

# **EDUCATION TRANSPORT**

**Travel Policy for Children  
and Young People who  
need special arrangements**

**May 2011**

## **Introduction**

This policy supplements Suffolk County Council's general policy for home to school transport and should be read in conjunction with it. The policy applies to those children and young people of compulsory school age (that is to say aged 5 to 16) who require special arrangements and who fall outside the County Council's general policy.

**In Suffolk we believe that all children and young people should be enabled to travel as independently as possible. Whilst also promoting sustainable and environmentally friendly travel solutions, Suffolk County Council takes seriously its responsibilities by providing assistance with travel where this is necessary in accordance with this policy.**

This aim is set in the context of the duties of all local authorities regarding home to school transport, as set out in the Education Act 1996 and the requirements of the Special Education Needs Code of Practice (2001).

The County Council's general school travel policy allows for free transport to be provided when it places a child/young person in a special school/facility/catchment or nearest mainstream school if their home is over two miles away, if under 8 years of age, and three miles away for pupils aged 8 and over (ages are taken at 1<sup>st</sup> September in each school year), or if it is considered that their medical difficulties are significant enough to merit transport for a shorter journey (see paragraph 2:2).

The Act also extends rights for children and young people from low-income groups aged 8-11 (those eligible for free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of Maximum Working Tax Credit). Free transport will be provided to the nearest suitable school more than two miles from their home (rather than 3 miles). Children and young people aged 11-16 years from these low income groups may be provided with transport to any one of the three nearest schools between two and six miles from their home and to the nearest suitable school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief up to a distance of 15 miles from their home.

The County Council has a duty to provide free transport for eligible children and young people, as determined in the criteria set out above. It should be noted that where parents choose an alternative school for their child, free transport is not provided if there is another, more local school that is able to meet the child's needs.

## 1. **Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport**

- 1.1 Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school and this includes getting them to school. Some children may have individual circumstances so that parents and carers require help with travel in order to carry out their responsibilities. This policy statement describes the arrangements that Suffolk County Council will make. Some children and young people who require help with travel may have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, but generally the County Council will provide travel assistance based on a child's individual needs and circumstances.
- 1.2 Applications for help with travel should be made by contacting the County Council directly. This can be done by telephone, in writing, email or in person (contact details at end of document). The Parent Partnership Service is also available to provide information, support and advice.

## 2. **Making a Decision about Assistance with Travel**

- 2.1 Agreement to provide help with travel will be considered carefully and only if there is a significant reason why the child could not otherwise get to school, accompanied as necessary by their parent or carer in line with the general transport policy. For example, another child in the family attending a different school would not normally be considered as a "significant reason". It is important to note that there is no automatic entitlement to special transport arrangements.
- 2.2 In reaching a decision the County Council will review evidence provided in any reports submitted in support of the application for help with travel, for example written evidence from professionals concerning the child's physical, medical, behavioural, social, sensory and developmental needs.

The County Council will draw on evidence of any of the following:

Current medical advice from the Community Paediatrician, Consultant Paediatrician or Physiotherapist which confirms the child has:

- i. **Restricted mobility** which is long term and significant, for example, a physical disability requiring the daily use of mobility aids such as a wheelchair.
- ii. **A medical condition**, which is long term and results in significantly, restricted mobility due to pain and/or extreme tiredness. An example of this might be juvenile arthritis.
- iii. **A medical condition which is potentially life-threatening** and where there are health and safety risks. Examples of this might be uncontrolled seizures or conditions, which are technology dependent.
- iv. **A significant sensory or communication impairment**

Examples might be profound hearing impairment, blindness or severe autism / communication disorder.

Written evidence from an Educational Psychologist, Community Paediatrician or Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) professional that describe the child as having:

