



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you



School Transport Policy

2022 - 2024

SUMMARY

This document summarises arrangements for the statutory duties required of BfC for school transport.

OWNER

School Transport Manager

Version

V1.0

DATE

March 2022

REVIEW

March 2024

Brighter Futures for Children is the Directorate of Children's Services at Reading Borough Council

Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading RG1 2LU

Contents

Introduction	4
Definitions	4
Statutory walking distances	6
Monitoring use and effectiveness	7
Mainstream	8
Eligibility - Low-income families.....	8
Applications.....	8
Parental preference	8
Discretionary provision	9
Denominational transport	9
Pupils below the compulsory school age.....	9
Medical conditions and disabilities.....	9
Special Educational Needs and Disability	9
Eligibility	9
Applications and decision making for transport provision	11
Special Education Needs and Disability	11
Additional journeys made outside of the SEN Panel	11
School transport authorisation flow chart.....	12
Concessionary fare payers	13
Escort	13
Parental preference	13
Reviews of transport being provided.....	14
Special Education Needs (SEN)	14
SEN – Residential places	14
SEN - pre-school	14
SEN - Working towards independent travel	14
Information for both Mainstream and Special Educational Needs.....	15
Peripheral activities	15
Other exceptional circumstances	15
Appeals.....	15
Grounds for appeal	15



Stage One.....	15
Stage Two.....	16
Transport responsibilities	16
BFfC - Responsibilities	16
Escort responsibilities	16
Driver responsibilities	17
Operator responsibilities	18
School responsibilities	19
Safety of route	19
Change of circumstances, loss, errors, fraud.....	19
Quality and standards.....	20
Contracted services.....	20
Emergency closures	20
Behaviour on school transport	20
Comments and complaints	21
Appendix one – Legislation	22
Appendix two – Safety of route guidelines.....	23
Appendix three – Useful links	23

Introduction

Local authorities in England deliver a range of statutory and non-statutory services for children. In Reading these statutory children's service care functions and duties are undertaken by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) on behalf of Reading Borough Council.

BFfC is committed to meeting the educational needs of as many children and young people as possible within local schools. In most cases, this will mean that children and young people can walk or cycle to school with their parents or carers. This policy sets out how we will help the small number of children and young people who find it difficult to travel to school without some assistance.

The legal responsibility for making sure a child's attendance at school rests with the child's parent. Generally, parents are expected to make their own arrangements for their child to travel to and from school.

A local authority is only under a statutory duty to provide transport to eligible children. Eligible children are pupils of compulsory school age (5 – 16) whose circumstances fall into any of the following categories:

- If the nearest suitable school is not within statutory walking distance of the child's home by the nearest available route. To see the legislation, please see [Appendix one – Legislation](#).
- They cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND).
- The nature of the route to the nearest suitable school is unsafe to walk
- If they are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, and they meet school distance criteria (outlined at page 8 of this document).

This policy is in keeping with the Statutory Guidance issued for Local Authorities on Home to School Travel and Transport by the DfE dated July 2014

Definitions

In this document, the following definitions apply:

“Qualifying Schools” are

- community, foundation, or voluntary schools
- community or foundation special schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- maintained nursery schools, or
- city technology colleges (CTC), city colleges for the technology of the arts (CCTA) or academies, including free schools and University Technical Colleges (UTC).

“Parent”

“Parent” has the meaning as defined in the Education Act 1996; it includes anyone with parental responsibility, and anyone who has care of him.

“Walking Distance”

As defined in the Education Act 1996, and means

- 2 miles for students under 8 years of age (or 16 years of age for pupils from low-income families)
- 3 miles for students aged 8-16 years of age.

Walking distance is assessed by measuring the shortest available walking route between the front gate of the student's home to the nearest school/college entrance. BfFC will make allowances for community safety or road safety reasons. The courts have defined a safe route as one "along which a child, accompanied as necessary can walk and walk with reasonable safety to school".

Routes are not unsafe because of dangers that might arise if the child were unaccompanied (please see [Appendix two – Safety of route guidelines](#)). Initial checks on the distance are made using a GIS mapping system. If the distance is close to the 2 or 3 mile limit, a physical check may be made using a calibrated measuring wheel.

"Reasonable Journey"

BfFC considers a reasonable journey to be one that allows the child to reach school without undue stress, strain, or difficulty such as would prevent him or her benefiting from the education.

To this end, BfFC considers the following maximum times/distances as being reasonable for School Transport journeys:

- **Primary school students:** in Reading, primary schools tend to have small designated areas, so journey times are short. BfFC considers a public transport journey normally not exceeding 45 minutes or six miles to be reasonable.
- **Secondary school students:** Secondary schools serve a larger area than primary schools, with more potential for public transport. BfFC considers a public transport journey normally not exceeding 75 minutes or twelve miles to be reasonable.
- **Special school students:** In some circumstances, travel to special schools may result in a need for longer travelling times especially when outside the Borough.

"Suitable School"

In determining whether a school is suitable for a student for school transport purposes, BfFC will consider:

- the age of the child
- whether the school is the nearest appropriate school
- the reasonable time and distance that the child will have to travel to that school
- whether the school meets the child's needs as identified in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

A school that selects pupils by ability, aptitude or gender will not generally be regarded as fulfilling this requirement unless the school is the nearest school to the child's residence – or one of the three nearest if the application for a secondary school and is based on Low Income. That is unless there are exceptional reasons that the nearest school to the child is deemed unsuitable for the ability, aptitude, or gender of the pupil.

"Residence"

Any reference to a child's residence means the dwelling where the child normally resides with his or her parent. This includes a placement made where a child is in public care.

Where a child's parents are separated, the address of the parent with whom the child normally resides will be recognised as the child's place of residence.

