



School Transport Policy

2024-25

DRAFT: subject to consultation

SUMMARY

This document summarises arrangements for the statutory duties required of BfC on behalf of Reading Borough Council.

OWNER

Anne Tarrant, School
Transport Manager

VERSION

V4.0

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Brighter Futures for Children
Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading RG1 2LU

Company number 11293709

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1. Introduction

This document describes the policy for providing travel assistance to school and the criteria applied to determine eligibility.

The Policy has been developed in accordance with the legislative framework set out under the Education Act 1996 and current statutory guidance (last updated January 2024, available [here](#)). It will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that arrangements adopted within Reading reflect any new legislation and guidance.

The awarding of travel assistance will be based on the criteria set out in this policy and the needs of the pupil for whom the transport assistance is being requested.

Travel assistance will not be awarded based on:

- the financial circumstances of the family (unless paragraph 4.5 applies);
- the needs of siblings; or
- parents work commitments.

Ways in which travel assistance may be provided:

The Company will decide the travel assistance arrangements for an eligible child. Where possible, and in line with Reading borough Council's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2023 (see [here](#)) active travel options and options will be suggested where appropriate.

If a pupil is eligible for travel assistance the travel options will be considered in the following order:

- Travel training.
- Scholars bus pass for the pupil to travel unaccompanied.
- Bus pass for the parent, or nominated adult, to accompany the child.
- Personal travel budget/mileage to assist with the cost when the parent/carer agrees to take full responsibility for getting the pupil to school.
- A seat on a shared vehicle arranged by the Company.
- Exceptionally, a seat in a private hired car (taxi) arranged by the Company.

Passenger Assistants will only be allocated following a safety assessment related to the assistance being provided. This provision is usually restricted to:

- Pupils with special education needs who are under 5 years old.
- Pupils with complex needs who would be at risk on school transport if travelling unaccompanied e.g., pupils with severe behavioural difficulties, mobility issues, pupils unable to communicate effectively or those with life threatening medical issues.
- Vehicles where the number of pupils travelling together necessitates the provision of a passenger assistant.

It is not normally expected that a pupil will require medication or medical intervention on the journey to and from school. However, where this is identified as an issue, consideration will be given to parents accompanying their child or additional qualified support being sought.

The Company will ensure the arrangements are free of charge to the parent of an eligible child, which may include the parent's journey home, but not to another location, having taken their pupil to school in the morning, and their journey back to school to collect their child in the afternoon.

There will be exceptions to this, for example if a parent works close to their child's school and does not travel home after taking their child to school.

A child's eligibility is not affected by any further benefits or allowances they or their parents may receive.

[Appendix A](#) provides examples of travel assistance eligibility.

If the pupil qualifies for transport assistance under paragraph 4.8 or 4.10, other options may be considered such as:

- a bus pass with travel training;
- a personal budget; or
- a place on a school bus.

All applicants for travel assistance under paragraph 4.8 and 4.10 will be assessed to determine whether pupils are able to benefit from travel training. If assessment indicates that the pupil will benefit, any augmented travel assistance will be time limited. These assessments take up to 10 days to complete.

2. Responsibilities and Duties

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child(ren) attend school.

However, in certain circumstances, Brighter Futures for Children (the Company) will provide travel assistance, if certain criteria are met.

The Education Act 1996 provides the following duties and powers on local authorities:

- duty to promote sustainable modes of travel to meet school travel needs - s.508A
- duty to make necessary travel arrangements free of charge to secure suitable school travel arrangements for eligible pupils. Eligibility includes age, distance to school, disability and safe walking routes - S.508B
- power to make necessary school travel arrangements for other pupils on payment of a charge as appropriate - s.508C
- power to provide travel assistance or travel expenses for pupils attending early years education, subject to eligibility criteria - s.509A
- duty to prepare a Post-16 transport policy statement setting out transport provision and financial assistance (where applicable) to facilitate attendance of sixth form students at educational institutions - s.509AA and s.509AB

This policy covers the local authority's duty to provide eligible pupils, who meet the minimum criteria, school travel assistance at the start and end of the school day, not including pre or after school activities such as wrap around childcare or school clubs.

If a pupil is referred to alternative provision by the school where they are on roll, it is the school's responsibility to assess the need for transport and provide that transport if required.

3. Non-statutory school age (0 to 4) Eligibility for Travel Assistance

Children under statutory school age are not automatically entitled to transport to an early years setting or school. Statutory school age begins on the first day of the term following the child's 5th birthday.

The Company will consider providing travel assistance for any child who will turn 5 within the term that the application is made, subject to them meeting the eligibility criteria and a safety assessment. Parents should not assume automatic entitlement.

The eligibility criteria are outlined in Section 4.

4. Statutory school age (5 to 16 - Mainstream and pupils with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP))

Statutory school age begins with the start of term following a pupil's 5th birthday and ends on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they turn 16.

Pupils of statutory school age need to attend a school or educational setting on a full-time basis; this is defined as 190 days (or 380 sessions) each academic year.

