

School Travel Policy

Agreed: 19 June 2018

Travel policy for:

children who are changing school or home address from September 2019

This policy will be in place and remain current over subsequent school years until changed.

OS Mastermap Highway network is used for all distance measurements.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This is a new policy statement, following extensive consultation and engagement held during the school year 2017-2018.

Suffolk County Council (“SCC”) reached the decision on 22 March 2007 to operate a two-tier education system, to support improving outcomes for children. The final phase in Bury St Edmunds was completed in September 2016.

Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet reached a decision on 19 June 2018, to introduce this new policy statement Home to School Travel Policy 2019-2020 on a phased basis with effect from September 2019, for children as they join or move schools, age and distance criteria apply.

This policy statement also explains the new arrangements, which are applicable from September 2019 including:

- Opt-into travel, where parents ask us to assess their eligibility. We would only allocate a seat to an eligible learner if the parent requests this;
- Ask all parents to tell us annually that they would require a seat, where eligible (including children who are currently receiving SCC funded school transport);
- Use **Public Rights of Way** when measuring the distance from home to school for eligibility purposes;
- The Brokerage Service where capacity building support is available to schools and communities, so families can plan their own travel arrangements. The Brokerage Service will also:
 - Signpost parents to commercial operators when parents wish to buy a seat for their child to travel and/or
 - Where any **spare seats** exist on **closed contracts** running to schools, sell these on a first come first serve basis (as set out in the <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel/policies-guidance-faqs/>) and
 - Advise families in planning their children’s travel arrangements

Under the new arrangements, a child will remain eligible for transport to their current school if they are receiving SCC funded transport in July 2019, are aged 5-16 and continue to live at their current home address. The one exception to this is children who turn eight and who live between two and three miles from their current school. Prior to turning eight, such children are entitled to funded school transport if they live more than 2 miles from their **nearest suitable school**. However, once they turn eight, such children are only entitled to funded transport if they live more than 3 miles from their nearest suitable school.

Children starting a new school in September 2019 will be assessed under this new policy. Under SCC’s new policy, there are no Transport Priority Areas (i.e. areas where children would receive funded school transport to a particular school over and above the statutory minimum).

The School Travel Policy is for residents of Suffolk whose children are of statutory school age (i.e. 5-16). It also applies to Rising 5 year olds.

Supporting information to this policy can be found at www.suffolkonboard.com, including Guidance Notes, Frequently Asked Questions and Answers, together with a timeline linked to the policy. Use the same link to access Suffolk's Post-16 Transport Policy for 2019-2020 including for full time learners aged 19-25 with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Parents and carers have a legal obligation to ensure their children attend school regularly, and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school. Suffolk County Council is required to provide transport to those eligible under the law and policy.

There are a number of terms that have a particular meaning such as "**nearest suitable school**". These terms are defined in the glossary at the end of this policy. Where a word is so defined, it will appear in bold in the policy.

THE LAW

This policy has been drafted in accordance with the relevant law and guidance and in particular

sections 444 and 508A-509AE Education Act 1996, the Education Act 2002, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the Children & Families Act 2014. In addition, the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) Special Educational Needs and Disability 0-25 Code of Practice (2015) and DfE Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014 have been taken into account.

Transport for children of compulsory school age including Rising 5's

PART I STATUTORY OFFER

Introduction

Suffolk County Council are required by law to provide funded school transport for four categories of children:

- i) children who live more than the statutory walking distance from their **nearest suitable school**
- ii) children who live less than the statutory walking distance from their **nearest suitable school** but who cannot walk to school safely;
- iii) children who are unable to walk to school because of a SEN, disability or mobility problems;
- iv) Certain children whose family have a low income (**extended rights eligibility**)

This section, together with the glossary at the end of this policy, explain the precise terms of entitlement for these four categories of children.

