

Children & Young People's Services

Information for Parents: Additional Needs Transport Guidance



CONTENTS

Introduction	p2
Eligibility to Transport	p3
Process for Assessing Eligibility Criteria	p4
Transport Arrangements	p4
Use of Escorts	p5
Emergency Guidance	p7
Contact Details	p8

Introduction

Scottish Borders Council is committed to offering an excellent service to pupils, their parents/carers, schools and contractors. The Council attaches a very high priority to getting pupils safely to and from school and this guidance is intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all those involved in the movement of pupils on organised transport.



Eligibility to Transport

Home to school transport is provided on the grounds of:

- Distance entitlement;
- Additional support needs;
- Placement within a school.

Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, places a statutory obligation on education authorities to make such arrangements as they consider necessary, to enable the attendance of pupils living beyond a specified maximum walking distance from their school and in so to have regard for the safety of those pupils. School transport will be provided for children and young people who attend their nearest catchment school where the distance is further away than the statutory walking distance:

- Pupils at primary school who live more than two miles from their catchment school.
- Pupils at secondary school who live more than three miles from their catchment school.

Where a parent /carer makes a placing request for a school other than their catchment school then transport arrangements will be the responsibility of the parent. If you choose to send your child to a more distant school or specialist provider then you will assume responsibility for the provision of transport and all associated costs.

Transport may be provided in the following circumstances:

- To and from a mainstream school where a child lives outside the statutory walking distance.
- Where a child is required to attend an enhanced provision.

Scottish Borders Council will not provide or make alternative travel arrangements in the following situations:

- Breakfast clubs, after school clubs or activities
- To/from childminders, friends or other family members addresses
- To/from dental, clinical, medical or hospital appointments
- Variations to approved journeys or times at the request of parents
- Due to parental work or childcare arrangements

Process for Assessing Eligibility Criteria

It is acknowledged that some children and young people will require supported transport arrangements because of their additional support needs. In determining individual transport needs, recommendations from school staff, Psychological Services, community and health professionals will be taken into account. Information from parents or carers is a crucial part of this process. Where it has been identified that a child or young person may require transport the request will be made by the school or specialist provision. In every case, transport requests will be considered through an approval process by an appropriate Education Officer.

Transport Arrangements

Where transport is awarded, a pass to access mainstream transport will be issued unless this is deemed unsuitable for a child's or young person's needs. In such cases travel by taxi, minibus or coach, will be arranged and wheelchair user accessible vehicles if necessary. Transport provision will be based upon shared transport with others where times and routes allow.

The provision of transport may change or cease as the child or young person needs change, or becomes more able to travel independently. Such decisions will be made with the team around the child or young person and will take full account of the child's or young person's needs. In all cases, transport arrangements will be subject to a minimum annual review.

If home to school transport is agreed to be necessary as part of a child's or young person's support plan, consideration should then be given to the following:

- Distance to be travelled.
- Ability for independent travel.
- Journey duration.
- Physical and psychological capabilities.
- Requirements for supervision or assistance.

Information on all of the above will be taken into account when deciding on the type of transport to be provided. Where Scottish Borders Council has fulfilled their commitment to make transport arrangements and the parent rejects the proposed transport, there will be no further obligation to make alternative provision.

Wheelchairs, Special Seats and Harnesses

Where pupils have particular mobility requirements, or need specialist equipment, drivers and escorts will be briefed accordingly.

All equipment used will be done so according to the manufacturer's requirements and in accordance with the law. Wheelchairs must be of an appropriate design and strength for transport purposes. If a pupil is required to use a booster cushion in a taxi or private hire car, the booster cushion will be provided by the Transport Section.

Use of Escorts

Escorts are provided to look after children and young people travelling on school transport who are assessed as requiring supervision because of specific medical or safety reasons. When a pupil's needs are such that an escort is required, the escort will be provided by the Council. Every escort will be provided with training and pre-employment checks including a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme.

An escort's duty is to accompany a child on and off school transport providing adequate care and supervision and ensuring that a high standard of health and safety is maintained at all times. Escorts are not responsible for taking pupils between their home and the transport vehicle. Where pupils share transportation the escort is required to remain with the vehicle for supervision purposes at all times.

Travel plans are developed for each child and escorts are provided with information on the specific individual needs of each child and how those needs can be best met. Escorts will carry contact details for the Transport Section, school and parents/carers of each pupil. Where specific equipment which relates to transport is required this will be made available to the escort/driver prior to the commencement of the contract.