The Company will consider providing travel assistance if the:

- pupil lives in the Reading Borough Council area;
- pupil lives beyond the statutory walking distance to their nearest suitable school;
- pupil is from a low-income family (where extended rights apply – see section 4.5);
- pupil's walking route to school is unsafe;
- pupil has an EHCP, a disability or a mobility difficulty.

The nearest suitable school is defined as 'the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the child's age, ability, aptitude, gender and any special educational needs they may have'.

A 'qualifying' school is:

- a maintained school or nursery, or a special school approved under s.342 of the Education Act 1996
- a pupil referral unit or alternative provision academy
- an academy

When determining the nearest suitable school for transport purposes, the Company does not consider whether a pupil is qualified for a selective school or the parent's preference for a single gender or faith school. Therefore, the geographically nearest suitable school may be an all-ability mixed gender non-denominational school. In these instances, if a pupil chooses to attend selective or single gender school, the Company will not support travel costs to that school, unless it is the nearest suitable school.

Parents/carers should always express a preference for their nearest suitable school on their application. The Admissions team will determine places available and therefore families do not need to be concerned about whether their child is likely to secure a place at the nearest suitable school.

Parents are not required to name the nearest suitable school as their first preference when they make their school application, but it must be listed as one of their preferences to ensure that if they cannot be offered a place at the nearest suitable school, then transport could be provided to the next nearest school.

If parents do not express their nearest suitable school as one of their preferences, and instead choose a place at a school which is not the nearest suitable school, the pupil will not be eligible for Company funded travel assistance unless the extended rights apply (please see section 4.5).

The previous information on “places available” does not apply to admissions to Special Schools or Additionally Resourced Provision.

Applications for transport to UTC Reading will be assessed under the mainstream secondary school transport policy. As it is unlikely that UTC Reading will be the nearest available secondary school, pupils will only qualify for transport assistance under the Low-Income policy (See Section 4.5).

Escorts, where awarded, are only provided for pupils at the beginning and end of the school day. It will not be provided for additional activities, e.g., Induction/Open Days, Interview visits, Work Experience, Homework Clubs, Dental/Medical appointments, Respite Care, Breakfast Clubs or Parental / Carer attendance at school.

Where a pupil becomes ill during the day, it is the responsibility of the parent to collect their child or to agree with the school that they will provide adequate care until the end of the school day.

4.1 Types of travel assistance

In order to determine the most appropriate travel option for pupils and the most cost-effective means of travel assistance, the Company will use a range of criteria. These are described in the following sections.

4.2 Statutory Walking Distances

The statutory walking distances are as follows:

- up to 2 miles (if below the age of 8)
- up to 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)

4.3 Calculation of distances and available routes

For eligibility purposes, the statutory walking distances will be calculated with reference to the shortest walking route a pupil can walk safely (accompanied as necessary). A route might include footpaths, bridleways and other tracks which are not passable by motorised transport.

For pupils who fall within the 'Extended Rights' eligibility criteria the 6-mile and 15-mile upper limits are not walking routes. These routes are those which are passable using a suitable motorised vehicle. In short, the two upper limits will be measured along road routes.

4.4 Pupils who live beyond the statutory walking distance

Travel assistance will be provided free of charge for those pupils of statutory school age who are travelling over the statutory walking distance to/from the nearest open entrance gate of their nearest suitable school. Pupils will normally be required to use public transport, and, in these cases, they will be provided with a free bus pass in order for them to use the service. The provision of any form of transport other than bus would only be made in exceptional circumstances.

4.5 Extended rights for pupils from low-income families

A pupil may be eligible for extended rights under the 'low income' provisions. The Company defines low-income families as those where a pupil receives free school meals because their parents or carers receive at least one of the benefits listed below:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit – provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Universal Credit - with an annual earned income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

If the pupil is not entitled to free school meals, another benefit that is accepted is entitlement to the maximum level of Working Tax Credits.

Where extended rights apply, pupils aged 8 to 10 from low-income families who live more than 2 miles (rather than 3) from their nearest suitable school become eligible for travel assistance from the Company.

Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home will be eligible for travel assistance even if the school they attend is not their nearest suitable school, providing it is one of the three nearest schools which the pupil is qualified to attend (for example a mainstream pupil is not qualified to attend a special school even if it is one of the 3 nearest schools and therefore it would be discounted).

Secondary school age pupils from low-income families who attend a school between 2 miles and 15 miles away from home will be entitled to travel assistance if their parents/carers have expressed a wish for them to be educated at that particular school based on the parents/carer's religion or belief and, having regard to that wish, there is no nearer suitable school. This applies to parents/carers with a particular religious or philosophical belief, including those with a lack of religion or lack of belief.

4.6 Pupils whose route to school is unsafe

If the route to school is unsafe to walk, and if the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance of and is registered at the nearest suitable school, the Company will fund suitable travel arrangements.

