



GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TRAVELLING ON HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Only vehicles licensed as hackney carriage, private hire vehicle or public service vehicle and licensed operators are used for conveying children on home to school transport.

- 1. Home to school transport is provided from the child's home address (i.e. main place of residence) to school and vice-versa.** No variation to this journey can be accommodated without the prior authorisation of the Transport Team at County Hall.

Variations may only be agreed in circumstances where the contractor is willing to vary the journey, there is no increase in cost and there is no appreciable time penalty for other children on the journey.

If a contractor agrees to a temporary variation of the route but wishes to make a charge, the Transport Team will only agree if the parent/carer or some other agency covers the full additional cost of alternative arrangements.

If, following a parental request, the contractor is unable to vary a journey, the Transport Team will make every effort to place the child on an alternative route if this can be done at no extra cost. If this cannot be done, then transport can only be provided to and from the home address or other previously agreed pick-up/set-down point.

- 2.** Prior to the commencement of each school year, parents/carers will be informed of the transport arrangements for their child including the name and telephone number of the contractor, pick-up times, and escort allocated to the journey (if applicable).

The Autumn Term (September) is always hectic and it is likely that pick-up times/drop-off times will be estimated for some journeys. Parents/carers will therefore need to exercise some flexibility at the start of the term until journeys settle into a regular pattern.

- 3.** When the vehicle arrives in the morning, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to have the child ready for collection at the home address or agreed pick-up point. The parent/carer must take the child from the house to the vehicle.
- 4.** The NSPCC have suggested as good practice that children under the age of 13 years do not have the maturity to manage the responsibility of being left alone and this may be the case, even with older children, if they have a physical disability or have a learning disability. In order to safeguard the pupil and to protect escorts and drivers it is important for all pupils on home to school transport to be handed over to a responsible person at the end of the school day.

If a parent/carer is not at home to receive their child, escorts/drivers will notify Metro and the Transport Team who will then attempt to contact the parent/carer on the telephone numbers provided. However, if the Team cannot locate the parent/carer then we may have no alternative but to contact Social Care Direct (Tel No 0845 8 503 503) to obtain advice as to the location to which the child should be taken. The escort/driver will then be notified accordingly. If this does happen then it will be the parent/carer's responsibility to collect their child from the appropriate location.

- 5.** All journeys are subject to change at any time during the school year. This could include:
 - adding extra children;
 - removing children;
 - splitting a single journey into two separate journeys.

If this happens we will let you know. The timetabling of transport cannot always be arranged to fit in with parents'/carers' domestic arrangements.

6. If a child is not at the pick-up point at the appointed time in the morning, the transport will proceed on its route without undue delay. If a child is persistently late, then the driver/escort will wait for 3 minutes only and then proceed. It will then be the responsibility of the parent/carer to take the child to school.
7. Children should be encouraged to remain in their seats and seats belts must be worn at all times whilst travelling on the vehicle. Failure to comply may result in children being withdrawn from home to school transport on grounds of health and safety.
8. Escorts will usually be provided on journeys where it has been deemed necessary by the Special Educational Needs Group and/or the school being attended.
9. If a child does not attend school for any reason, e.g. illness, family arrangements, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the Contractor and the Transport Team as soon as possible, to avoid any unnecessary journeys being undertaken. You must also let the contractor and the Transport Team know when the child is well enough to return to school.
10. If a child refuses to board a vehicle or absconds from the vehicle neither the escort nor driver should give chase or attempt to restrain the child in any way. Instead, escorts should verbally advise the pupil to return to the vehicle. If the pupil refuses to do this, then the escort should attempt to track where the child is (where this is possible).

The escort should then immediately inform the school and Transport Team who in turn will notify the parents/carer and the Police (if appropriate).



If there are other children in the vehicle the escort will remain with these children.

If a child becomes aggressive whilst in the vehicle placing others at risk the escort and driver will need to make an informed decision about the safest way of continuing with the journey. If the escort/driver feels it is unsafe to continue they may return the pupil to their home address or to the school (whichever is appropriate) and the parent/carer will be notified accordingly.

11. At the start of the term, parent/carer are issued with a Pupil Information form, which you are requested to complete and return in order that we can update our records should we need to contact you in an emergency. If your child has any medical condition that may require treatment on the journey or any other information you wish to disclose, it is important that you include full details on the form. As your child may be in the care of pupil escorts (where appropriate), it would be helpful for them to have a copy of this information in case there are any problems on the journey and it is, therefore, important that you complete, sign and return the form to the Transport Team.
12. Occasionally, it may be necessary for you to send items from home to school, via the Escort, such as correspondence, money or medicines. If this is the case then items such as correspondence or money should be placed in a sealed envelope clearly marked with the child's name as well as the name of the person receiving the item. Please avoid sending cash, wherever possible.

Similarly medicines should be marked with the child's name and placed in a bag clearly displaying the child's name. The escort will then ensure the bag is kept out of reach of children whilst on the vehicle and delivered to the appropriate member of school staff.

13. Pupils whilst in transit should not normally consume food or drink. The only exception may be diabetic children who may need to consume food or drink, which they may carry, to raise unexpected low blood sugar levels. However, this should not normally occur in pupils with well-controlled diabetes.
14. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that any child who suffers from asthma and requires an inhaler makes appropriate arrangements for this to accompany them at all times whilst in the vehicle. (Again, the inhaler should be placed in a bag clearly displaying the child's name). If the inhaler is required whilst the child is in transit it will be expected that older children will be able to administer this themselves. In exceptional cases however, i.e. very young children, the escort may help **provided the**

parent of the child has given their prior written consent and the escort is clearly provided with instructions on how to administer this.