Where a child is in public care, and it is considered desirable for the child to continue his or her education at a particular school, the School Transport Service will meet the costs of transport, provided that the new address is within the borough boundary. If the address is outside the borough boundary the costs will be met from the Social Care budget.

When a child in Year 11 moves house, transport will be provided until he or she has completed their examinations provided that the distance criterion is met. This will normally take the form of a bus pass. When children move house in other year groups, primary or secondary, parents can make an In-Year application for a change to a nearer school. Transport assistance will only be made where no nearer school is available.

"Compulsory school age"

Education is compulsory for children between the ages of five and sixteen. A pupil becomes of compulsory school age on the first day of the term following their fifth birthday. A pupil ceases to be of compulsory school age at the end of the last Friday in June following the 16th birthday.

"Low Income Families"

Children entitled to Free School Meals or whose parents receive the **maximum** level of Working Tax Credit.

Statutory walking distances

Provide free transport for all pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) if their nearest suitable school is:

- beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8); or
- beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)

In both cases, the pupil must be attending the nearest suitable school. This is defined as a school which has places available and that the local authority deems to provide education appropriate to the age, aptitude, and ability of the pupil and any SEND he or she may have.

In addition, for pupils who are entitled to free school meals, or their parents or carers are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, free travel assistance will be provided, if:

- The nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11)
- The school is between 2 and 6 miles (for children aged 11-16 where there are not three or more suitable nearer schools)
- The school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (for children aged 11-16).

BFfC is also required to make transport arrangements for all pupils who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe (please see [Appendix two – Safety of route guidelines](#)).

BFfC may also provide transport assistance if:

- the nearest suitable school has no place available, and the next nearest school meets the distance criterion



- the child has been excluded from the nearest suitable school and the alternative placement meets the distance criterion.

As it is not possible for retrospective payments to be made for transport costs prior to the application being made, applications should be submitted as soon as possible.

Monitoring use and effectiveness

To monitor the use and effectiveness of its system, the School Transport Service will keep accurate student records, along with details of service providers, season ticket details, and other statistical information. All information about individuals and their particular requirements will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR 2018.

Mainstream

Eligibility - Low-income families

[Schedule 35B, added to the 1996 Education Act](#), includes free school travel for children from low-income families. The Act defines low-income pupils as those who are entitled to Free School Meals or whose parents are in receipt of the **maximum** level of Working Tax Credit.

Once eligibility has been confirmed, entitlement is until the end of the academic year. A new application must be made prior to the start of each academic year by the parent or carer. Renewals are accepted from March.

Primary school

The two-mile walking limit is extended up to the end of primary education for pupils attending their nearest qualifying school.

Secondary School

Transport for secondary school pupils will be provided for pupils attending one of their three nearest qualifying schools, where they live more than two miles but less than 6 miles from that school.

Where a preference has been expressed for a school based on the parents' religion or beliefs, then a secondary school pupil **from a low-income family** is entitled to travel assistance where they live more than two miles but not more than 15 miles from that school. A Denominational Certificate signed by the Parish Priest/Minister confirming that the parent is a practising member of their church/congregation will be required.

When considering whether a school is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief, BFFC will take into account the nature of other schools that may have been named as a higher preference on the application form. For an application for travel assistance to be agreed under this section, the expectation will be that the faith school that is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will be named above any non-faith schools that have been named on the application form. The 6 and 15 mile limits are measured along road routes as they are not "walking routes".

Applications

Applications should be made online, or an application form can be requested from the School Transport Team. On receipt of an application form, checks will be made with school and other records to confirm eligibility for free transport. A Supplementary form needs to be completed if application is being made based on low income.

Season tickets are issued for the start of term or within two weeks of the receipt of application. In special circumstances where this is not appropriate, an alternative form of transport will be provided e.g., for pupils with medical conditions.

There will be no entitlement to transport assistance if transport is requested to a preferred school on the basis that the nearest school is oversubscribed, if a place would have been available had the nearest school been listed as a preference and the application submitted on time.

Parental preference

Where parents have exercised preference and later experience a change of circumstances, which prevent them from meeting their responsibility for transport, BFFC would expect the child to transfer to the nearest



available school. BFfC will not assume responsibility for transport to the preferred school. Further information can be found in the [Definitions](#) section)

University Technical College (UTC) Reading

Transport applications for UTC Reading are assessed under the mainstream secondary school transport policy. As UTC Reading will not be the nearest available secondary school, unless under the three-mile distance criterion, pupils will only qualify for transport assistance under the Low-Income policy.

Discretionary provision

In addition to the reasons outlined in the [Mainstream](#) section above, BFfC may provide free transport on the application of a parent in the following circumstances.

Denominational transport

The Education & Inspections Act 2006 does not require BFfC to provide free transport to faith schools. However, low-income families should refer to [Low Income Families section above](#).

Please note, for Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge: although not the nearest appropriate school, transport assistance is provided to Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge School for pupils living within the RG4 postcode area (north of the river).

Pupils below the compulsory school age

Transport will be provided for Rising Fives where the child is attending the nearest appropriate school and the home address is over 2 miles from the school by the nearest available walking route, at the start and end of the school day only. There is no transport provision for pupils attending on a part-time basis.

Medical conditions and disabilities

Transport will be provided for a student of compulsory school age, to attend their nearest suitable school if they are unable to attend school because of a medical condition or disability.

Eligibility for such children will be considered upon receipt of the written advice from a GP or hospital and based on an individual assessment of their particular transport requirements. Discretion is not normally exercised to support pupils attending a school which is not the nearest suitable school as transport is a parental responsibility for the whole time a pupil attends a preferred school

Special Educational Needs and Disability

Eligibility

Criteria for SEND home to school transport

BFfC considers the individual needs of children, involving professional advice, and will consult with parents and teachers in arriving at a final decision. Having an EHCP does not automatically mean that a child will be eligible for travel assistance.