All walking routes are assessed in accordance with the Road Safety GB and RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) guidelines. The Company will assess the route at the times the pupil would be using it and will take into account:

- the age of the pupil
- whether risks might be less if the pupil were accompanied by an adult and whether that is practicable
- the width of the road and the existence of pavements
- the volume and speed of traffic
- the conditions at different times of the year
- availability of suitable crossing points

4.7 Travel assistance to schools that are not the pupil's nearest school

If a place cannot be offered at the nearest suitable school when this has been expressed as one of the preferences, then travel assistance to the next nearest suitable school will be offered. Where the

Company allocates a school place which is not a preference, the Company will only consider providing transport support if the nearest suitable school was expressed as one of the preferences.

4.8 Criteria for travel assistance for pupils with an EHCP

Pupils who have an EHCP may require assistance with getting to school or to another educational setting. This may be over and above the provision made for other pupils. Having an EHCP does not automatically mean that a pupil will be eligible for travel assistance, they must still be attending the nearest school that can meet their needs. The Company considers the individual needs of pupils, including professional advice, and will consult with parents/carers and teachers about transport needs and assistance. Where appropriate the pupil will also be consulted.

The Company will take the following into account when determining eligibility for travel assistance for pupils with an EHCP:

- mobility
- medical needs
- behaviour
- vulnerability (including age, young parents and those at risk of disengaging from employment, education or training)
- practicality
- travel training
- nearest suitable school

This list is for guidance only, and satisfaction of one or more of these factors does not automatically support entitlement to travel assistance.

When determining the most appropriate type of travel assistance for pupils with an EHCP, we will consider the following:

- age of the pupil;
- nature and severity of the pupil's needs;
- availability of public transport;
- length and nature of the journey;
- most cost-effective mode of transport.

An application form can be obtained from the Special Education Team (Tel 0118 937 2674). The eligibility of these applications will be assessed by the SEND Team via the SEND Panel, using the criteria above.

4.9 Promoting independence for eligible children with special educational needs and disabilities

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 sets the expectation that professionals working with children with special educational needs or disabilities will support them to prepare for adult life and help them to achieve the best outcomes in employment, independent living, health, and community participation. Planning should start early. Where a pupil has an EHC plan, the Company will ensure that the annual review of the EHC plan from at least year 9 onwards includes a focus on preparing for adulthood, including independent living.

For many pupils, learning to travel independently is an important part of preparing for adulthood and will help them lead fulfilling adult lives. When making travel arrangements for eligible children

with special educational needs or disabilities, the Company will take account of how best to support them to develop independence.

Wherever possible the Company will offer independent travel training to children with special educational needs or disabilities who are eligible for travel assistance to school and who they think will be able to complete the programme.

Once an eligible pupil can travel independently, their travel arrangements will be reviewed.

4.10 Other exceptional circumstances

Parents/carers of pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria above, who feel that their circumstances merit provision of travel assistance may apply outlining the exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered, and travel assistance may be provided at the discretion of the Company.

An example of exceptional circumstances is a medical condition or disability.

Discretionary assistance will be:

- dealt with on a case-by-case basis;
- granted for a set period of time;
- is subject to review more frequently than other circumstances;
- may cover the whole cost of transport provision or be a contribution to the cost of the travel assistance.

In deciding whether to grant travel assistance in exceptional circumstances, the Company is required by the statutory guidance to be 'reasonable' in the performance of its function. That is, it must be fair, rational and consider all relevant factors.

5. Non-statutory school age (16 to 19 - Mainstream and pupils with an EHCP)

Local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement by 31 May each year. The Company prepares this on behalf of Reading Borough Council and publishes this on the Company's website.

This statement specifies the arrangements for transport that the Company considers is necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of sixth form students receiving education or training.

Under national legislation, students are required to be in education, employment or training until their 18th birthday. This could involve mixing full-time work with study, following an apprenticeship, continuing full-time in school or college, or combining part time training with volunteering. There has not, however, been any change to statutory school age which ends at the end of the academic year in which the student turns 16.

Under the current law, there is no automatic entitlement to travel assistance or to another educational setting once a student is 16 and over. However, the Company is required to facilitate the attendance of all those of sixth form age i.e., those students in school years 12- 14 who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday. This may involve travel assistance, but the Company does not need to provide this assistance free of charge. Responsibility for attendance lies with the student and their parents/carers.

6. Support for students with an EHCP 19-25 years

The Company outlines the support available to students aged 19 to 25 with an EHCP in the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement described above.

7. General Guidance

7.1 Travel assistance

If a pupil qualifies for travel assistance, they will be awarded a bus pass.

If the pupil qualifies for transport assistance under paragraph 4.8 or 4.10, other options may be considered such as:

- a bus pass with travel training;
- a personal budget; or
- a place on a school bus.

All applicants for travel assistance under paragraph 4.8 and 4.10 will be assessed to determine whether pupils are able to benefit from travel training. If assessment indicates that the pupil will benefit, any augmented travel assistance will be time limited. These assessments take up to 10 days to complete.

7.2 Home address

Transport assistance is based upon the distance from the home address to school and will be verified using the information supplied by the parent/carer. Home address is defined as being the address at which the parent/carer ordinarily reside and with whom the pupil normally lives.