In addition to providing the funded transport to pupils who have a statutory entitlement to it SCC has decided to provide funded school transport to certain other pupils:

- Rising 5s,

- children attending the **nearest suitable school** in Suffolk (even though it is not their **nearest suitable school**),
- in Bury St Edmunds, provide transport to the nearest suitable two-tier school even if it is not the **nearest suitable school**.)
- entitlement to pupils attending St Benedict's Catholic School which is on a split site.

The details of the discretionary provision are set out in Part 2 below.

Nearest suitable school

Funded transport will be provided for children attending their **nearest suitable school**, inside or outside of Suffolk, where the distance from home to school is over the statutory walking distance:

- More than 2 miles (3218 m) from home for children aged under 8
- More than 3 miles (4827 m) from home for children aged 8 and over

For transport purposes the **nearest suitable school** is identified by considering whether the child would have qualified for a place at the school or educational placement, regardless of whether it was named on the Common **Admissions** form (CAF), and where applicable an ADM1 (In Year Application Form for schools who are their own admission authority) or a school's own application form. The **nearest suitable school** with a place is determined to be a maintained school or academy within the administrative area of SCC (See glossary on page 20 for definition of qualifying school).

Parents and carers can find out their **nearest suitable school** for transport purposes by using the following link: <http://schooltravel.suffolk.gov.uk/>. This tool will be updated annually in preparation for September opening of the normal **admissions** round.

Travel assistance is not provided to independent schools, other than Academies and/or Free Schools, unless a child has special educational needs and/or disabilities and it is named in their Education, Health and Care Plan.

For children with an Education, Health and Care Plan the local authority will only provide transport to the nearest suitable placement. This means that where there is a second suitable placement named in Section I of the Plan that is nearer than the placement the child attends by parental choice then transport or travel will not be provided to the school attended by parental choice.

Safety

Funded transport will be provided for children attending their **nearest suitable school**, which is less than the statutory walking distance, if it is considered unsafe for the child, accompanied as necessary, to walk to school. This entitlement will continue as long as the route remains unsafe. SCC publishes guidance in terms of assessing route safety at <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/getting-to-school-5-16-year-olds/appeals-process/>. Where routes become safe, for example due to improvements, entitlement to funded transport will cease at the end of the nearest half term.

In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk for the purposes of 'unsafe route eligibility' SCC will consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child. When considering whether a child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child on the journey to school a range of factors may be taken into account, such as the age of the child and whether one would ordinarily expect a child of that age to be accompanied.

Where a disability prevents a parent or carer from accompanying their child to school, the child's individual needs will be considered taking into account SCC's duties under the Equality Act 2010. Where eligible, the family will receive appropriate support to enable the child to attend a school within the statutory walking distance. This would be for both short and long-term arrangements.

Income

Children will also qualify for SCC funded travel if their parents are in receipt of the Maximum Working Tax Credit or the child is entitled to Free School Meals due to low income, if they are:

- aged 8 to 10 and the nearest school is at least 2 miles away;
- aged 11 to 16 and the school is 2 to 6 miles away – as long as there are not three or more suitable schools nearer to home.
- aged 11 to 16, and the school is 2 to 15 miles away – if it is their nearest school preferred on the grounds of the parent's religion or belief.

The two-mile limit will be measured by the shortest available route (including **Public Rights of Way**), along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk safely. The upper limits of 6 and 15 miles will be measured along roads only, using the Integrated Transport Network (ITN). In future, Ordnance Survey Mastermap Highways Network will replace the ITN.

Roll Out of Universal Credit

Eligibility for free school meals is currently the primary means of determining eligibility for extended rights to home to school transport and will continue to be so.

Following the commencement nationally of Universal Credit roll out from 1 April 2018, those eligible children will have transitional protection rights to free school meals until March 2022, when the roll out is due to conclude. This means that more child will be eligible for free school meals and therefore likely that more children will be eligible for extended rights transport as a result. Note: The Department for Education is currently considering the implications of this to local authorities and further guidance has yet to be issued.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Mobility difficulties (including temporary medical conditions)

Children are entitled to SCC funded travel however far they live from their school if they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school (or other place where they

might be receiving education under s 19(1) Education Act 1996), accompanied as necessary, because of their SEN, a disability or mobility problem.