Every case will be considered individually. BFfC will take into account any information provided by parents, the school, other professionals who know the child and, when appropriate, the child. In addition to the factors set out in the mainstream section, these are the factors that BFfC may consider:

- the nearest suitable school
- the student's age and their need to be accompanied

- the impact of the student's SEND or a temporary medical condition on travel
- the health and safety issues of the student's SEND, mobility difficulties or a temporary medical condition on travel
- the suitability of the route
- travel time and the distance travelled
- mobility
- exceptional behavioural needs (professionally evidenced and subject to risk assessment)
- additional identified vulnerabilities
- travel training

The list is for guidance only, and satisfaction of one or more of the criteria does not automatically support entitlement to transport assistance. If the conclusion is that the child is not able to manage the required route safely, accompanied by a parent as appropriate, then the most appropriate type of transport assistance will be provided.

The child or young person's additional needs are considered a disability as defined by the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Some children and young people may have a temporary medical condition. Eligibility for such children will be considered upon receipt of the written advice and based on an individual assessment of their particular transport requirements. Having a disability, and EHCP or attending a special school does not automatically provide entitlement to travel assistance. When determining the most appropriate mode of travel assistance for pupils with SEND, we will consider the:

- age of the child
- nature and severity of the pupil's SEND
- availability of public transport
- length and nature of the journey
- most cost-effective mode of transport

General Entitlement

Pupils with special educational needs have the same entitlement to school transport provision as any other pupils within the education system. BfFC is only under a duty to provide free transport to a child's nearest suitable school, provided that it is beyond statutory walking distance of his or her home and subject to application any of the eligibility criteria outlined above. The nearest suitable school for a pupil with special educational needs may well be different than for another pupil. Transport may be provided for pupils whose home address does not meet the distance criteria if the child cannot be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of issues related to their SEND. Eligibility for such pupils will be assessed on an individual basis to identify any transport requirements.

In exceptional cases, as part of the EHCP Assessment, or following an Annual Review of the EHCP, BfFC may identify a child who has particular travel needs requiring specialist transport assistance. Within Annual Reviews, a pupil's transport should be reviewed and may result in alternative arrangements on the advice of professionals.

It is also necessary, where it is appropriate and safe to do so, to develop students' independence as they mature and approach adult life. Where safety permits, BfFC will promote travel options that encourage students with special educational needs to become responsible for making their own way to school, to increase their independence.

Wherever appropriate, a student with special educational needs will also be encouraged to travel on public transport or join the Independence Travel Training scheme, especially when this is considered to be a factor in developing their independence, life, and social skills

As it is not possible for retrospective payments to be made for transport costs prior to the application being made, applications should be submitted as soon as possible.

Applications and decision making for transport provision

Special Education Needs and Disability

Applications are made through our website: [Help with school transport and costs](#).

The parent or guardian can complete the application but should read the Transport Policy and eligibility criteria before completing the online form. Transport decisions are made using this eligibility criteria only.

Any transport request will consider the eligibility criteria provided in this policy and the individual needs of each child and young person, with the understanding that having an EHCP does not automatically mean that a child will be eligible for travel assistance. Transport entitlement will **not** take into account parent's circumstances, such as work or other commitments, or attendance by siblings at other schools.

In most cases for pupils with an EHCP, consideration for assisted travel arrangements will form part of the initial assessment, annual review, or transition planning process. Further information can be found here [Special Education Needs \(SEN\)](#). If transport is provided as part of the EHCP, then the transport arrangements will be reviewed during the EHCP annual review.

Approved requests for transport provision are passed on to the School Transport Service. The School Transport Service requires five days' notice to allocate provision and notify operators, parents/carers, and schools of the arrangements. Occasionally a longer period may be required if a new contract (taxi or minibus for example) is required, or a pupil has complex needs.

Transport assistance will only be provided to students outside the entitlement when it is demonstrated and professionally evidenced that there is a need.

In all circumstances, the factors will demonstrate that the child cannot make the journey to school safely. Any transport provided will be based on the child's or student's needs, not the wider family's circumstances.