In situations of joint parental custody, the home address would normally be that at which the parent/carer, in receipt of the child benefit for that pupil, resides. If child benefit is not received, then the address at which the pupil is registered with a GP will be used. If this is not conclusive then we will use the address the pupil spends the greater proportion of the school week.

7.3 Educational placement for students with an EHCP

Transport assistance is based on travel from the home address to the educational placement or placements named in section I of the EHCP.

Placements attended will need to meet the criteria for transport eligibility to receive transport assistance. There is no automatic entitlement to transport assistance.

7.4 Change of address and emergency contact details

Parents have an obligation to notify the Company when they move house.

If a pupil or student moves to an address further away from the school such that their current school is no longer the nearest suitable school, the Company will normally expect the parents/carers to apply for a place at the nearest suitable school and to consider a moving date which takes account of a planned transition to the new school. If parents/carers choose not to apply for a place at the nearest suitable school, the Company will not continue to provide travel assistance unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers must provide the Company with up-to-date emergency contact numbers and email addresses. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to provide updated information where there are changes to avoid incurring costs.

If a pupil or student remains eligible for travel assistance, it can take up to 15 working days to organise the transport arrangements.

7.5 Inaccurate Applications

The Company reserves the right to reclaim the cost of any transport provided, if it is found that any incorrect information has been submitted in order to gain travel assistance.

7.6 Students living outside of Reading

Students who live outside of Reading attending a school in Reading should apply to their own Local Authority for assistance with transport.

7.7 Grounds of religion or belief

There is no eligibility for transport assistance for pupils on the grounds of religion or belief, except in relation to low-income families (see section 4.5).

7.8 Transport during the school / college day

Transport will not be provided for journeys made during the school day. Where pupils attend medical or dental appointments or off-site provision arranged by the school, then the school or parent/carer, as appropriate, must make arrangements and pay for transport.

7.9 Transport timing

Appropriate transport arrangements will be made based on the age and needs of the pupil. Pick-up and drop-off times cannot be rescheduled to take into account other family commitments. Parents/carers who are unable to be home at the specified pick-up and drop-off times and location will have to make alternative arrangements.

Students receiving mainstream transport assistance are expected to walk up to 1 mile to their pickup point, with or without a parent/carer as appropriate. The pickup point for students with an EHCP may be a short distance from the home address, up to 1 mile.

Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child is at the pickup/setting down point near their home and for accompanying their child to/from this point where required. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring they are waiting to meet their child at the setting down point on the return (homeward) journey. If parents are late to either drop off their child by two minutes or more, the transport will leave without the child. If the child is on the vehicle and parents are late by two minutes or more, parents are liable for the costs resulting from their delay.

7.10 Transport for students with an EHCP transferring to a different school

Transport is arranged from home or the closest available pick-up point to the designated school only. Where a pupil is transferring to a new school during the academic year, we accommodate requests for changes in transport where possible. Any request for transport to other schools or settings during transitions need to be submitted online application form.

7.11 Transport following the closure of a school

If a school decides it needs to close early or not open because of severe weather, every attempt will be made to inform the parents/carers. This may not always be possible especially in the case of larger schools. The school will advise parents/carers of their procedures in the event of an emergency closure.

In bad weather conditions, the transport operator is the sole judge of whether to begin or complete a bus journey, giving priority to the safety of the pupils on the vehicle.

Parents/carers must ensure that their child is warmly dressed in case the journey to or from school is very slow or even halted in bad weather.

In the event that transport is not able to operate in the morning because of adverse weather conditions, but a parent/carer nevertheless decides to take the pupil to school, then they will be expected to make their own arrangements to collect the pupil either at the end of the day or at the time of early closure.

Drivers are required to seek the safest route and may therefore avoid normal routes in order to stay on major roads or to avoid specific hazards. They are instructed that they must only set-down pupils at specific set-down points. Where transport is not able to access the predetermined set-down point due to poor weather, passengers may be asked to leave the vehicle at an alternative safe location.

Where a road is too hazardous for school transport in the morning, the transport operator is under no obligation to attempt the afternoon run if the hazard remains. Parents/carers would be informed if this is the case so they can make alternative arrangements to collect the pupil from school.

7.12 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks are carried out on all drivers and escorts prior to them being employed on transport contracts. Following a satisfactory check and appropriate safeguarding training, an identity badge will be issued to drivers and passenger assistants by the Company which will be worn at all times as proof of approval to undertake the work. If a driver or passenger assistant cannot produce their badge, you should notify the School Transport Manager immediately and do not let your child travel in the vehicle.

If you have any concerns regarding the behaviour of drivers or passenger assistants, please report this by emailing school.transport@brighterfuturesforchildren.org.

7.13 Safety of Routes

The Company will monitor the routes and vehicles used to ensure that they are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk to anyone travelling on the vehicle or using the route to travel to school. Any vehicle or route found to be unsafe will be withdrawn and alternative arrangements made until normal service can be resumed. The Company reserves the right to make changes to routes and types of travel as necessary.