The entitlement for children with special educational needs and disabilities or mobility difficulties is assessed against the statutory home to school transport policy except where exceptionally, a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) expressly states that transport should be provided.

The local authority may also consider additional support for travel if evidence is provided that a child's needs are significant enough to require further assistance. Parents that believe their circumstances justify additional travel support need to make written representation to the Passenger Transport Unit, contact details are provided in the further information section of this policy. Cases will be considered by the Individual Needs Travel Group.

If it is agreed that help with travel should be provided this will always be aimed at preserving the child's independence as far as possible. SCC 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 bus or rail pass including where necessary an additional pass for parent or carer to accompany the child.
- a passenger assistant to accompany the child on public transport
- transport from a networked pick up point
- a mileage payment for the parents or carers to transport the child themselves.
- school transport (which might include a minibus or taxi)

For children who have special educational needs and/or mobility difficulties (including temporary medical conditions), entitlement to travel will be considered on an individual basis. Travel arrangements will be reviewed:

- as part of the annual EHCP process or following an assessment of the child's ability to walk to school, having regard to a child's special educational needs, disability or mobility problems where relevant, and taking into account any exceptional circumstances. Relevant supporting professional evidence will be required before transport eligibility is agreed.
- as and when required by the Passenger Transport Team as part of their responsibility to ensure the child's needs are continuing to be met whilst using the most efficient and cost-effective transport arrangement. Relevant supporting professional evidence may be required where a child's needs may have changed.

In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk for the purposes of 'special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility' SCC will consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child's parent can reasonably be expected to

accompany the child. When considering whether a child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child on the journey to school a range of factors may need to be taken into account, such as the age of the child and whether one would ordinarily expect a child of that age to be accompanied.

Where a disability prevents a parent or carer from accompanying their child to school, the child's individual needs will be considered with due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Where eligible, the family will receive appropriate support to enable the child to attend a school within the statutory walking distance. This would be for both short and long-term arrangements.

Boarders: Where a child of **compulsory school age** with an Education, Health and Care Plan has a residential placement, subject to distances outlined above, it is the nearest suitable named placement and any specific parental agreements in respect of transport, help with travel will be provided for those that board at schools.

For termly boarding transport will be provided at the beginning and end of school terms and half terms and at weekends if the school closes.

For weekly boarding transport to school will be provided at the start and end of the school week.

Daily Placements

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

Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes; whilst a child of secondary school age to travel up to 75 minutes each way. Similarly, a child's special educational needs and/or disability might be such that it implies a shorter maximum journey time.

Dual Placements

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 home to statutory school transport policy will apply to each provision separately for the beginning and end of each school day.

Children in Care

This Home to School Travel Policy applies to children in care.

Excluded Children

A child will be an eligible, if they have been excluded from school and transport is required for attendance at a new school or a Pupil Referral Unit if the length of journey is over the statutory walking distance.

Exceptional Circumstances

In recognition that the local authority's powers should not be unreasonably fettered by its general policy, SCC will consider individual requests for home to school transport, where:

- 1) There are compelling reasons to justify making an exception to the policy and/or
- 2) It is claimed SCC has not applied this policy correctly.

Any applications would be expected to be supported by evidence to allow the local authority to consider the merits of the application.

Where an application is agreed then SCC will rectify this situation.

Where a case is not upheld, and it is decided that the child does not qualify exceptionally for funded support towards travel, it remains the parent or carer's responsibility to ensure school attendance or consider transferring their child to a nearer suitable school.

Please note: 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 travel policy. For example, another child in the family attending a different school or conflicting with family working patterns would not normally be considered as a "significant reason". It is important to note that there is no automatic entitlement to special travel arrangements.