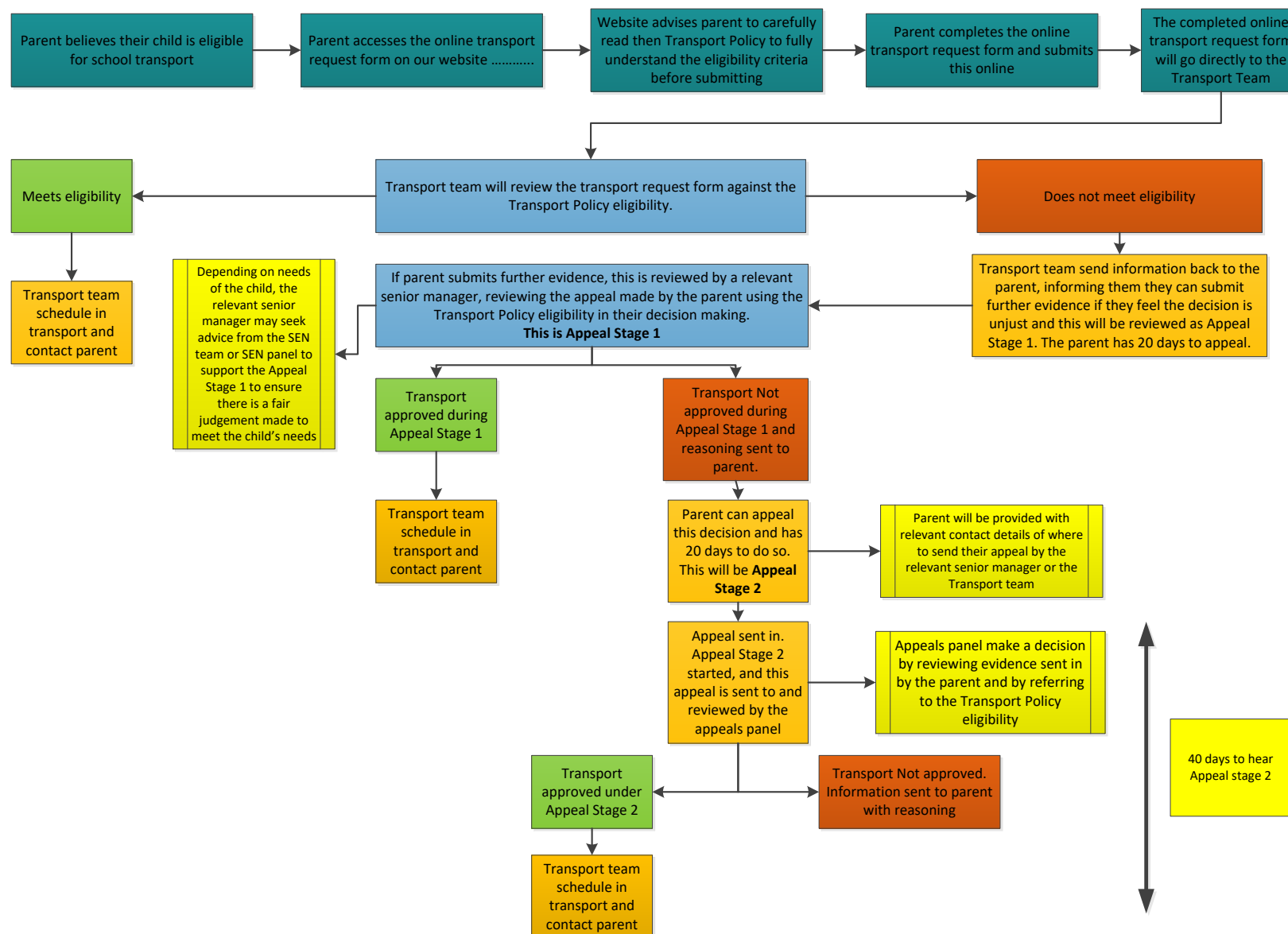
BFFC will consider several factors when determining the mode of transport to use. These include the nature of the child or young person's special educational needs; their age; their medical needs; the viability of using contracted services; public transport or (for a young adult) the person's own transport; the need for specialist transport and/or escorts and the efficient use of resources.

Please see the authorisation flow chart in the section below: [School transport authorisation flow chart](#)

Additional journeys made outside of the SEN Panel

BFFC have a duty to provide, if evidenced and applicable, school transport to and from school at the start and end of the school day. This means only the approved transport routes or costs can be made for the child. Any additional journeys (meaning additional costs) not authorised by the School Transport Service will need to be met by the parent or the school. BFFC has no liability or responsibility for these additional journeys.

School transport authorisation flow chart



Concessionary fare payers

Where spare seats are available on school transport contract vehicles, pupils not entitled to free transport maybe allowed to travel on the pre-payment of a fee determined by BFFC.

This concession can be withdrawn at any time for the following reasons:

- a) the seat is required for a pupil entitled to assistance
- b) the vehicle ceases to operate
- c) non-payment of account
- d) operational requirements e.g., route re-organisation, provision of a smaller vehicle
- e) misbehaviour by the pupil.

Escort

Escorts are provided to ensure the safety of passengers travelling to and from school. The provision of escorts is agreed on a case by case basis and is generally restricted to:

- a) pupils with special needs under the age of five years
- b) Pupils with complex needs who would be at risk on school transport if travelling unaccompanied
- c) Vehicles where the number of pupils travelling together necessitates the provision of an escort.

Escorts must have an enhanced DBS check and have attended either the Readibus training day, PATS training day or an online Spectrum course. Attendance at further training sessions may be required. Unless specifically employed and trained to do so, escorts are not expected to administer medical treatments.

When assessing whether a child can reasonably be expected to walk to school, BFFC will consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied.

Where a child does need to be accompanied, the general expectation is that they will be accompanied by a parent unless there is a good reason why it would not be reasonable to expect a parent to do so. For example, a single parent has a medical condition or disability or both parents have a medical condition or disability which would prevent them from accompanying the child along a walking route that would be considered unsafe without adult supervision.

Parental preference

Whilst nothing in this policy should be construed as limiting the schools for which parents of children with EHCPs may express a preference, if a child is attending a school as a result of parental preference (i.e., not the one that BFFC considers being the nearest suitable) the child's parents must meet the transport costs. Home to school transport will not be provided.

BFFC will consider the following tests before reaching a decision:

- 1) Whether both the parental preference school and the one BFFC school has identified are in fact both suitable and appropriate to meeting the child's SEN and whether there is a place available at both schools
- 2) The cost differential between transporting the child to the parental preference school and the one BFFC considers the nearest suitable school
- 3) Whether the transport cost to the parental preference school is more expensive to the extent it represents an inefficient use of resources.

Reviews of transport being provided

Travel arrangements will be reviewed during the annual EHCP review and could include:

- Efforts to work towards independent travel
- If solo travel provided, efforts to introduce to school bus routes
- Current cost
- Escorts
- Parent engagement

Special Education Needs (SEN)

It is the responsibility of the parent or carer to consider transport requirements for their child with reference to this policy when considering their preference for educational placements. In most cases for pupils with an EHCP, consideration will be made by the school transport service for travel assistance arrangements which will form part of the initial assessment, annual review, or transition planning process. The eligibility of these applications will be assessed by the School Transport Service, using the criteria above. If parent or carers wish to make a request for travel assistance they should read the eligibility criteria in the policy and then complete the online transport request form on our website: [Help with school transport and costs](#).