15. If there are any changes to your child's wheelchair, car seat or other equipment you must notify the Transport Team immediately in order that this information can be forwarded to the Contractor. Changes to wheelchairs may impact on the type of restraints being used (e.g. webbing or clamps) or the wheelchair may no longer fit into the space available in the existing vehicle causing major problems. Failure to provide the Transport Team with sufficient notice of any changes may result in your child being unable to travel on the transport and, in such cases, the responsibility of transporting your child to/from school will rest with you until a solution can be found.

16. As a general rule the Transport Team do not allow parents to travel on any of the home to school transport journeys but there may be occasions when this is allowed as a "one off". For example, if a parent has been due to attend an annual review in school and they have no transport and live at the opposite end of the district to the school the Local Authority may help out. In order to do this the Transport Team must receive prior notification, there must be escorts on the journey, sufficient room on the vehicle for the parent and there must be no additional costs incurred by the Transport Team as a result.

This will, however, be the exception rather than the rule and the decision as to whether a parent travels or not must be approved by the Transport Team and not individual escorts, parents or contractors.

17. The general policy of the Local Authority is to provide travel assistance between **home and school only**. Following the Special Schools reorganisation in 2002 it was agreed that existing pupils who attended Fieldhead Hospital School at the time of the closure and received help with respite transport would continue to do so as long as they attended a Wakefield District school. Apart from these exceptional cases pupils will not be transported to/from respite centres unless they have the prior approval of the Transport Team.

18. Whilst it is a very rare occurrence there will be situations when adverse weather conditions apply. If it is felt by the Contractor that due to health and safety conditions it is unsafe to undertake the journey it will have to be cancelled. If this happens the Contractor will be responsible for notifying the Escorts concerned.

Every effort will be made by the Transport Team to notify parents and schools but in cases of severe weather it may not always be possible to notify parents promptly because of the work involved. We hope that these occasions will be extremely rare.

19. Single person journeys (SPJ) will only be provided as a last resort in cases where pupils place themselves, escorts, driver and other road users at risk - these will normally be pupils who present severe and challenging behaviour. There will also be some cases where a SPJ is approved due to the special requirements (i.e. complex medical needs) of the child. Single journeys will normally be for a fixed period pending a review and must be supported by a written recommendation from the Headteacher at the school and the Special Educational Needs Group.

20. The protection and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and we all have a part to play to make sure that children are safe. In order to do this well, it is necessary for parents, family, other professionals and the local community to identify concerns about those close to them. This helps to ensure that they are offered support before the situation becomes far worse.

If you are worried or concerned about any child in your care, please contact the Transport Team, or alternatively, Wakefield Social Care Direct on 0845 8 503 503.

21. From time to time there are a number of children who experience problems on home to school transport and when this happens we may have to remove them as an interim measure until a solution can be found. This is always done as a last resort to provide us with an opportunity to work closely with parents, school and other professionals in trying to come to a satisfactory conclusion and to eventually place the pupil back on home to school transport.

A child's behaviour may suddenly become unpredictable for a variety of reasons i.e. change in medication, family circumstances, clash of personalities etc, and we may have to explore a number of options available to us. Whatever decision we make will be done with everyone's safety in mind and any changes that are implemented will be subject to close monitoring.

Following the issue of a warning letter to parents regarding their child's behaviour it will be normal policy for the school to convene a meeting where all relevant personnel, including parents, will be invited to explore issues surrounding the difficulties and discuss possible solutions.

Children should be aware that good behaviour whilst travelling on school transport is essential. Children who persist in misbehaving, placing others at risk, may be withdrawn on health and safety grounds and responsibility for transporting the pupil will then pass to the parent/carer.

The LA will make the decision as to whether a child should be withdrawn from transport. This is not a decision that can be made by individual escorts, drivers, Operators and Metro. However, it is appreciated all parties, including parents, will normally be involved in the final decision making process by the LA.



Children who misbehave on the mainstream services causing a nuisance or health and safety risk to other passengers and road users may have their bus pass or boarding card withdrawn after consultation with Metro. Where a schoolcard has been defaced or is illegible, the driver may withdraw this.

22. Where transport cannot be provided due to escort shortages or vehicle unavailability, the parent/ carer still has the legal responsibility to get their child to and from school. Reimbursement of bus fares is available in such circumstances or when own transport is used, mileage expenses are reimbursed at the Council's Passenger Transport Rate. Where this applies, parents/carers should contact the Transport team and request Form G58. Please note, however, we will not normally refund taxi fares paid if you are unable to transport your child by car or public transport.

Should any difficulties be experienced with the transport, please contact the Transport Team at County Hall on (01924) 305643/305675/306949/306980.

Suggestions/Complaints

If you have a complaint about your child's transport, or if you want to make a suggestion on how to improve it, you should write to the Transport Team, County Hall, Wakefield WF1 2QL. This matter will be investigated and you will receive a full written response as soon as possible. In any event, you will get a letter within 10 days to explain what is happening. Alternatively, you may wish to email us at hst@wakefield.gov.uk (Fax no: 01924 305611).