info/school-students.

20. What proof of entitlement to travel will School Opal card holders be required to carry?

School Opal card holders will not be required to carry any other proofs of entitlement when travelling between home and school using the School Opal card.

Fulfilment

21. How will School Opal cards be issued to students?

Most students who already have a 2015 school student travel pass will have their School Opal card automatically issued and sent to the student's school at the beginning of the school year in 2016.

School Opal cards for new applications, students with a change of school, campus or personal details, or students who going from year 2 to year 3 or year 6 to year 7, will be sent to a student's nominated address.

22. What information will be printed on the School Opal card?

The student's first and last name is the only personal information that will be printed on the School Opal card.

Travelling with Opal

23. Where can students travel with their School Opal card?

The School Opal card will be valid for use between home and school on approved bus, train and ferry services, including public routes. It should only be used on school days between the student's home and school. Students must comply with the Student Code of Conduct when travelling.

24. What are the travel times for school students using a School Opal card?

A School Opal card should only be used for approved travel on school days between the student's home and school, and only covers travel commencing between 06:30 and 19:00 weekdays.

For travel outside these times customers should use a Child/Youth Opal card or paper ticket.

25. Will students be able to use a single School Opal card for all approved transport modes?

Yes, students will be able to use a single School Opal card which has been activated for travel between home and school on approved bus, train and ferry services, including public routes within the Opal network.

26. Will students be expected to tap on and off when travelling with the School Opal card?

Yes, students must tap on and off when travelling with the School Opal card.

27. How will students know what route they need to be on?

Customers can use the TfNSW online tools to help determine their route to nominate when applying for a School Opal card. Transport for NSW will continue to work with schools and operators to help students know which bus to use.

28. Will the School Opal card be enabled to allow students access to two different operators?

Yes, the School Opal card will be enabled to allow students access to the appropriate approved operators to support their travel requirements.

29. What happens if a student uses a different Opal card when travelling, e.g. their Child/Youth Opal card?

If a student uses a Child/Youth Opal card instead of their School Opal card when travelling between home and school the fare will be deducted from the value on their Child/Youth Opal card. If the student taps on with one card and taps off with another a default fare will be incurred on the Child/Youth Opal card for an incomplete journey.

30. Are School Opal cards transferrable?

No, each School Opal card is issued to a specific student and is printed with the eligible student's name. Students should advise Transport for NSW of any change in school or home address so Transport for NSW can update the travel entitlement on the School Opal card.

31. Can students add value to School Opal cards for personal travel?

No, value can't be added to the School Opal card as this is a free travel pass. For personal travel students should use the appropriate Opal card, such as a Child/Youth Opal card, with sufficient value on it to travel.

32. What kind of Language assistance is provided by TfNSW and where can this be found?

Customers who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment can contact Transport for NSW through the National Relay Service on 133 677.

For customers requiring help in their language, they can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

33. Where can students find out more information about the Assisted School Travel Program?

Students with disability who are unable to travel to and from school under the Transport for NSW's School Student Transport Scheme may be eligible for transport assistance under the Department of Education and Communities' Assisted School Travel Program (ASTP). For further information on the program, please refer to

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/programs/astp/index.php>

34. What happens if a student's School Opal card is lost, stolen or damaged?

To report a lost, stolen or damaged School Opal card, phone 131 500 or email concessions@transport.nsw.gov.au opens in new window quoting the student's name, address and school.

A card replacement fee may apply.

Questions?

Contact: www.transportnsw.info/school-students or 131 500