SEN – Residential places

Where BfFC names a residential school or provision at some distance from the parents' home, BfFC will either provide transport or pay the costs of such students' transport at the beginning and end of each half term, plus any weekend when the school is closed. Payment can include reimbursement of public transport costs, petrol costs or provision of a travel pass. All other transport costs must be met by the child's parents.

The transport is provided for the pupil and does not include transport for the parents to attend Open Days, Annual Reviews etc.

SEN - pre-school

There is no statutory requirement for BfFC to provide transport for children who have an EHCP and who attend an early years setting, a nursery school, or a nursery class at a primary or infant school.

However, transport may be provided, based on an individual assessment of the child's SEND

SEN - Working towards independent travel

Independence is a key life skill. As students become older a move to more independent method of travel is an important contribution to developing this wherever possible. Although some will require some form of assisted transport throughout their school career, many others should be working towards more independent travel, i.e., no escort followed by a bus pass or walking.

Altering the method of assisted transport for a pupil may well cause concern for both the pupil and the parents. This demonstrates the need for both an appropriate expectation within the school about the importance of independence skills for adult life and careful preparation before the review. While reviews will always take account of the pupil's needs in reaching a decision to recommend a move to more independent travel, it may be wise to raise it as a possibility at least one Annual Review before the formal recommendation may be made. BfFC will take the final decision, with parents being able to appeal to an independent panel where they disagree.

Information for both Mainstream and Special Educational Needs

Peripheral activities

Transport assistance, where awarded, is only provided for pupils at the beginning and end of the school day. It will not normally 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.

Other exceptional circumstances

Parents may make requests for free transport for their children on the grounds of exceptional educational or social need. As such cases are exceptional, it is not possible to specify general criteria which may be applied to judge eligibility. Where an application is turned down an appeal can be submitted on-line (see section 12). An appeal should be supported by appropriate professional advice e.g., GP/Hospital letters, Social Worker/Educational Welfare Officers' reports, etc. Where the need arises as a result of a decision of a court, a copy of the relevant Court order must be submitted.

Appeals

Grounds for appeal

A parent/carers can appeal on one of the following grounds:

- That the policy has not been properly applied
- That the policy has been properly applied but there are exceptional circumstances
- (Please note - A parent being unable to take their child to school due to work commitments will not be considered as exceptional circumstances).

The appeal will be based on the needs of the child and not the family's financial circumstances.

Pending a review, it remains the parent/carers' responsibility to ensure their child attends school.

If the appeal is unsuccessful, an appeal can be made to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH (Tel: 0845 602 1983) or through the website: www.lgo.org.uk.

Stage One

If a parent has had an application for free school transport turned down by the School Transport Service or believes the provision to be unsuitable, an appeal against this decision can be made. The Parent(s) will be asked to submit an on-line form, within 20 working days from receipt of the BFfC written decision. The statement should include any personal circumstances to be considered, accompanied by any additional supporting evidence from professionals.

The decision will then be reviewed by a relevant senior manager within 20 working days of receipt of the request and parent(s) will be notified.

If assistance is granted, it will normally take the form of a bus pass or the most economical option possible. If other provision is being sought, the request should form part of your submission.

Stage Two

Any challenge to the Stage One Reviewing Officer's decision should be made within 20 working days from receipt of the Stage One decision. The parent should request that their appeal be progressed to Stage Two where it will be reviewed by an Independent Officer Panel headed by the Director of Education and the Lead Member for Education. 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 request and any additional supporting information. Prior to the case being heard, a full copy of all correspondence will be sent to the parent. Minutes will be made, and a letter will be sent to the parent within 5 days of the hearing, outlining the details of the discussion and confirming the decision.

If an award is made for a time-limited period, a review of the original decision will be undertaken by the panel members who heard the appeal. Parents will be advised in advance of the review and given the opportunity to submit additional information or an update on their circumstances. The papers will be circulated to the panel, giving sufficient time to review before the end of the agreed provision.

Transport responsibilities

BFFC - Responsibilities

The School Transport Service is responsible for:

- Determining service provision in accordance with pupil needs
- Awarding contracts in accordance with BFFC's tendering procedures
- Providing escort training
- Endeavouring to ensure that pupils' travelling time is kept to a minimum
- Monitoring service provision and taking action to rectify problems.

BFFC reserves the right to withdraw transport for any pupil who presents a safety risk to other passengers or transport crew.

Transport arrangements are subject to change when pupils leave or join a route. The transport provider may also change as BFFC reviews provision to ensure the most cost-effective transport.

BFFC will not fund additional journeys or routes or changes which are put in place by anyone other than officers within the SEN or School Transport teams, without prior approval of the relevant budget holder.