If you are concerned regarding the safety of a route, you can report this by emailing school.transport@brighterfuturesforchildren.org.

7.14 Identification of new routes

The Company reserves the right to review all routes in light of any changes to the Admission Policy or areas of new housing. If such changes mean that a pupil will no longer be entitled to transport, then the notice of withdrawal will be two months from the date of notification to the parent/carer.

7.15 Journey Times

The Company will make every effort to ensure that travelling times to and from school are a maximum of:

- 45 minutes each way at primary school age
- 75 minutes each way at secondary school age

Where pupils with special needs attend out of borough placements or boarding placements, the distances involved may mean that some pupils will have longer journeys.

7.16 Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) regulates the way we use your personal information.

You provide this information when you seek services from or come into contact with us. The Act provides a legal framework to the way we handle this data. Data Protection compliance is not an activity that is done once and requires ongoing compliance measures and reviews.

To ensure this compliance is managed in a structured way, the Company and Reading Borough Council employs Data Protection Officers. Our data protection policy can be found here on the Company website.

7.17 Parents/Carers of students with additional needs who are not at home

In the event that parents/carers of pupils with additional needs are not at home when the pupil is returning from school, the driver or escort will notify the Company's School Transport Manager to seek advice. Where possible, they will make a return visit to the family home to check if the parent or carer has returned.

If the parent/carer has not returned by the end of the route, the driver or passenger assistant will contact the School Transport Manager to inform them of the situation. The School Transport Manager will then inform the Head. Drivers and passenger assistants will receive further instructions following the advice given by the Head Teacher and may be required to travel back to school to leave the pupil with an appropriate adult. In all cases, a note will be left for the parent/carer containing details of who they should contact and the whereabouts of the pupil.

If an incident happens after 5pm Monday to Thursday, and after 4.30pm on a Friday, contact will be made with the Social Care Emergency Duty Team. All incidents will be recorded and considered by the Company.

Parents will be liable for costs incurred by the Company resulting from their failure to be present on time to meet their child.

7.18 Escorts for students with additional needs

Escorts are responsible for the supervision of pupils to and from school. They will oversee the pupil's conduct and safety in such a way that the driver is able to drive the vehicle safely in their duties. The

role of the escort is to help the driver to ensure the pupil can access their transport provision in a safe and appropriate way.

The needs of each individual pupil will be assessed (typically via a risk assessment contributed to by key stakeholders) to determine whether they will require supervision by a escort. There is no minimum and maximum age that determines whether an escort is required.

Escorts receive training in order to understand the needs of pupils placed in their care. All escorts are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring check (DBS).

Every effort will be made to ensure that the same passenger assistant and driver continue to transport a pupil. We understand disruption can be unsettling and will do our best to minimise changes. This may not always be possible, and changes may need to be made, for example as a result of staff unavailability/staff turnover/contract renewals.

The escort is not responsible for administration of medical aid. If a pupil has a medical condition which could require the administration of medical aid during the journey, the Company will make suitable transport arrangements.

Should an eligible child have medical needs that require a Health Care Plan or a life-saving medical plan to be implemented in the event of an emergency, all viable options to provide transport will be explored in conjunction with relevant Health Services. These steps may pose a delay in the implementation of transport, or temporary withdrawal of transport in exceptional cases if it is not deemed by the contractor, commissioner, or family that it is safe for the child to continue travelling without further consideration, or amendments to the transport arrangements.

In some instances, a continuing healthcare assessment may be necessary to understand fully the care needs of children, and what support is needed to ensure they travel safely. NHS continuing healthcare - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

7.19 Residential Schools

The frequency of transport for pupils in 52-week placements will be determined individually.

The frequency of transport for pupils in a standard 40 week placement will depend on the number of weeks in the school calendar. The following numbers are for guidance only:

- termly boarders: 2 journeys each term, 6 journeys per academic year
- half termly boarders: 2 journeys each half term, 12 journeys per academic year
- weekly boarders: 2 journeys each week, 76 journeys per academic year

Where a student is unable to make their journey to school due to sickness or family matters and the Company has been informed at least 24 hours before, the journey will be provided at a date agreed between the School Transport Manager and the parent/carer. A parent/carer will be expected to make their own transport arrangements if the Company is notified less than 24 hours before.

7.20 Expected level of behaviour for all pupils

We aim to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils whilst travelling to school. To ensure this, all pupils using Company organised transport are expected to meet standards of behaviour that will ensure their own safety and that of other passengers. The Company will work in partnership with schools and other educational settings to promote appropriate standards of behaviour and pupils being transported will be expected to follow the same behaviour codes as they do when in school or

other educational settings. Behaviour that does not meet our standards will be monitored and appropriate action taken.

Should a risk assessment be deemed necessary to enable informed, appropriate, safe transport; the service will endeavour to seek the views of key stakeholders e.g schools/ parents/ transport contractor.

Where behaviour falls below the required standards transport may be suspended for a set period or withdrawn completely. This would be a matter of last resort. The length of the suspension or withdrawal of travel assistance will be dependent upon the seriousness of the incident.