Escorts act as a link between schools and parents/carers including the safe handover to school staff. Any issues or concerns should be reported as soon as possible to the school or specialist provision who will liaise with the Transport Section as appropriate.

Escort Communication

The school will liaise with the Transport Section to provide all medical, communication and safety needs as well as any specific requirements for each pupil. This information along with the child's transport passport will be cascaded to the escorts prior to starting the contract they are allocated too and reviewed regularly. Where it is deemed necessary arrangements will be made by the Transport Section for escorts to be introduced to the child and parent/carer prior to the commencement of the contract. We appreciate that children with additional support needs often find it difficult to adapt to changes to their usual routines. This introduction can help to provide some reassurance and reduce any anxieties. Prior to the start of the new school year when escorts are allocated to school contracts relief or cover escorts will also be identified should sickness or absence cover be required.

Whilst it is our aim to provide consistency for children and young people changes in escorts may be unavoidable particularly at the start of each school year as arrangements across the whole service change.

Responsibilities

Parents should watch for the arrival of the vehicle at your home or pick-up point. Parent/Carers should make sure that their child is ready to join the transport vehicle when it arrives in the morning. The operators are only obliged to wait for a few minutes before moving to the next pick-up point. Any delay may result in delays further on in the journey to other parents and pupils on the route and may disrupt school start time. The arrival time of the vehicle should be consistent to within a few minutes either way but may vary slightly due to road and/or weather conditions.

Similarly, in the afternoon parents/carers must meet their child when the vehicle arrives. Where parents/carers are not at home in the afternoon to receive their child and cannot be contacted, operators are advised to contact either the head teacher or the Transport Section for advice. They will then attempt to contact you, or your emergency contacts so that arrangements can be made for you to pick up your child. If this is not possible, the child will be returned to the school or to the safest and most suitable premises available in the circumstances and remain in the care of them until alternative arrangements can be made.

If the vehicle is persistently late the school office or Transport Section should be notified. If there is a problem on a particular morning, or your child is unwell and unable to attend school, then you must inform the escort or transport operator as soon as possible to avoid delays for other children within the vehicle or unnecessary payment if the vehicle need not operate. Where there are appointments that are known in advance, The Transport Section must be given at least 48 hours notifications so that the operator can be made aware. The escort will notify the Transport Section that the school transport will not be operating. It is also important that the escort/transport operator is advised when your child is able to return to school again.

If your child misses the transport vehicle in the morning Scottish Borders Council will not pay or make alternative transport to/from school. Parent/Carers must notify the school of any changes in their circumstances, especially any change of address. Please note that escorts and school transport operators will only take instructions from the Transport Section and cannot make amendments to journeys at the request of parents.

Safety during transportation

Scottish Borders Council is responsible for your child's safety and supervision whilst they are travelling to and from school. Operators and escorts will ensure that passengers are picked up and set down at safe and suitable locations.

Where vehicles are fitted with child locks or window locks, these are not normally used, as they can delay evacuating the vehicle in an emergency situation. Where your child needs to remain in their wheelchair whilst travelling, it is important that you inform the school in advance if a new wheelchair is being considered. This is essential to ensure that an assessment can be undertaken in terms of the suitability of the current vehicle and to ensure the wheelchair can be conveyed using the appropriate restraining equipment.

In the event of an accident the escort/operator will inform the school, parents and Transport Section as soon as possible after the incident. The school may be asked to help notify you if the operator cannot reach you.

Behaviour during transportation

The escort or transport operator will report to the school any pupil whose behaviour in the vehicle becomes unreasonable or dangerous. Occasionally, an escort or operator may be hurt by an individual pupil. If this begins to occur more frequently, discussions will take place between you, the school, and the operator as to whether there is any measure which could be introduced to reduce the risk or if it is practical to continue to provide transport assistance for the pupil to the school.

Emergency Guidance

In adverse weather conditions, transport operators/drivers will use their discretion to decide whether a journey can be made safely. If a morning journey begins but is abandoned, the driver will return all children on board the vehicle to their homes and into the care of a responsible adult. As soon as is practicable, the driver will contact the Transport Section to advise them of the action taken.

In the event of severe weather conditions:

- The parent/carer should check local radio and Scottish Borders Councils Website for updates or contact the school for out-of-authority placements to check if the school will be opened and staffed for pupils on that day.
- Contractors and escorts will notify parents directly when they are unable to operate the contract.

Contact Details

Passenger Transport Section

Email: PLACESANTransport@scotborders.gov.uk

Additional Needs Contact Number: 0300 100 1800

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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