

Home to School Transport for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

A Guide for Parents/Carers

Gloucestershire County Council provides home to school/college travel support to approximately 1,700 children and young people with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) each year. This is provided in line with the eligibility criteria set out in the policies on our website: www.goucestershire.gov.uk/sentransport.

Frequently Asked Questions

What type of travel support will you provide?

If your child is of statutory school age, travel support can be in the form of either:

- Bus pass, with independent travel training where necessary and appropriate or
- A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) for parents to make their own arrangements or
- Taxis/minibuses where necessary to meet the young person's needs, usually on a multi-occupancy basis.

For Post 16 learners, travel support will be in the form of either:

- Bus passes, with independent travel training where necessary and appropriate or
- A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) for parents to make their own arrangements.

Please note: Post 16 learners are not eligible for support in the form of a taxi. Please refer to the relevant policy on the website for more details.

Will my child have a passenger assistant?

The risk analysis/assessment will determine whether a student requires a passenger assistant and one will only be provided when there is a risk to the health and safety of the student or to other passengers. A passenger assistant is normally provided on fully accessible (wheelchair) vehicles and on minibuses.

Will my child be able to meet the transport staff?

Transport companies are expected to carry out a home visit before new transport commences to provide an opportunity for the child or young person and their parents/carers to meet the driver/passenger assistant and discuss the student's needs.

Is there a limit on the journey times?

Government guidance based on best practice states that the maximum journey time for

- A child of primary school age should be 45 minutes each way and for
- A young person of secondary school age it should be 75 minutes each way.

Due to the rural nature of the county, some students need to attend a special school that is some distance from their home and government guidance accepts that such journeys may be longer than the recommended timings above.

How can I be sure the transport is safe?

We take every precaution to ensure your child's safety when travelling on the vehicle. In particular we ensure that:

- All drivers and passenger assistants have enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service clearance.
- All drivers and passenger assistants are required to complete basic first aid training and pass our training scheme which covers all aspects of the role.
- All students on transport have a Passenger Safety Plan (PSP) so that drivers/ passenger assistants understand each child or young person's needs.
- Site visits take place to check: the roadworthiness of vehicles (e.g., inspecting tyres); on an unannounced 'spot check' basis by trained motor engineers.
- Any concerns raised by parents/carers, schools, social workers are fully investigated in a timely manner.

What happens if my child requires medication on board transport?

Drivers and passenger assistants are not authorised to administer medication or to undertake any form of medical intervention. In the event of an emergency, the vehicle will stop in a safe place and a member of staff will call the emergency services.

Are students allowed to eat on transport?

No food or drink of any description should be consumed during the journey unless by prearrangement due to a child or young person's particular needs.

Is it possible to change the collection/drop-off time?

The transport company will inform the parents/carers of the collection and drop-off times. As the timings need to support the efficient operation of the route, family circumstances (e.g. work commitments, siblings attending different schools) cannot be taken into account. Due to changes to the transport network (for example, students joining or leaving a vehicle), the collection and drop-off times may change over time, but every effort will be made to provide parents/carers with notice of any alterations.

If you cannot change the collection/drop-off time, can my child be transported from/to a different location (e.g. sibling's school, childminder, grandparents)?

The County Council can only provide transport assistance between the student's permanent home address and the school. Therefore, transport is not provided to/from alternative addresses, such as a sibling's school or a relative, even if the distances involved are similar.

What happens if I cannot meet my child at the designated drop-off time?

A responsible adult must be at home to receive the child or young person at the agreed return time from school. To ensure your child's safety, if there is no-one available at home to meet your child, we may contact Social Care or the Police for assistance. If this happens more than once, transport may be withdrawn until officers are satisfied that proper arrangements are in place.

What happens in bad weather and/or school closures?

In severe weather conditions (e.g. snow, storms, floods) it may be necessary to either change or cancel transport arrangements for safety reasons at short notice. If you are advised by the transport company that your child's morning journey has been cancelled, you should assume that the afternoon journey will also be cancelled unless you hear otherwise.

What happens if there is a breakdown or accident?

If it is not possible for a vehicle to complete its journey, the transport company will make alternative arrangements (this is usually in the form of a replacement vehicle). Should there be a breakdown or accident whilst your child is on board, parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible and made aware.

What happens if my child is ill and cannot go to school?

If your child is unwell and unable to attend school, you must contact the transport company the night prior to travel. If your child only shows signs of being ill on the morning of travel, parents/carers must call the transport company as soon as possible before the transport is due to arrive.

The transport has not turned up. What should I do?

If the transport company has not contacted you to say there is a delay, phone them for an update. If regularly late, parents/carers should contact us so that this can be investigated.

Can anything be done if the transport company keeps changing the driver/PA?