When behaviour first becomes an issue dialogue with the parents/carers and the school/educational setting will begin, with a view to resolving issues prior to any further action being taken.

Parents/carers will be notified when transport is suspended or withdrawn, giving 5 days' notice of the suspension/exclusion. This will take the form of a written warning letter, suspension or withdrawal letter. If an incident is of a serious nature the Company reserves the right to withdraw the pupil from transport immediately to ensure the safety of the pupil and others. In these instances, the parent/carer will be notified.

The decision to suspend or withdraw transport will take into account any special educational needs and disabilities the pupil may have that impact on their presenting behaviour. Where this is the case, the Company will work with parents/carers and the pupil with additional needs (where they have capacity) to identify alternative solutions to safely transport them to their school/ educational setting.

Parents/carers are responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport due to inappropriate behaviour that is unrelated to any special educational needs and disabilities. There would be no refunds for transport during this period.

Behaviour that falls below the required standard includes that which is likely to significantly offend or endanger others, including, but not limited to:

- serious damage to the vehicle by the pupil
- actions which may constitute a health and safety risk
- assaults on others
- verbal abuse of other people including but not limited to swearing, taunting, racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic comments, threatening behaviour
- incitement of others to engage in misbehaviour
- making repeated malicious false allegations of mistreatment requiring investigation
- serious misuse of a travel pass
- failure to comply with the reasonable instructions of the driver, escort, Company officer, or authorised member of school / establishment staff

During the period of suspension or withdrawal, it is expected that parents/carers take steps to address the behaviour. The parent/carer, pupil (where reasonable) and school/educational setting will be consulted on arrangements for the return to transport.

Parents/carers who wish to appeal a decision taken to suspend or withdraw transport should follow the process outlined in the suspension or withdrawal notification letter. This will enable a review of the case.

8. Application and Review Process

8.1 Application process

Mainstream

Application forms for travel assistance are available online and can be found using this link:

<https://brighterfuturesforchildren.org/for-parents-carers/schools/transport/>.

Applications cannot be made retrospectively. Assistance will only be provided from the date of application.

Pupils with an EHCP

Applications are made to the SEND Team and assessed by the SEN Panel.

8.2 Review process

Provision of travel assistance at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement and the requirement will be reviewed by the Company on a regular basis.

All pupils who receive travel assistance will be subject to review:

- at the end of Year 3 in which the pupil attains the age of 8 years;
- at the end of Year 6;
- following the successful completion of Independent Travel Training;
- at the annual review meeting if the pupil has an EHCP;
- following a change in circumstances.

If during the course of any school year the Company determines that the provision of travel assistance is no longer appropriate, it will stop at the end of the term in which the decision was made.

9. How to Appeal a Decision

If you applied for travel assistance and your child is not offered assistance or the transport being provided is unsuitable, you do have a right to challenge the decision through the appeals process. This guide will take you through the appeals process.

9.1 Grounds for Challenge

There are only two grounds for appeal, and these are:

- That you believe the policy has NOT been applied correctly;
- That you believe the policy HAS been properly applied correctly but the exceptional circumstances outlined in the application have not been fully considered.

9.2 How to make an appeal.

If you believe that one of the two grounds for appeal apply you can challenge the decision. There are two stages to the appeals process.

- Stage One

This appeal will be reviewed by a senior officer in the School Transport Service, the Reviewing Officer.

An appeal should be submitted, via the online form (https://reading-self.achieveservice.com/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-1a6aff7c-82df-41a6-8277-b0c6c2d83a1c/AF-Stage-d3dccd92-82c4-4d15-bae8-b1e8ea60ed93/definition.json&redirectlink=/&cancelRedirectLink=/&category=AF-Category-0c39d40f-83aa-4cef-9790-1719ad0c268a&noLoginPrompt=1).

This should be completed and submitted within 20 working days from the receipt of the Authority's written decision not to award assistance. The form will ask you to state which of the two grounds you are appealing on and why you are appealing.

If you are appealing on exceptional circumstances or low income you will be able to upload further evidence not included in your original application. Do not include the evidence submitted with your original application.

Reviewing Officer will review your original application within 20 working days of receipt and parents/carers will be notified in writing.

If you would like a hard copy of the appeals form, please email: School.transport@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

OR write to:

School Transport Service

Brighter Futures for Children
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading RG1 2LU

Or call:

0118 937 2542

- Stage Two

If your appeal is not upheld, and the original decision remains you have a second chance to challenge the decision.

Again, this should be completed and submitted, via the online form (https://reading-self.achieveservice.com/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-1a6aff7c-82df-41a6-8277-b0c6c2d83a1c/AF-Stage-d3dccd92-82c4-4d15-bae8-b1e8ea60ed93/definition.json&redirectlink=/&cancelRedirectLink=/&category=AF-Category-0c39d40f-83aa-4cef-9790-1719ad0c268a&noLoginPrompt=1).

This should be completed and submitted within 20 working days from the receipt of the Reviewing Officers written decision not to award assistance. The form will ask you to state which of the two grounds you are appealing on and why you are appealing.