PART II DISCRETIONARY OFFER

The Education Act 1996 permits SCC to have a discretionary travel scheme as a part of its general travel policy.

Suffolk County Council, following the decision reached by Cabinet 19 June 2018, is phasing out its previous Transport Priority Area approach.

The discretionary elements of the new school travel policy with effect from September 2019 are as follows:

- Rising 5-year olds;
- Two-Tier Education in the Bury St Edmunds Area;
- Split Site – St Benedict’s Catholic School;
- Prioritising Suffolk Schools for **nearest suitable school**, and in addition, where parents request their absolute nearest school out of county, transport would be provided, subject to distance, would also be provided.

Rising 5-year olds

In addition to providing funded school transport for pupils of **compulsory school age** (i.e. 5-16) who live more than the statutory walking distance from their school SCC will also provide funded school transport for “Rising 5-year olds” (ie children who are attending reception but have not yet turned 5 provided that they live more than 2 miles from their **nearest suitable school**).

Two-Tier education in the Bury St Edmunds Area

Bury St Edmunds: For the Bury St Edmunds area, in addition to providing funded school transport to the **nearest suitable school**, funded school transport will also be provided to the nearest two-tier school (even if it is not the **nearest suitable school**) if it is located more than the statutory walking distance from their home.

St Benedict’s Catholic School

Split Site: Where one of the St Benedict’s Catholic School sites is the **nearest suitable school** to the child’s home, SCC will provide funded school transport for the whole secondary phase up to age 16 to St Benedict’s Catholic School providing the child lives more than three miles from the site which they are attending at the time. If they live more than three miles from one site but not the other, funded school transport will be provided to the site which is located more than 3 miles from their home.

Where one of the St Benedict’s Catholic School sites is the **nearest suitable school** to the child’s home, SCC funded transport would also be offered to the next nearest two-tier secondary school provided that the child lives more than three miles from this school.

Funded transport to nearest suitable school in Suffolk

Where a child’s **nearest suitable school** is located outside of Suffolk, SCC will also provide funded school transport to the **nearest suitable school** in Suffolk provided it is located more than the statutory walking distance from the child’s home.

For September 2019

The Suffolk Brokerage Service will provide assistance to children who do not otherwise qualify for SCC funded travel through:

- All Schools, 6th from centres and Colleges of Further Education will be able to make use of the Suffolk Brokerage Service, in terms of capacity building support, and widening access solutions funded by partner(s).
- The Brokerage Service will work with the full range of commercial bus, coach and minibus operators to promote the commercial opportunities available in running routes to Post-16 provision, linking together families and relevant Post-16 providers where there is commercial demand.
- Signposting assistance to families and young people as they plan their Post-16 pathway. This service would be available from September 2018 onwards, and includes the promotion of a variety of journey planners and apps to help families.
- Signposting and providing advice for their personal travel plan.

Spare seats

Selling any **spare seats** on journeys SCC has arranged specifically for children entitled to SCC funded travel. In these circumstances, SCC will sell these on a first come first served basis.

The charging arrangement for the sale of **spare seats** for the school year commencing September 2019 will be £750 per annum. The termly charge will be £250 per child per seat. Each year the cost of a spare seat will rise by £90 until it reaches the average cost of a spare seat (which in May 2018 was £966) when the yearly increase will then revert to £10 per term (£30 per year).

For those with special educational needs and disabilities (where they are not eligible for transport funded by SCC) wishing to purchase a **spare seat** the charge will be £690 per annum for school year 2019-2020. The termly charge will be £230 per child per seat. Each year the cost of a spare seat will rise by £30 per year (£10 per term).

If there are more applications for the purchase of these seats, they will be sold on a first come first served basis.

Where the offer of a seat can be made, travel is conditional on the parents/carers accepting the terms and conditions of the offer and making a fixed termly contribution toward the cost of the transport. The availability of a seat is reviewed termly. A **spare seat** cannot be guaranteed as it may be required for an entitled child.