Escort responsibilities

- Escorts must have undergone an enhanced DBS check attended a Readibus, PATS training day and online Spectrum training course and be wearing an identity badge issued by BFFC during working hours. Although a copy of the badge can be kept on a mobile phone, the badge must be visible while working
- Escorts must be aware of their responsibilities and any contingency plans laid down by the contractor regarding breakdowns, accidents, or other emergencies. They should ensure they have emergency contact numbers for the parents of pupils travelling on their routes
- Escorts must ensure that pupils board and alight safely by keeping doors closed while the vehicle is moving, not allowing children to open, or closing doors and ensuring that pupils are well clear of the vehicle before driver moves off. Parents are responsible for bringing pupils to the vehicle and collecting them in the afternoon – the escort should not leave pupils in the vehicle unsupervised at any time

- The escort must ensure all luggage is stowed safely and that pupils have seat belts or other harnesses and seats secured
- The escort must, as far as possible, sit where the pupils can be watched. Clear guidelines should be set as to what is acceptable behaviour. Severe or persistent misbehaviour must be notified to the school
- The escort must exercise reasonable control and ensure pupils do not hinder the driver.
- Escorts should not engage in confrontational situations with parents but report the incident to the employer or the School Transport Team
- Under no circumstances should an escort strike a pupil. Where pupils are involved in a fight or confrontation, minimum, appropriate, physical restraint may be used (Where there are concerns, training will be given)
- Escorts must never use foul language or abusive gestures but should maintain a courteous, professionally detached relationship with the pupils, parents, school staff and the driver. Inappropriate conversation topics must be avoided. Staff should not tease, play or 'fool around' with passengers and should not interfere with their belongings. All passengers should be treated with care, respect, and dignity
- Physical contact with pupils must be kept to a minimum. Staff are not permitted to lift children on/off vehicles
- There must not be any filming/recording of pupils on mobile phones or other devices.
- In the event of an accident or breakdown, the escort must remain with the children.
- The escort will co-operate with BFFC staff, teachers, and parents to resolve problems, reporting any issues felt to be relevant to the child's wellbeing. Incidents, conversations, or behaviour changes can indicate a pupil has a problem
- Escorts must be aware that some of the information about the pupils is confidential. Any written notes should be kept in a safe place which cannot be accessed by others.
- If no-one is available to receive a pupil at the end of the day, escorts should be prepared to take the child for the remainder of the journey before returning to the pupil's house, during this time the escort should try and contact the parents to establish when they will be home. It is helpful for staff to ensure they have contact numbers for the parents in case of an emergency
- Escorts must ensure that pupils do not eat in the vehicles to reduce the risk of choking and to avoid medical conditions and allergies being aggravated
- No smoking is permitted during working hours
- Escorts must not be in possession of alcohol, drugs, or offensive weapons
- The escort must be trained to use any equipment provided e.g., harnesses, car seats etc.

Driver responsibilities

- Drivers must not drive a vehicle they consider to be unroadworthy. The vehicle should be plated, and the driver must always display their Identity Badge
- The schedule must be followed using only designated pick-up points
- The driver must be aware that the schedules contain information relating to pupils which is confidential, and they must not be left in places where they can be accessed by others
- Drivers must always park so that pupils alight on the pavement and not in the carriageway and make sure all pupils are clear of the vehicle before moving off
- Drivers must not allow any unauthorised passengers to travel
- A courteous, professionally detached relationship must be maintained with pupils, parents, school staff and escort
- The driver must exercise reasonable control, assisting escorts when one has been provided. Drivers should not engage in confrontational situations with parents but report the incident to the employer or the School Transport Team

- Under no circumstances should a driver strike a pupil. Where pupils are involved in a fight or confrontation, minimum, appropriate, physical restraint may be used (Where there are concerns, training will be given)
- Drivers must never evict a pupil from the vehicle but must report misbehaviour to staff
- Drivers must never use foul language or abusive gestures. Inappropriate conversation topics will be avoided. Drivers must not tease, play or 'fool around' with passengers and must not interfere with their belongings. All passengers should be treated with care, respect, and dignity
- Inappropriate conversation topics and language must be avoided. Physical contact with pupils should be kept to a minimum
- There must be no filming/recording of pupils on mobile phones or other devices
- The driver must ensure that school transport signs and route numbers are displayed correctly
- Children must not open and close doors – childproof locks should be used where available. Before moving away, drivers should ensure that all passengers are seated and that appropriate seat belts/restraints are secured
- The driver must never leave pupils unattended. When returning pupils home, the driver must wait until the child is received by a responsible adult
- The driver must be trained to use any equipment provided e.g., ramps, lifts, harnesses, fire extinguishers, strap cutters etc.
- Most schools have arrangements for parking, picking up and setting down within the grounds and drivers are expected to co-operate with their procedures-
 - Drivers must adhere to speed limits, not use mobile phones unless parked and are not permitted to smoke. Where practicable, drivers must switch off vehicle engines to reduce smoke emissions, noise, and other pollutants. Vehicles should not be left unattended. If a driver leaves the vehicle, it must be secured locked and parked in a safe and appropriate place
- The driver must be aware of procedures in the event of a breakdown, accident, or other hazard such as fire. All incidents should be reported as soon as is possible
- The driver must not be in possession of alcohol, drugs, or offensive weapons
- The driver must be aware and compliant with regulations relating to Drivers' hours
- The driver must advise their employer, and, if necessary, the DVLA, Swansea of any change in their medical condition which may affect their fitness to work
- Drivers will only act on instruction from their operator who are instructed by the school transport service and are unable in any circumstance to take direct instruction from any other party.

Operator responsibilities

- The operators must be aware of their responsibilities including reliability of operation, procedures for breakdowns and emergencies, customer care, vehicle provision and maintenance, contact details, and service monitoring
- The operator must ensure that all legislation relating to the transport provision is adhered to including, licensing, badged staff, vehicle maintenance, provision and displaying of school transport signs, wheelchair floor tracking, harnessing and tail lift testing and maintenance, record keeping etc. All records should be available for inspection by the staff from BfFC and the Council as required
- The operator is responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of procedures for breakdowns, accidents, or other incidents
- Operators will only act on instruction from the school transport service and are unable in any circumstance to take direct instruction from any other party.