The parent should request that their appeal be progressed to Stage Two where it will be reviewed by an Independent Officer Panel headed by a senior officer from Brighter Futures for Children.

Parents can submit additional information and will be invited to attend. Officers on this panel will have had no involvement in the original decision making. The appeal date will be within 40 working days of receipt of your request and any additional supporting information. Prior to the case being heard, a full copy of all correspondence will be sent to the parent.

Parent will be informed of the outcome within 5 days of the hearing. Full details of the decision will be provided.

9.3 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

If you believe there has been an administrative fault, at any time during your appeal, with the way Brighter Futures for Children has handled your appeal, you may contact the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSO) who investigates complaints about Councils:

PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH (Tel: 0300 061 0641) www.lgo.org.uk

10. How to Make a Complaint or seek remedy to an issue with transport

If things go wrong, the School Transport Service will endeavour to rectify the situation swiftly, to the satisfaction of all parties, as long as the solution is not outside the boundaries of this policy.

For issues identified by schools or families that require a remedy relating to the delivery of service from the provider e.g.:

- lateness of transport
- changing schedule (within policy reasons, e.g., sickness, INSET days etc.)

Please refer to your travel schedule and contact the operator directly in the first instance. This will likely remedy your concern quicker than reporting to a third party first. If you have an issue that persists, please contact the School Transport service on school.transport@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Any pupil, parent or carer wishing to make a formal complaint relating to Home to

School Transport arrangements, should contact the Customer Relations Team:

Call: 0118 937 3787

Write:

Freepost RTLS-CKGX-RKLL
Brighter Futures for Children
Customer Relations Team
Bridge Street
Reading RG1 2LU

Email us at: complaints@reading.gov.uk

Appendix A

Examples of travel assistance eligibility, and where the Company will award discretionary travel assistance.

Child A is thirteen years old. Their nearest school is a co-educational secondary school that is 3.4 miles from their home. Their parents choose to send them to a single sex secondary school that is 5.3 miles from their home. Child A is not eligible for travel assistance to the single sex school because the co-educational secondary school is their nearest suitable school.

Child B is twelve years old. They attend School 1, a secondary school 3 miles from their home. Their parents chose this school because it offers a choice of several modern foreign languages at GCSE. School 2 is 1 mile from Child B's home and would have been able to admit them, but it only offers one modern foreign language. Child B is not eligible for travel assistance as they are not attending their nearest suitable school because School 2 would have been able to provide them with an education that was suitable for their age, ability and aptitude.

Child C is six years old and attends their nearest suitable school. It is 2.3 miles from their home. Child C is eligible for travel assistance to school until the end of the term in which they are 8 years old, unless qualifying under the Extended Rights (Low Income policy)

Child D is seven years old and attends a primary school that is 2.6 miles from their home. There is another suitable primary school 1.2 miles from their home which has places available. Child D is not eligible for travel assistance to school, as they are not attending their nearest suitable school.

Child E is eleven years old and attends their nearest suitable school. It is 2.8 miles from their home. Child E is not eligible for travel assistance to school – unless qualifying under the Extended Rights (Low Income policy).

Child F is fourteen years old and has a disability that requires them to use crutches to walk. They need to take their time to ensure they are balanced. They attend their nearest suitable school. It is 1 mile from their home. The local authority decides that they could not reasonably be expected to walk to school. Child F is eligible for travel assistance to school.

Child G is eleven years old and has been diagnosed with a long-term medical condition which causes them to take a long time to recover after strenuous physical activity. They attend their nearest suitable school which is a short walk from their home. The parent applies for travel assistance to school on the basis that the child needs to recover for a long time after any strenuous activity. Based on the information available to them, the local authority decides that Child G would not need to recover for a long time after the short walk to their school. Child G is not eligible for travel assistance to school.

Child H is twelve years old. They attend their nearest suitable school. It is 2 miles from their home. The only walking route to this school is along a busy road with no footpaths or stepping off points. The local authority carries out an assessment of the route and decides it would not be possible for a child to walk it in reasonable safety, even if they were accompanied by their parent. Child H is eligible for travel assistance to school.

Child I is eleven years old and eligible for free school meals. Their nearest suitable school is 2.5 miles from their home. Their second nearest suitable school is 3 miles away. Their third nearest is 5 miles away. Child I would be eligible for travel assistance to any of these schools.

Child J is eleven years old and eligible for free school meals. Their three nearest schools are School X, School Y and School Z. School X is 1.5 miles from their home, School Y is 2.2 miles from their home, and School Z is 5.5 miles from their home. Child J would be eligible for travel assistance to School Y or School Z, but not to School X.

Child K is thirteen years old and is eligible for free school meals. Their parents are Sikh and wish them to be educated in a school with a religious character. They attend a designated Sikh school that is 8 miles from their home. There are other schools which are nearer to their home, but none of these is a Sikh school. Child K is eligible for travel assistance to the Sikh school.