However, the **spare seats** scheme does not extend to the offer of seats on public transport journeys or to other vehicles that have not been hired as a whole to carry out school transport journeys solely for SCC.

Parents whose children do not otherwise qualify for SCC funded school travel assistance, and who would like them to travel on the transport can apply for a spare seat by applying online at www.suffolkonboard.com.

PART III GENERAL

Medical Conditions

If a child suffers from a medical 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.

A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is a sum of money paid to parents or carers of children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan who qualify for transport. A PTB is offered at the discretion of SCC where for example, the offer of a PTB as an alternative to a taxi or minibus, works out to be more cost effective to the local authority.

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.

Where a child or young person has a care-plan or medical protocol in place, parents and carers should make this known to the driver and /or passenger assistant.

Some children and young people meet the threshold for Specialist Learning Support due to their complex health needs*. A Specialist Learning Support Assistant (SpLSA) may be present on transport depending upon the individual child or young person's needs.

**This service is available to children and young people who are registered with a GP within Ipswich and East Clinical Commissioning Group and West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and attend a school within those geographical areas.*

Parental Agreements

Parents or carers who have an agreed arrangement with SCC to provide transport themselves will be reimbursed travel expenses, at SCC parental transport rate. Additionally, Personal Travel Budgets are available where these provide the best value solution for the authority.

Promoting the development of self-reliant travellers

Where it is safe, appropriate and reasonable to do so, children with special educational needs will be expected to walk (accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult) to and be dropped off at, a common pick up point near their home.

To support the development of children to become self-reliant travellers, individual children with an Education, Health and Care Plan, or with special educational needs and/or disabilities, will, where appropriate, be offered a programme of independent travel training. Upon successful completion and sign-off, their travel arrangements would be adjusted.

Passenger Assistants

A passenger assistant may be provided following a risk assessment for children or young people with either an Education, Health and Care Plan or additional needs.

The requirement for a passenger assistant will be reviewed annually or as circumstances change. Needs may alter as the child or children grow older and a passenger assistant may not continue to be necessary.

In circumstances where a child may be travelling on their own on a public service and there is clear professional 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.

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 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. Passenger assistants have basic training in first aid but are not otherwise medically trained.

General Information

It is important to note that the policy applies to home to school travel 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.

Opt In Arrangements

Under the new school and Post-16 travel policy arrangements, all parents and carers need to inform us:

- if they wish their child/ren to be assessed for SCC funded school travel and
- to let us know annually that they want their child/ren to continue to make use of their SCC funded school and Post-16 travel.

For more information on how the Opt In arrangement will work for September 2019 and the timetable please visit www.suffolkonboard.com.

Transport for under 5s

All children are entitled to a full time school place from the September of the school year in which they reach five years of age. Parents may delay full time attendance until the start of the term after of their fifth birthday.

When children who begin school on a full-time basis in the school year in which they reach 5 years of age will have SCC funded travel made available in accordance with the arrangements and policy for children of **compulsory school age** set out above.

A parent or carer needs to Opt In for school travel for their child who is attending full time education, transport will be provided according to the published criteria contained this policy, and subject to distance.

Exceptions to this policy may be made in respect of young children with special educational needs (*Please see the section on “Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Mobility difficulties”*).

TRANSPORT FOR STUDENTS AT SIXTH FORMS AND COLLEGES

Suffolk County Council has a discretionary policy for home to school and college travel assistance for Post-16 students. These arrangements meet the requirements set out in the legislation and in other guidance that is from time to time provided.

The Post-16 Travel policy is available separately.

HOW THE SCHOOL TRAVEL POLICY IS IMPLEMENTED

Assessing eligibility for School Travel

For on-time Secondary normal admission round applications eligibility for transport will be assessed using the availability of school places based on National Offer Day, 1 March each year, or the next working day. For Primary normal admissions round this would be the 16 April, or next working day.