- v. **Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties**, which create a risk to the safety of the child and others.
  - vi. **Social and communication difficulties**, which create a risk to the safety of the child and others.
  - vii. **Severe Learning Difficulties**. Access to a passenger assistant may be necessary if the pupil is known to demonstrate constantly challenging behaviours resulting in an identified risk to their own and others' safety during travel. However, depending on individual circumstances, access to a passenger assistant for pupils with severe learning difficulties in national curriculum years 6-11 is not normally necessary unless the pupil also has additional physical or medical difficulties (see section 5).
  - viii. **Significant social and/or emotional immaturity in comparison with other children of their age**. This may be linked with cognitive ability or be as a result of a specific developmental disorder. Some children with moderate to severe learning difficulties may be vulnerable in social settings due to their lack of independence and social skills. An example might be a pupil with moderate learning difficulties who shows extreme vulnerability. Another example might be a secondary aged pupil with Asperger's Syndrome who is known to have very little awareness of personal danger.
- 2.3 Any significant changes to personal circumstances (for example a house move) must be notified to the County Council and will trigger a review of transport assistance and school placement. This might result in transport assistance being changed or withdrawn and / or an alternative school placement being offered.
- 2.4 In the circumstances where the County Council decides that transport assistance cannot be provided, there is the option to appeal against the decision. See paragraph 9.2 below.
3. **Transport for children placed in Other Schools Not Maintained by Suffolk County Council**
- 3.1 **52 Week Placements**  
Appropriate transport arrangements will be considered in discussion with parents and carers about the child's placement needs.
- 3.2 **Termly Boarding**  
Transport will be provided at the beginning and end of school terms and

half terms and at weekends if the school closes.

### 3.3 Weekly Boarding

Transport to school will be provided at the start and end of the school week.

### 3.4 Daily Placements

Transport to school will be provided at the start and end of every school day.

3.5 Parents or carers who have an agreed arrangement with Suffolk County Council to provide transport themselves will be reimbursed travel expenses, at the County Council parental transport rate. (see section 13 on travel allowances).

3.6 Transport would not normally be provided for parents to attend annual reviews, but may be considered in cases of hardship or for other exceptional reasons.

3.7 In all cases schools must notify the County Council in advance, of any changes to school dates affecting transport arrangements for example, training days or emergency closure.

## 4. **Deciding on the Travel solution**

4.1 If it is agreed that travel assistance should be provided this will always be aimed at preserving the young person's independence as far as possible. The Local Authority will consider the following options in order (home to school transport only being provided as a last resort):

- travel training support to enable the young person to learn to use public transport or to travel independently
- a walking travel assistant (where a parent or carer is unable to accompany the child)
- a mileage payment for the parents or carers to transport the young person themselves (see paragraph 15 below).
- a bus or rail pass including where necessary an additional pass for parent or carer to accompany the child - see also section 8 below
- a passenger assistant to accompany the young person on public transport (see section 5 below)
- transport from a networked pick up point
- home to school transport (which might include a minibus or taxi).

4.2 For day pupils, every effort will be made to keep journey times to a minimum and discretion will be used depending on the child or young person's special needs and the availability of a suitable school near to their home with a place.

4.3 All decisions will be based on the information provided and each case will be considered carefully, taking into account the needs of the child or young person.

## **5. Passenger Assistants**

- 5.1 A passenger assistant will normally be provided if there are more than five children or young people with Statements of special educational needs or additional needs travelling in one vehicle. The requirement for a passenger assistant will be reviewed annually or as circumstances change. Needs may alter as the child grows older and a passenger assistant may not continue to be necessary.
- 5.2 In circumstances where a child may be travelling on their own on a public service and the Statement of Special Educational Needs stipulates that s/he must have an assistant on home to school transport or there is clear evidence that an assistant is needed, the child may be accompanied by the parent or the local authority will arrange for a passenger assistant to accompany them.
- 5.3 The passenger assistant's duty is to supervise children / young people on the vehicle. They will assist them to board and to leave the vehicle, but ordinarily they cannot collect them from the home and take the children/young people into school if that would mean leaving others unattended in the vehicle. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to take the child to and collect from the vehicle. At school, the passenger assistant should ensure that children and young people are escorted into school or given to a member of staff in the playground, bearing in mind that other youngsters on the vehicle must not be left unattended.
- 5.4 Passenger assistants have basic training in first aid but are not otherwise medically trained.

## **6 Pupils with potentially Life Threatening Conditions**

- 6.1 If a child/young person suffers from a medically-diagnosed condition which is potentially life-threatening and may require immediate medication or treatment, parents or carers will be encouraged to take the child or young person to school themselves.
- 6.2 If a child with a potentially life-threatening condition travels on local authority home-to-school transport it should be noted that passenger assistants will not administer treatment or medication. Should this situation arise the emergency services will be called. All passenger assistants are advised of this protocol.
- 6.3 Where a child or young person has a care-plan or medical protocol in place, parents and carers this should make this known to the driver and /or passenger assistant. Special schools will make available to parents a small container for attaching to a child's school bag which can hold important medical information for use in the event of an emergency while on school transport.