We recognise that for some students with SEND, change can be very unsettling. However, some changes are unavoidable (for example, due to sickness, leave, staff turnover) and may be necessary to ensure the most efficient use of the available resources. Where this is necessary, parents/carers will be notified in advance (where possible).

Is transport supplied for respite care?

We are not required to support any journeys other than from the permanent home address to school. Very occasionally, where a request is submitted by a child's social worker for transport to a respite address that does not require additional mileage and will not affect other passengers, such a request *may* be considered. For all other circumstances, the child's social worker will be able to advise whether they can support the request.

Are there any journeys for which you cannot provide transport?

If your child is entitled to transport assistance, we can only provide transport between their permanent home address and school, and at the usual school start and finish times. It is not possible for us to provide transport:

- Between their school and any other establishment
- For work experience placements
- For activity weeks
- To medical appointments (e.g. dentist, hospital)
- If your child is ill and needs to be collected from school early
- To or from a location that is not your normal home address (e.g. childminder, grandparents) unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To or from induction/enrolment days at colleges.

Can you provide transport for breakfast/after school clubs or phased entry?

Transport can only be provided at the beginning and end of normal school days and transport requirements outside of this are the responsibility of parents/carers.

Is transport ever suspended?

Occasionally officers suspend transport following an incident during on transport to allow them time to investigate exactly what happened. Officers aim to reinstate transport as quickly as possible, but they must be sure that the transport provided is safe and appropriate for the student concerned, other passengers and the driver/passenger assistant. Whilst transport is suspended, the parents/carers are responsible for taking their child to/from school.

My child is now transported by a different transport company, but we preferred the old one. Can this be changed back?

Periodic review and retendering of contracts is unavoidable due to the Council's legal obligations, and these can result in a change to the type of vehicle and passengers, the

route or the transport company. Officers will notify parents/carers of any changes in advance so home visits can take place. We are unable to take into consideration any preferences from parents/carers.

Why do you have to review the arrangements as we are happy with our operator?

There are approximately 1,700 children and young people in the home to school transport network and over time it can become inefficient. In addition to these other contracts have to be reviewed and retendered when they reach the end of the contract term. Therefore, from time to time it is necessary to take a fresh look to make sure the arrangements reflect the needs arising from students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In addition, the County Council must ensure that it is meeting strict procurement regulations concerning contracts paid for by public funds.

How often will transport arrangements be reviewed in the future?

Each year children join and leave schools and as part of this process a regular alignment of suitable travel arrangements take place. Dependent upon the home addresses' of new pupils, there may be a requirement to schedule children onto more appropriate routes although this will be fully evaluated and kept to a minimum with variations to each contract arrangement.

What you can expect from your transport operator

All drivers/passenger assistants (PAs) will:

- Wear GCC identification badges and always wear high visibility clothing whilst on school sites.
- Have enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service clearance.
- Hold a basic first aid training certificate and have passed our training scheme.
- Have a reasonable grasp of the English language.
- Have read and understood the child/young person's Passenger Safety Plan.
- Offer a home visit prior to the operation of a new contract.
- Be presentable and have a clean appearance.
- Treat students/parents/carers in a respectful and courteous manner.
- Ensure the vehicle is roadworthy and operated to a high standard of cleanliness.
- Not smoke during the performance of the contract, including 'e-cigarettes'.
- Wait for up to five minutes upon arrival at the agreed collection or drop-off time.
- Keep parents/carers informed of any significant delay to transport.
- Notify SEN Travel Enablement of any incident or accident affecting passengers.
- Avoid, where possible, changes in drivers/passenger assistants.

What we expect from parents/carers to help transport run smoothly

- Ensure that your child is ready five minutes before the company is due to arrive.
- Be at home in time to receive your child on their return from school.
- Treat the transport team/company respectfully and politely.
- Inform the transport company/driver/PA as soon as possible if your child is not attending school for any reason (e.g., illness).
- Inform the transport company/driver/PA if you collect your child from school during the day (e.g., to take him/her to a medical appointment).
- Ensure, where possible, your child is aware of appropriate behaviour whilst travelling to and from school.
- Inform us of any changes that might affect the transport arrangements, including but not limited to: changes to your address; your contact details or those of your emergency contact(s); timetable changes; changes to health or medical needs.

- Notify us of any problems with the transport so that these can be addressed in a timely and appropriate way.

How do I report concerns?

Depending on the nature of the concern you should initially raise these with your transport provider, this being the company and not the driver. Should you not be satisfied with outcome, or you feel our involvement is required, please contact us using the telephone number or ideally email below. It is important when emailing to go into detail about the concern including dates and times where appropriate.

Contact Details

If you have any questions about home to school transport for students with special educational needs and/or a disability please contact us on (01452) 425011 or email sen.transport@gloucestershire.gov.uk . Email is the preferred option.