For all other admissions applications (e.g. late and in year) eligibility for school transport will be assessed using the availability of school places, on the date the admissions application is determined.

Transport eligibility will not be reassessed unless there is change of school offered or change of child's home address.

Calculation of Home to School Distances

In order to establish whether or not there is an entitlement to home to school travel assistance and in accordance with requirements set out in the legislation, home-to-school distances are measured by the **shortest available walking route** which includes **Public Rights of Way**. Routes are calculated using a network comprised of the Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network (ITN), which includes all roads and urban paths, and **Public Rights of Way** as shown on the Definitive Map. Distances are measured from the point of the network that is closest to the address point of the child's home to the gate or access to the school or college. The type of route we measure is one available for all-the-year-round use (see Glossary for definition).

In terms of the Extended Rights to Low Income Transport, in accordance with the published guidance we measure the upper distances according to road route via the Integrated Transport Network.

In future, Ordnance Survey Mastermap Highways Network will replace ITN.

Provision of Travel Assistance

For children or young people who qualify for travel assistance in accordance with the above statutory offer and the discretionary offer, SCC will provide the most appropriate transport with regard to the child's needs. This will include the purchase of seats on public service bus routes or direct from a school, and in every circumstance, whichever is the best value for SCC.

It is important to note that, regardless of any agreement with a third party to provide the service, SCC will still have the responsibility to ensure that a child receives the statutory requirements for school travel. For example, a school or a multi academy trust may have decided to provide a home to school travel service that is outside this policy. But if the school or multi academy trust then decide to stop providing that travel service then SCC would not provide an equivalent replacement service. Instead, children who had been receiving that travel service would be assessed by SCC under this policy. This would be a new assessment of eligibility because their circumstances have changed.

These terms would need to be made clear in the agreement and published on both the school, multi academy trust and SCC's website.

Travel Passes

As a part of the information we use to assess entitlement to transport, we have a database of children and students provided by schools and colleges of further education. It is, therefore, vitally important that the details of an individual child or student, which are held at the school are correct – particularly in relation to the home address, post-code and date of birth.

Each child or student who is allocated to a transport service arranged by SCC will be provided with a pass (when parents opt-in) which authorises travel on that journey. Passes are not transferable to other journeys and should be carried at all times. The companies who provide us with transport have clear instructions to check passes regularly and to allow only those who can produce a valid Pass to ride under the arrangements made by SCC. We tell them to exercise discretion, particularly at the beginning of each new term, **however it is important to emphasise that children and students must carry their Pass each day.**

Details of the timetable applicable to each of the journeys are available at www.suffolkonboard.com.

Travel Times

Best practice suggests that the maximum length of journey for a child of primary school age is likely to be 45 minutes each way; whilst a child of secondary school age might be expected to travel up to 75 minutes each way. Similarly, a child's special educational needs and/or disability may however, necessitate a shorter maximum journey time.

Changes to Personal Circumstances

Any significant changes to personal circumstances (for example a house move) must be notified to SCC and will trigger a review of travel assistance. This might result in travel assistance being changed or withdrawn. Any review, will be assessed according to this policy for the period from September 2019 school year onwards, or the Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for September 2019.

Suffolk County Council does not provide home to school travel 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.

Travel to Pupil Referral Units (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. 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.

All drivers and passenger assistants are required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS) check. Details of codes of conduct for transport operators can be viewed online at www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/download-home-to-school-transport-leaflets

Smoking is strictly forbidden on all the transport services SCC arranges for children and students. It is also a requirement that when on the vehicle children and students must behave appropriately at all times and not do anything that might put the driver, the vehicle or other passengers at risk. Misbehaviour or damage caused to a vehicle may result in the Travel Pass being withdrawn by SCC, the school or the operator. Details of the codes of conduct for students can be viewed online at www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/download-home-to-school-transport-leaflets

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

Temporary Travel Assistance

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 travel arrangements, the following protocol will be followed.