## **7. Specialist Learning Support Scheme**

- 7.1 For some young people who require constant nursing interventions and/or are dependent on technology for their survival, a specialist learning

support assistant service is available through Thomas Wolsey School, Ipswich. This involves medically trained learning support assistants who work with the young person at school, or at home when they are too ill to attend school. The School may request that these assistants may sometimes accompany the young person on transport to school. This scheme is not available for students in the Waveney Primary Care Trust area.

## **8. Social Skills Training**

8.1 To promote young people to develop life skills the County Council expects that young people over the age of 14 years will make use of public transport, through the use of a bus or rail pass. This will generally help to prepare them for post 16 education, employment or training.

8.2 The County Council requires at least 5 working days notice to arrange for bus or rail passes. Notice must be given by the end of July for travel passes required for September.

8.3 Travel passes will be issued for a whole term unless in exceptional circumstances this has to be reviewed.

## **9. Notification of Decision**

9.1 Once help with travel has been agreed by the special needs team the applicant will be notified. Travel arrangements will then be put in place normally within 5 working days of the decision and the Passenger Transport Unit of Suffolk County Council will contact the applicant at that stage.

9.2 If a child/young person's circumstances fall outside the terms of the free travel policies and the parent/carer believes that these justify special consideration, they are entitled to make written representations (appeal) to a Committee of the County Council. The members of this Committee take final decisions in those areas where the County Council has discretion to provide home-to-school and college transport.

9.3 The County Council will review the special travel arrangements for each young person on an annual basis or as circumstances change, to ensure that travel decisions remain appropriate. In all cases the reasons for the decision about the provision of travel assistance will be made clear to parents and carers.

## **10. Situations requiring temporary arrangements**

10.1 The County Council does not provide transport in circumstances where the parent might not be able to accompany the child to school on a temporary basis.

10.2 Where the normal arrangements for home to school travel are inappropriate, for example, because a child or young person experiences an accident, planned surgery or an illness which results in a temporary

inability to use the current transport arrangements, the following protocol will be followed.

- a) Requests can be made by the parent / carer or school and should be made by contacting the County Council Passenger Transport Unit directly. This can be done by telephone, in writing, email or in person. The Parent Partnership Service is also available to provide information, support and advice. (See contact details at end of document)
- b) Supporting medical advice will be needed to accompany the request so that the County Council is in a position to determine:
  - Full medical details of the condition, including timescales for recovery.
  - Written medical confirmation regarding the child's fitness to return to school.
  - The likely period for which additional transport may be needed.
  - Any risks associated with lifting and handling the child.
- c) Any implications for travel assistants may need to be considered e.g. action that might be required in a medical emergency.
- d) Any temporary travel arrangements deemed necessary would be arranged within five working days from the receipt of the written request and supporting evidence.

## **11 Occasional School Visits, Taster Days and Work Experience**

- 11.1 The County Council does not provide home-to-school transport for children who may attend other schools or venues as part of transition arrangements, or work experience. Any such assistance would have to be negotiated between the schools and the families concerned.

## **12. Dual Placements**

- 12.1 Sometimes, children and young people may have a dual placement and be on the roll at both a mainstream school and a special school or other specialist provision. In these individual circumstances where this arrangement has been agreed by the local authority in discussion with the schools and the family, the special arrangements policy for home to school transport will only apply to the specialist provision. Transport assistance would only be provided to the mainstream catchment school if the child was eligible under the County Council's home-to-school transport policies.
- 12.2 It is important to note that the policy applies to home to school transport at the beginning and end of the school day. Other arrangements, such as transfers or changes that occur during the school day, including at lunchtime are for the schools concerned to organise and fund.

### **13 Transport to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)**

- 13.1 Transport to PRUs will only be provided in line with this policy and in particular will be available only at the beginning and end of the school day.
- 13.2 Other arrangements, such as transfers or changes that occur during the school day, including at lunchtime are for the PRUs and schools concerned to organise and fund.

### **14. Children in Care**

- 14.1 If a pupil is taken into care, Suffolk County Council Social Care Services will fund the cost of the transport to enable the child or young person to attend the same school, provided that the entitlement criteria are met. Such arrangements will be reviewed every half term.

### **15. Travel Allowances**

- 15.1 When a child is eligible for transport, the County Council may provide help with travel by paying parents or carers a travel allowance to take their child to school. This may, for example, be where a child/young person has a potentially life-threatening condition (see section 6) or where they would be travelling a route not served by existing contract transport.
- 15.2 Sometimes parents or carers wish to take their child to school themselves and request reimbursement. A travel allowance will not normally be offered when there is a place available on existing contract transport.
- 15.3 In cases where it is clear that the parent or carer is returning home immediately after taking the child / young person to school and is travelling from home to collect them at the end of the day, then a double journey will be paid for.
- 15.4 A travel allowance is normally payable at the County Council parental transport rate.