School responsibilities

- Staff should be available to transfer pupils between the vehicle and the classroom. Escorts and driver should not leave pupils unattended while accompanying other pupils from classrooms
- The school must ensure that loading areas are as safe as possible, minimising the movement of pupils round moving vehicles
- Changes which affect the transport provision e.g., early closures, school trips, pupils leaving etc should be notified as soon as possible. Minor changes can be notified direct to the operator. Changes which may affect the cost to BFfC should be notified to the School Transport Service
- The Operators will present a Con 1 form at the end of each month. These should be signed/stamped by authorised signatories at the school to confirm the number of days transport has been provided
- Monitoring forms are available for schools to survey the transport and advise of any concerns they may have
- Advice may be sought from school staff regarding problems that may arise with individual pupils
- Operators will only act on instruction from the school transport service and are unable in any circumstance to take direct instruction from any other party, this includes school settings.

Safety of route

The courts have defined a safe route as one “along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk and walk with reasonable safety to school”. Routes are not unsafe because of dangers that would arise if the child were unaccompanied.

Whilst a parent may make a case that a route is believed to be unsafe, it is BFfC that determines if a route is safe. The assessment will be made based on the criteria set down in the guidelines in [Appendix two – Safety of route guidelines](#).

It is the responsibility of the parent to decide whether to accompany their child to school or make alternative arrangements. They are also expected to provide protective clothing and footwear as necessary.

Change of circumstances, loss, errors, fraud

If a child aged less than eight years receives free transport but would lose this entitlement on turning eight due to the different walking distances involved, free transport will be maintained to the end of the term in which the child’s eighth birthday falls.

If a child moves out of Reading Borough, the student must surrender any travel pass with immediate effect. Responsibility for travel will rest with the Local Authority in whose area the student then resides.

Where a child is awarded a season ticket for public transport, he or she must carry the ticket for all home to school journeys and show it when asked. If a child is unable to attend school because the season ticket has been lost or stolen, the parent is responsible for paying the fares or transporting the child until a replacement ticket is received.

Where a pupil has been assessed as eligible for transport assistance in error, or as a result of defective information or fraud investigation, the provision will be withdrawn at the end of the term in which the matter is brought to the attention of the parent. Any passes issued to the child must be returned at the end of that period. In the case of a fraudulent application, assistance will be withdrawn at the end of the week in which clear evidence of such fraud is presented.

BFfC reserves the right to take legal action against any parent who makes a fraudulent application for free school transport.

Quality and standards

Service Standards

In addressing service quality, BfFC will set service standards that promote journey quality and effectively address bullying or poor behaviour.

Parents and Children

Although BfFC may provide transport assistance, the parent is still responsible for ensuring that their child attends school.

Contracted services

BfFC requires its contractors, their employees, and any sub-contractors, to adhere to the terms and conditions agreed to under the In-Tend framework.

If a contractor, its employees, or any sub-contractor, fails to comply with this, BfFC may deem the Operator to be in breach of contract.

Emergency closures

Severe Weather Conditions

After consideration of the forecasts, Headteachers may decide that the health and safety of pupils necessitate closing the school. Announcements on school closures are made on local radio stations when weather is severe.

If the weather deteriorates once pupils have arrived at school, Headteachers will advise BfFC if they deem it necessary to close and arrangements will be made for vehicles to collect pupils as soon as is practicable. Parents will be contacted to ensure that care is available on their return.

Loss of Essential Services

In the event of heating breakdown or disruption of other essential services (such as water supply), especially during cold weather, the Headteacher may arrange for pupils to be returned home. Parents would be notified accordingly.

Behaviour on school transport

For reasons of health and safety each child must always wear an appropriate seatbelt. In addition, pupils should not:

- Eat or drink on the vehicle
- Stand up in the vehicle whilst it is moving
- Distract the driver in any way
- Play radios, personal music players (CDs, MP3s, iPods, mobile phones, etc.) unless using personal headphones
- Drop litter inside the vehicle
- Smoke on school transport
- Try to leave the vehicle whilst it is moving
- Hit or bully other passengers on the vehicle.

Parents will be responsible for any damage caused to the vehicle by their children and will have to pay the operator for any repairs that maybe necessary, including cleaning costs where appropriate.



If a child persistently misbehaves, BfC reserves the right to withdraw transport provision – either on a temporary or permanent basis. If it is necessary to take this course of action, the parent is then responsible for ensuring their child’s continued attendance at school.

The Education Act 2006 makes it clear that head teachers have the right to address unacceptable behaviour, even when this takes place outside the school premises, and this includes behaviour on school transport.

Comments and complaints

BfC welcomes feedback and constructive comments from its service users. The School Transport Service will pick up all comments about services, whether written or verbal, made face-to-face or over the telephone – including those which are not formal complaints.

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.

However, the School Transport Service can only deal with complaints about the services that are contracted by the School Transport Service. Complaints about contracted services will be dealt with in accordance with BfC’s published complaints procedure. Complaints about services provided by train operating companies, or bus companies, must be directed to company in question.

Appendix one – Legislation

A Local Authority is only under a statutory duty to provide transport if the nearest suitable school is not within statutory walking distance of the child's home by the nearest available route (section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996 refers).

The relevant legislation is as follows:

- Sections 508A, 508B, 508C, 508D, 508F, 508G and 509AD and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 (The Act), which were inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006).
- Regulation 5 and Part 2 of Schedule 2 to The School Information (England) Regulations 2002, as amended

The summaries of these sections are as follows:

Section **508A** of the Act places a duty on local authorities in England to assess the school travel needs of all children and persons of sixth form age in their area and to assess and promote the use of sustainable modes of travel.

Section **508B** of the Act sets out the general duties placed on local authorities to make such school travel arrangements as they consider necessary for 'eligible children' within their area, to facilitate their attendance at the relevant educational establishment. Such arrangements must be provided free of charge.

This duty is in addition to the duty on BfC (providing services on behalf of Reading Borough Council) to make travel arrangements for children from 'low-income families' who attend the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live between two and 15 miles from home.