Child L is eleven years old and attends School 1 which is 4.2 miles away from their home. Their parents applied for this school as their first preference. The nearest secondary school is School 2 which is 3.7 miles from their home. They chose not to apply for this school, despite information on the eligibility for travel assistance to school being readily available at the time they submitted their preferences. School 2 is undersubscribed, and Child L would have been offered a place there had their parents applied. Child L is not eligible for travel assistance to School 1 because School 2 is their nearest suitable school and has available places.

Child M is eleven years old and attends the second nearest secondary school to their home. It is 4.2 miles away. Their nearest secondary school is 3.7 miles from their home. Their parents applied for this school, but it was oversubscribed, and they were not offered a place. Child M is eligible for travel assistance to school as they are attending their nearest suitable school with available places.

Child N is nine years old and has autism. They attend their nearest suitable school which is 2.5 miles from their home. They are unaware of danger and need to be accompanied even on very short journeys. They also become distressed and can act unpredictably in noisy environments. Their walk to school would be along busy roads. The local authority determines that the parent would not be able to keep them safe on this journey. Child N is eligible for free travel to school.

Child O is seven years old and attends their nearest suitable school which is 1.5 miles from their home. They do not have special educational needs, a disability or mobility problem. The local authority determines that they would be able to walk to school in reasonable safety if they were accompanied. There is no good reason why the parent could not reasonably be expected to accompany them or make other arrangements for their journey to and from school. Child O is not eligible for free travel to school.

Child P is fifteen years old and is blind. They attend their nearest suitable school which is a short walk from their home. The local authority determines that they could reasonably be expected to walk to school if accompanied. Child P's parent is a single parent with a disability which means they would not be able to accompany Child P to school. The local authority considers the individual circumstances of Child P and decides it would not be reasonable to expect their parent to make arrangements for their journey to and from school. It decides to arrange travel assistance to school for Child P.

Child Q is fourteen years old and is also blind. They attend their nearest suitable school which is a short walk from their home. The local authority determines that they could reasonably be expected to walk to school if accompanied. There is no good reason why Child Q's parent could not reasonably be expected to accompany them or make other arrangements for their journey to and from school. Child Q is not eligible for free travel to school.

Child R has special educational needs. They live in a village 4 miles from their nearest suitable secondary school and are eligible for travel assistance to school. Other children living in the village attend the school. The local authority meets its school travel duty in respect of these children by providing them with a pass for travel on the public service bus. When Child R joined the school in Year 7, the local authority determined their special educational needs meant they would not be able to travel on the bus with their peers. The local authority arranged a taxi to take Child R to school.

When Child R moved to Year 9, the local authority reassessed their needs. They determined Child R was ready for independent travel training. Child R's parent was hesitant at first, but the local authority explained the benefits and the parent agreed, knowing Child R would need the skill in adulthood.

The travel trainer helps Child R with understanding things such as where to wait for the bus, which bus to get on and what to do if they miss the bus or it is late. Once Child R has completed the travel training programme, the local authority reassesses their needs and determines they are now able to travel independently on the bus. They withdraw the taxi and provide Child R with a bus pass.

Child S is seven years old and has an EHC plan which names their nearest suitable school. This school is 20 miles from their home. The route is often very busy meaning the journey from Child S's home typically takes 45 minutes. The taxi collects one other child on the way, which adds 10 minutes to Child S's journey, meaning a total journey time of 55 minutes. Given the additional expense that would be involved in providing Child S and the other child with separate vehicles, the local authority decides it is reasonable to exceed the recommended journey time in Child S's case.

Child T is fourteen years old and has an EHC plan which names a school that is 10 miles from their home. Previously they travelled in a taxi with one other child and the journey took 30 minutes. The local authority then combined several routes into one. Child T now travels in a minibus with 11 other children. Due to the extra stops, the journey time is now 90 minutes. Child's T's school makes the local authority aware that, due to their special educational needs, they often become very distressed at being in the minibus for that length of time. On arrival at school, it takes them a long time to calm down. As a result, they miss some of the activities other children participate in. The local authority decides it is not reasonable to exceed the recommended journey time in Child T's case and reinstates their original travel arrangements.

Child U is twelve years old, has special educational needs and is eligible for travel assistance. They have recently moved to a new school. Having travelled quite happily in a taxi to their original school, they become distressed when travelling in a minibus to their new school. Their special educational needs mean they are unable to explain why they are distressed. The driver works with Child U's parent to resolve the issue. They identify that Child U's distress is caused by having the radio on during journeys. The driver agrees to keep the radio switched off whilst Child U is travelling.

Child V is 4 years old and has special educational needs. They are about to begin school for the first time and will be eligible for travel assistance. They can become very distressed in unfamiliar situations. The local authority arranges for their driver and passenger assistant to visit Child V's home to meet them before the start of term. This gives Child V the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the vehicle and sit in the seat they will use on the journey to school.

It also gives the driver the opportunity to let the parent know that two children will already be on the vehicle when it comes to collect Child V and that it will collect one further child after Child V. This enables the parent to talk to Child V to prepare them for what will happen on the journey to school. The parent is also able to let the passenger assistant know about some strategies they have found useful when Child V has become distressed when travelling.