### **16. Transportation of Equipment**

- 16.1 Pupils travelling daily are expected to travel with no more than one item of hand luggage and those attending residential schools are expected to travel with no more than one suitcase (or equivalent). Some children/young people will have extra items (e.g. to meet their medical or physical needs) and these will be transported, but prior arrangement is essential.

### **17. Time-Keeping**

- 17.1 In order to enable drivers to keep to schedule and to pick up and return the children and young people home at the times agreed, parents or carers are expected to have pupils ready 5 minutes before pick-up time and be there to collect them 5 minutes before they are expected home.

- 17.2 It is essential to keep to agreed time schedules to ensure the young people arrive at school on time and even in exceptional circumstances a driver will wait for no more than five minutes beyond the scheduled pick-up time at a pick-up point in the morning.
- 17.3 If there is no-one to collect a child / young person at the end of a school day the driver will take them on for the remainder of the journey and return to the agreed destination. The child / young person will not be left unescorted and will not be left with anyone other than the parent or carer without their written authorisation.
- 17.4 If there is no alternative, the child / young person will be taken back to school (where appropriate) or if necessary to the local area office (Social Care) up to 5.00pm. After 5.00pm they will be taken to the local police station and the police will be asked to contact the Out-of-Hours Duty Social Work Team.

## **18. Dealing with Difficult Behaviour**

- 18.1 Drivers and passenger assistants will normally notify the Headteacher or nominated person at the school of any problems with a child / young person's behaviour as soon as difficulties occur. The headteacher will ensure that the County Council is kept fully informed.
- 18.2 Parents or carers will be informed of any problems and will be asked to assist in preventing any recurrence.
- 18.3 If a child/young person is behaving in such a way as to endanger him/herself or others on the vehicle, then it may be necessary to change or withdraw transport either temporarily or permanently.
- 18.4 All journeys between home and school will be completed. Even if a child / young person's behaviour is totally unacceptable s/he will not be put off the school transport anywhere other than home or school.

## **19 Early Years Travel**

- 19.1 Help with travel to early years settings is not generally provided. However there may be circumstances when this would be considered within the terms of our policy set out above (section 2) for young children in special school nursery classes or specialist provision.

## **20. Post 16 Travel**

- 20.1 The County Council will provide help with travel for eligible students in accordance with the published post-16 travel policy.
- 20.2 For those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, help with travel may be provided to students who begin a course after they reach the age of 19 years.
- 20.3 In such cases help with travel arrangements would continue until the student is 21 years of age.

- 20.4 In the case of transport for students with substantial and permanent disabilities aged 16-25 advice and information will be given to customers who wish to access educational opportunities. For people who are eligible under Fair Access to Care Services this support may be incorporated into their support plan. This applies to customers over the age of 16 and who meet the Fair Access to Care Services criteria. Students or their families should contact Adult and Community Services.
- 20.5 All eligible students or their parents or guardians are required to pay the discretionary charge. The discretionary charge is paid in three payments per year before the start of each term. Information about these charges is contained in the published post-16 transport policy.
- 20.6 The County Council will consider requests for specialised transport from students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties on an individual basis as described in section 2. In considering requests, the County Council will take into account whether specialised transport has been provided previously or if the need for transport was supported by a statement of special educational needs when the student was of compulsory school age.
- 20.7 The County Council will take into account the needs of the student, the requirement for value for money and try to take into account the wishes of parents or guardians before deciding the most appropriate mode of travel for a student (see section 4).
- 20.8 The County Council may change the type of transport assistance provided if it is to aid the student's independence and social skills training. The headteacher of the school or appropriate head of service at the college must support all requests of this nature in writing. In these circumstances and where agreed, the County Council will change the type of transport as soon as it is operationally possible.

## 21. **Communication**

- 21.1 A leaflet explaining the County Council's home to school transport policy is available for all parents and carers of children and young people requiring special travel arrangements.
- 21.2 Guidance leaflets will be available for all drivers and escorts of children / young people with special needs.
- 21.3 In all cases schools must notify the County Council in advance, of any changes to school dates affecting transport arrangements, for example, training days or emergency closure.

## **Contact us**

### **Public enquiries**

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