This duty is complemented by Section 9 of the Education Act 1996, which provides that in exercising all duties and powers under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State and local authority shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with their parents' wishes, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable expenditure. However, there is no general statutory duty requiring the local authority to provide free transport to a faith school.

Section **508F** of the Act places a duty on local authorities to make any transport or other arrangements that they consider necessary, or that the Secretary of State directs, for the purpose of facilitating the attendance of learners who are aged 19 or over at certain educational establishments.

School Transport is to assist "the attendance of persons of compulsory school age receiving education".

Only where students meet the relevant criteria in this policy will they be entitled to transport between home and school free of charge.

In addition to the duty to provide free school transport, there are some other circumstances in which BfC will consider whether free transport may be necessary to enable the student to attend school; these are detailed in Section 4.

BfC aims to develop a best value School Transport Service that:

- is efficient, safe, reliable, and accessible
- meets the needs of those who are entitled to a service, and
- is co-ordinated with other Reading Borough Council strategies and policies, including the School Journeys Strategy.



In order to reduce journeys to school by car, Reading Borough Council is working with families, schools, local communities, and transport planners to encourage students to walk or cycle to school or, where this is not feasible, to encourage greater use of public transport.

Appendix two – Safety of route guidelines

From the 2002 Guidelines: Identification of hazards and the assessment of risk of walked routes to school - Local Authority Road Safety Officers' Association (LARSOA)

1. In assessing the safety of a particular journey, consideration is given only to danger relevant to traffic/highway conditions.
2. It is essential that each case be considered on its merits.
3. The pupil may be assumed to be accompanied as deemed necessary by a normal caring parent or other responsible adult.
4. Judgements should be made fair in regard to both urban and rural routes. The task of a pedestrian in urban areas, even where there are footways, can be difficult when regard is had, for example, to the need to cross main traffic routes.
5. Consideration should be given to the overall nature of the route. It is not unreasonable to expect special care to be taken on short difficult sections.
6. Where difficult sections exist on a road, their location within the overall journey is relevant since applications for free transport would not normally be entertained in respect of very short journeys.
7. Where a footway, public footpath or bridleway exists such can normally be assumed to provide a safe route for that part of the journey.
8. Where a verge exists along which it is possible for the child and accompanying person to walk, the verge can normally be assumed to provide a safe route for that part of the journey.
9. Where, on lightly trafficked roads, a verge exists which is not easy to walk on, but which can be stepped onto by the child and accompanying adults when vehicles are passing, it can normally be assumed to provide a safe route for that part of the journey.
10. Many rural routes may lie along roads having neither footway nor verge. On such roads consideration should be given to the width of the carriageway, traffic flow and composition (such as frequent heavy goods vehicles) and to visibility (i.e., sharp bends with high hedgerows or banks).
11. Where there is evidence that a route is used by children (either accompanied or not) outside school hours this should be taken into account in judging whether it is available for journeys to school.
12. Consideration should be given to the relevant accident record of the route with particular regard to the effect on pedestrian movements.
13. Where road crossings are necessary, the availability of justified crossing facilities (zebra, pelican, school crossing patrol) using the laid down criteria should be taken into consideration.

Appendix three – Useful links

Family Information Service/SEND Local Offer

Free information for families who have a child/young person with a disability living in Reading.



Tel - 0118 937 3777

Email - Localoffer@reading.gov.uk

Website - www.reading.gov.uk/Sendlocaloffer

IASS (Information, Advice and Support Service)

Offers free confidential and impartial advice to Reading parents/carers who have children/young parents with special educational needs. Also offers support to parents who find secondary transfer a challenge, whether or not child has special educational needs.

Whitley Health and Social Services Centre, 268 Northumberland Avenue, Reading RG2 7PJ

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays – 9.30am-2.30pm

Tel - 0118 937 3421 (Answerphone out of hours)

Email - IASS@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Reading Families' Forum

Support for families of children/young people with disabilities in the local area.

Website - www.readingfamiliesforum.co.uk

Autism Berkshire

40 Caversham Road, Reading RG1 7EB

Tel - 01189 594 594

Email - Contact@autismberkshire.org.uk

Website – www.autismberkshire.org

Berkshire Vision

Helping blind and partially sighted children and adults in Berkshire

5 Middleton House, 5 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR

Tel - 0118 987 2803

Email – Info@berkshirevision.org.uk

Elevate Reading

Elevate Reading (part of BFfC) -

Providing information, advice, and guidance to post 16 young people, supporting them into education, employment, and training.

Elevate Team (BFfC)

3rd Floor, Reading Central Library Abbey Square, Reading RG1 3BQ

M 07929178133

T 0118 9372204



E elevate@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

LinkedIn: **BFFC**

Twitter: **@BFFC_Child**

Website: www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Readibus

Dial-a-ride bus service for people with restricted mobility in and around Reading.

Cradock Road, Reading RG2 0JT

Tel – 0118 931 0000

Email – Bookings@readibus.co.uk

Reading Association for the Blind

Walford Hall, Carey Street, Reading RG1 7JS

Tel - 0118 957 2960

Email – manager@raftb.org

Website – www.readingassociationfortheblind.org

Reading Deaf Centre

131-133 Cardiff Road, Reading RG1 8JF Monday-Friday 10am-1.30pm

Tel - 0118 959 4969

Email - Info@readingdeafcentre.co.uk

Website - www.readingdeafcentre.co.uk

Reading Mencap

Provide support so individuals with learning disabilities and their families might lead full and active lives.

21 Alexandra Road, Reading RG1 5PE

Office and drop-in centre open Monday-Friday 9.30am-1.30pm

Tel - 0118 966 2518

Email – office@readingmencap.org.uk

Website - www.readingmencap.org.uk