- a) Requests can be made by the parent / carer or school and should be made by contacting SCC's Passenger Transport Unit directly. This can be done by telephone, in writing, email or in person.
- b) Supporting medical advice will be needed to accompany the request so that SCC 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 normally be arranged within five working days from the receipt of the written request and supporting evidence.

Suffolk County Council does not usually provide transport in circumstances where the parent might not be able to accompany the child to school on a temporary basis. However, SCC will consider any applications for exceptional and extenuating circumstances.

Further Information

You can find further information on terms and conditions of use and procurement practices at www.suffolkonboard.com

HOW DO I CHALLENGE A TRAVEL ASSISTANCE DECISION?

Suffolk County Council's policy on entitlement to travel and transport has been summarised in this document. Suffolk County Council sets that policy and staff have no discretion to amend its application.

If a parent has submitted an opt-in application for free funded travel and this has been refused on the grounds of eligibility, but the parents believe their circumstances justify special consideration there is the right of challenge process.

A challenge can be submitted by completing the School Transport Review form at www.suffolkonboard.com/transportreview

On what grounds may I challenge?

You may challenge a transport decision for any of the following reasons:

- the transport arrangements offered;
- your child's eligibility;
- you disagree with the distance measurement between your home and your child's school or college in relation to statutory walking distances;
- you consider that the **shortest available walking route** is unsafe for a child, accompanied as necessary;
- there are other exceptional circumstances which mean that you cannot arrange for your child to access their school, examples might include your child's special needs or medical condition means that they cannot be expected to walk to their school, or your medical condition means that you cannot accompany your child to their school;
- it is claimed SCC has not applied this policy correctly.

Appeal

You can appeal the decision, further information on the 2 stage appeals process is which available online at www.suffolkonboard.com/appeals. Appeals forms can be requested from transport.appeals@suffolk.gov.uk or by calling 0845 606 6173.

Complaint

You may raise a complaint by email to customerrights@suffolk.gov.uk or telephone the Customer Care Manager on 01473 260711. Further information on the complaints process also be found on-line at www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support/customer-rights

Further Information

Suffolk County Council produces a Schools in Suffolk booklet each year about our schools and **admissions** arrangements; this includes information about the school

transport and post-16 policies. These booklets are published online and you can view these documents online at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissionstoschools

If you need clarification about any matter with regard to home to school travel you can contact us at:

Passenger Transport Unit

Suffolk County Council

Endeavour House

8 Russell Road

IPSWICH

Suffolk, IP1 2BX

Tel: 0845 606 6173

E-mail: transport.service@suffolk.gov.uk

GLOSSARY

Admissions

There are two types of school admission applications. The normal **admissions** round is a set period of time when applications and decisions are made for children to start school full-time, or to move on to their next school in the following school year. A parent in Suffolk is able to apply for up to three preferred schools and applications are prioritised using the **admissions** oversubscription criteria chosen by the school's **admissions** authority. Some schools, but not all, choose to use **Catchment Areas** as one of their criteria. We co-ordinate the normal **admissions** round to ensure that every learner receives the single offer of a school place at the highest ranked school possible to meet parental preference.

All other applications are considered as in-year **admissions** to a school. This is applications made during the school year or for entry at the start of a school year but in a different year group from the school's normal year(s) of entry.

Last year in the normal **admissions** round:

- 97.8% of children in Suffolk were offered a place at one of the high or upper schools their parents or carers applied for, with 93.3% getting their first preference when their application was on time.
- For primary (including infant, junior and middle) schools, last year in the normal **admissions** round 98.5% of children in Suffolk were offered a place at one of the primary or infant schools their parents or carers applied for, with 94.2% getting their first preference when they applied on time.

Catchment Area

Each year every school must publish an **admissions** policy that states the oversubscription criteria, that is the rules used to prioritise application, to decide which children will be offered places at the school when more children apply than the number of available school places.

