

SCHOOL TRANSPORT EXISTING PRACTICE 2016

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 School Transport provision is managed by the Passenger Transport Section in the Place Department on behalf of Education. The remit of the Passenger Transport Section is to secure school transport for those pupils who qualify in accordance with the legislation at the most economic overall cost to the Council.
- 1.2 The Passenger Transport Section is also required to advise the Director of Children & Young People on matters connected with school transport policy, and upon the implications of any proposed change in policy which would affect transport provision.

2.0 SCHOOL PUPILS - WHO QUALIFIES FOR FREE TRANSPORT

LEGISLATION

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to secure their children's education. Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places a statutory obligation on Education Authorities to make such arrangements, as they consider necessary for the provision to assist pupils' education. Section 42 of the Act defines the walking distance as:

“in the case of a child who has not attained the age of eight years , two miles and in the case of any other child, three miles.....”

- 2.2 At Scottish Borders Council the minimum legal requirements have been extended to provide free school transportation to:
- a) Primary pupils who live more than two miles from their catchment school
 - b) Secondary pupils who live more than three miles from their catchment school
- 2.3 Pupils enrolled at a Roman Catholic Primary School are offered transportation where they live within the designated catchment area.
- 2.4 Free school transport will be provided if the catchment school is full and a pupil from within the catchment area is required to attend an alternative school as long as that school is outside the statutory walking distance.
- 2.5 No assistance is given with transport for pupils who do not attend their catchment school.

3.0 WALKING DISTANCES AND TIME CONSTRAINTS

- 3.1 The determination of routes is planned so as not to exceed specified standards for the distance that pupils may be required to walk in the course of their journey to school, maximum times before and after school that children may be left on school premises and the overall length of the day.
- 3.2 The following maximum walking distances are observed:-

- a) Primary pupils shall not be required to walk more than 2 miles and High School pupils shall not be required to walk more than 3 miles to reach a school transport boarding point
- b) Where a route is linear, the child uplifted first shall not be required to walk more than one half mile to the transport pick-up point.

Subject to these constraints the most direct route will be followed.

3.3 In most villages all children are uplifted at a single pick-up point unless they use a public bus service, in which case they may board at any marked bus stop. Outside villages, pick-up points are agreed by Passenger Transport.

3.4 The following time constraints are observed:-

- a) Normally school transport is timed to arrive 5 minutes before the start of school and to leave 5 minutes after the close of school. There are exceptions at specific schools because of the nature of the school site.
- b) Pupils in burgh primary schools will normally share transport with their associated High Schools unless it is cheaper to provide separate transport for them.
- c) Where an improvement to public passenger transport services or a saving in the expense of school transport can be achieved by bringing children in earlier or taking them home later this will be done provided that:-

No child shall be left on school premises more than 30 minutes before the start of school or for more than 30 minutes after the close of school. No child shall suffer an aggregate waiting time in excess of 45 minutes per day and, where possible those who are required to arrive early shall be taken home promptly and vice versa.

- d) Where a route is circular it shall be so arranged that the children uplifted first in the morning shall be taken home first in the afternoon (and vice versa), provided that no additional cost is incurred by doing so.

3.5 The distance from home to school is taken to be from the garden gate (or if there is not a garden, from the front door of the house) to the school gate (custom and practice). The route which is measured is the shortest practicable route for a pedestrian.

4.0 PRIVILEGE LIFTS

4.1 From August 2013 a paid privilege lift scheme has operated.

4.2 A privilege lift is offered on request to a pupil who does not qualify for free travel where:

- a) a vehicle owned or on contract hire to the Council has vacant seats, and
- b) provided that no expense falls upon the Council in acceding to the request

The Council will not provide a larger vehicle than is necessary to meet the requirements of those who are entitled to free school transport, nor deviate from the specified route, solely to meet the requirements of pupils who seek privilege lifts, unless no additional costs arise from doing so. The Council will not accept financial contributions from parents for amending school transport routes, but will permit parents to enter into private arrangements with transport contractors to modify routes, provided that entitled pupils are not adversely affected.

4.3 Charges are based on a standard fixed rate:

£1 daily return fare for pupils who attend their catchment school.
£2 daily return fare for pupils who do not attend their catchment school.

- 4.4 In the event that more privilege lifts are requested than the number of spare seats that are available, priority shall be given:-
- (i) to those attending their catchment school over those attending an alternative school by parental choice.
 - (ii) amongst those attending their catchment school, to those who live furthest away.
 - (iii) amongst those equidistant from the school, to the youngest.
 - (iv) amongst those attending an alternative school by parental choice, to those who have attended longest at the school concerned.

5.0 DETERMINATION OF ROUTES

- 5.1 The Passenger Transport Section is responsible for determining the optimum network of routes and the best form of contract for every area and for the allocation of individual pupils to those routes. Routes are arranged so as to serve more than one school wherever possible. Routes are arranged and scheduled for normal travel conditions.
- 5.2 There is a general presumption in favour of using public service buses where these are available with suitable capacity at suitable times to maximise support for a comprehensive network of public bus services.
- 5.3 Where no suitable public bus service is available, the pupils may be allocated to contracted school buses, minibuses or private hire cars or to Council-owned minibuses. Where a family is living away from other children and off any established route, a parental mileage allowance may be offered.

6.0 APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 6.1 Persons suffering hardship as a result of a decision not to offer free school transport to a pupil, or by the school transport which is offered, have the opportunity to appeal to the Director of Children & Young People for an exception to be made to the normal transport guidelines. The Director may grant transport, or authorise a variation to transport arrangements, where:-
- a) The health of the pupil is such that to walk to school or to the pick-up point would be detrimental to their welfare, or
 - b) there is a significant element of danger even to an accompanied child.
 - c) The health of a parent is such that they cannot reasonably be expected to escort the child to school or to a transport pick-up point.
- 6.2 Where the grounds of the appeal cite the medical condition of the pupil or parent, advice is obtained from the Council's medical advisor.
- 6.3 Where the grounds of the appeal is that there is a road safety problem the following Road Safety Criteria will be taken into account:

A route shall be considered safe for a child (who is assumed to be accompanied as necessary by the parents) where:-

- (a) there is a continuous footway, footpath or bridlepath or level verge alongside the carriageway;
- (b) there is no such footway, but the carriageway is more than 6.5m wide;
- (c) there is no footway or verge and the carriageway is between 5.5m and 6.5m wide, but the traffic volume is less than 240 vehicles (2-way) per hour;
- (d) there is no footway or verge and the carriageway is less than 5.5m wide, but there is no location upon the route where forward visibility is less than the overall stopping distance (as indicated in the Highway Code) for the speed of local traffic.

6.4 Where:-

- a) the pupil concerned lives within walking distance of the school and
- b) the route to school would not be considered safe for an accompanied child by the Council's criteria, but
- c) there is a suitable public bus service available

then free transport will be given on application only if the child is eligible for free school meals.