The **admissions** authority responsible for a school's **admissions** policy decides its oversubscription criteria and this may include using a **Catchment Area**. If used, a **Catchment Area** will give a higher priority for admission to the school for children who live within the **Catchment Area** boundary, over those who live outside.

Suffolk County Council, the **admissions** authority responsible for community and voluntary controlled (usually Church of England) schools, has previously decided to use **Catchment Areas** as one of the oversubscription criteria for these schools. However, some **admissions** authorities in Suffolk, such as free schools and many academy trusts, do not use **Catchment Areas**. Instead they have chosen to prioritise the order in which children are offered school places in other ways as stated in their published **admissions** policies.

Catchment Areas only apply in respect of school admission priorities, and do not have any influence in respect of the legal requirements for provision of school travel.

Closed contract

A **closed contract** is used when SCC is not able to buy seats on a public registered bus service or another **commercially viable** transport service in the area so a contract is procured for a school bus to take eligible students from home to school.

Members of the public are unable to travel on a **closed contract** bus route.

Commercially viable

This occurs when a commercial operator assesses that the revenue generated from passengers wishing to travel will exceed the total actual cost of running that bus service, including an element of profit.

Compulsory school age

In England and Wales:

- A child begins to be of compulsory school age on the start date of the term following his or her fifth birthday, or that day if their fifth birthday falls on the day term starts.
- A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they reach the age of 16 or if they reach 16 after the last Friday in June but before the start of the new school year.

Extended rights eligibility

We provide funded transport where children are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit if:

- the nearest suitable school is beyond two miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 10);
- the school is between two and six miles (if aged 11-16 and there are not three or more suitable nearer schools);
- the school is between two and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16).

Nearest suitable school

This is the closest school by walking distance to the child's home address with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs the child may have.

Distances are measured by the shortest available route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. When measuring routes SCC will not only consider roads but will also take into account **Public Rights of Way** such as footpaths and bridleways.

Suffolk County Council has a duty to provide SCC funded travel assistance for eligible children and young people, as determined in the criteria set out in the Statutory Offer. When a child cannot be offered a place at the nearest school for the home address, this will take into consideration the availability and cost of travel.

Public Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way includes footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads.

School Travel Plans

A school's School Travel Plan should promote active, safe and sustainable travel to their school. A school travel plan should include elements such as:

- encouraging more walking and cycling;
- improving safety on the school journey;
- raising awareness among children and parents of the harmful effects of increasing car use on children's health, safety, and independence.

Shortest available walking route

Route is generally available all year round except in extreme weather conditions (as may be the case with any road). The following are regarded as acceptable risks and NOT normally accepted as reasons for a route being unavailable:

- Moral danger (lonely areas)
- Unmanned level crossings
- No street lighting
- Ditches, rivers, canal running alongside part of route
- Muddy paths
- Electric fences
- Cross field paths
- Presence of livestock

Spare seats

A discretionary scheme in Suffolk is in place which may provide assistance to children who would not otherwise qualify for funded travel by using **spare seats** on **closed contract** journeys that we have arranged for children entitled to funded travel. This does not currently extend to the offer of seats on public transport journeys or to other vehicles that have not been hired as a whole to carry out school transport journeys solely for SCC. The availability of a seat is reviewed termly.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A child or young person has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. They have such a learning difficulty or disability if they, (a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

Sustainable Modes of Travel (SMOT)

Travel arrangements that may improve the physical well-being of the individuals who use them, the environmental well-being of all or part of the local authority's area, or a combination of the two.

Please see Suffolk's SMOT plan at www.suffolkonboard.com/SMOT

Three-tier education system

In the Bury St Edmunds area there are some schools where children can go to a:

- Primary school from the Reception year to Year 4 before moving to;

- A middle school from Year 5, then to;
- An upper school from Year 9.