

ANGUS COUNCIL

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

POLICY STATEMENT



As at Oct 2016/Updated January 2018

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT

Our Commitment

Angus Council are committed to providing a school transport service that meets the requirements of pupils, parents and schools.

We will work in partnership with all parties concerned to ensure that school transport services are operated in a safe and efficient manner. All parents must abide by the School Transport Conditions which are noted in Appendix 1. A School Transport Behaviour Code is issued to all pupils each August (see Appendix 2).

The council will ensure that the transport provided is operated as efficiently as possible, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of pupils, parents and schools. Transporting a large numbers of pupils, almost 1,140,000 journeys per school year, we will endeavour to resolve any issues effectively and as speedily as possible.

Introduction

- 1.1 The Council provides school transport for approximately 3,000 entitled pupils daily.
- 1.2 The Council is formally required to co-ordinate the provision of school and public transport so as to meet the needs of the area in the most economic way. This will include the use of public bus services wherever possible.
- 1.3 Schools and Learning, (People Directorate), carries responsibility for all entitlement issues for primary, secondary pupils and for children and young people with additional support needs. School staff will escort children and young people with additional support needs to their respective vehicles, and will work in tandem with transport operators to manage pupil-centred issues on vehicles.
- 1.4 The Transport Team (Place Directorate) exercises management control over bus and taxi contracts and coordinates operational aspects of school transport provision.
- 1.5 Parents are responsible for applying for transport and ensuring that they comply with Conditions of Travel detailed on the application form such as escorting pupils to the pick-up point, crossing any roads, etc. (see Appendix 1).

- 1.6 Children and young people are responsible for their behaviour on school transport. The Council has in place a Behaviour Code which details the required conduct expected when travelling on school transport vehicles (see Appendix 2).

Entitlement to Transport

- 2.1 In Scottish legislation, the undernoted pupils qualify for free school transport:
- All pupils aged 8 years of age and under who live two or more miles from their catchment school;
 - All pupils aged over 8 years of age who live three or more miles from their catchment school;

In Angus all primary pupils who live 2 or more miles from their catchment school are entitled to school transport. All secondary pupils who live 3 or more miles from their catchment school are also entitled.

Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs or medical needs are considered on an individual basis.

- 2.2 Prior to pupils entering P1, S1, S5 and S6, parents are required to complete an on-line application form for school transport. This form, when completed, will be forwarded to the Schools and Learning team for approval and subsequently passed to the Transport Team who will be responsible for making all the necessary transport arrangements.
- 2.3 For pupils requiring Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision, parents should ensure that an application form and pupil travel passport for school transport is completed prior to entry to each new school and thereafter annually. The application form/pupil travel passport when completed will be forwarded, via the pupil's school, to the Schools and Learning team for approval and subsequently passed to the Transport Team who will be responsible for making all the necessary transport arrangements.
- 2.4 The qualifying distance for eligibility for assistance with transport is measured from home to school by the shortest suitable walking route. In considering whether a route is suitable, it is expected that a child will be accompanied by a responsible adult when walking to/from school. In any case of dispute over the distance between home and school, the home-school transport appeals process is used as set out in Section 7.
- 2.5 It should be noted that where any placing request is granted, parents accept full responsibility for the arrangement and cost of travel to and from school.
- 2.6 Angus Council also provides some school transport on the basis of safety grounds.

Privilege Places

- 3.1 A privilege place can be offered on request to a pupil who does not qualify for free transport on distance grounds or is not attending their catchment school and where the vehicle on contract hire to the Council has vacant seats and no expense falls upon the Council in acceding to the request. Privilege places may be withdrawn at any time in the event of those seats being required for entitled pupils.
- 3.2 In the event that more privilege places are requested than the number of spare seats available, priority shall be given to:
- Those attending their catchment school over those attending an alternative school by placement requests;
 - Amongst those attending their catchment school, distance from home to school will be the main criteria used, although a pupil already allocated a privilege place will not be displaced by another privilege place during the academic year.
- 3.3 All privilege places must re-apply on an annual basis. Once all applications have been received and transport for entitled pupils is allocated then privilege places will be allocated by mid-September. This may incur delays at the start of each term and parents will be required to transport the pupil during this period.

Summary of Operational Practices

- 4.1 The Council determines the optimum network of routes, the best form of contract and for the allocation of individual pupils to those routes. If establishment hours allow, routes are sometimes arranged to serve more than one school.
- 4.2 Contracts are generally awarded for a period of three years and are phased for renewal on a rolling basis so that in each year about one third of contracts are re-tendered.
- 4.3 Where contractors operate vehicles with more than eight passenger seats, the contractor will at all times hold a current Public Service Vehicle (PSV) Operator's Licence issued by the Traffic Commissioner. All drivers who drive such vehicles must possess a current Driver's Licence with entitlement which covers the category of vehicle being driven. All PSV drivers undertaking school transport duties for Angus Council undergo PVG checks and are issued with Angus Council photo ID Badges if deemed suitable to drive school transport vehicles. Mini-buses with between nine and sixteen passenger seats must have lap and diagonal seat belts fixed for each passenger seat position. All drivers must also undertake Child Protection Training annually.

- 4.4 The Council will make all decisions regarding which pupils, including privilege places, are conveyed and to which contract they will be allocated.
- 4.5 No unauthorised person(s) should travel on a contract vehicle, only the pupils allocated.
- 4.6 Contract routes will not be altered to accommodate the transport needs of privilege users.
- 4.7 Contractors operating vehicles with nine or more passenger seats must display school bus signs, as specified in legislation, on journeys conveying pupils to/from school. In such cases, hazard warning lights must be used while pupils are boarding or alighting.
- 4.8 Where there is no established route (usually remote rural areas) or capacity is not available, a parental mileage allowance may be offered. The mileage rate payable is the amount determined by the Head of Schools and Learning as being reasonable reimbursement of car operating expenses. Mileage rates are not individually negotiable.

Walking Distances and Time Constraints to Pick up/Drop off Locations

- 5.1 The following maximum walking distances are observed:
 - (a) Primary pupils will not be required to walk more than two miles and secondary pupils will not be required to walk more than three miles to reach a school transport boarding point;
 - (b) Where a route is linear, the child uplifted first will be uplifted as near to the child's home as practicable, given the size of the vehicle in use and the availability of public roads;
 - (c) If, due to a child's home location, the child would have to walk on private land, greater distances than those specified in (a) above, a parental mileage allowance may be offered;
 - (d) Except in the case of certain pupils with Additional Support Needs or pupils with severe mobility problems, a pupil will receive transport from/to a point on the public road in the vicinity of their home.
- 5.2 In most villages, children are uplifted from one or a small number of recognised pick-up points. If pupils are using a local bus service they may board the bus at any marked bus stop. Outside villages, pick-up points are determined by the Transport Team.
- 5.3 The following time constraints are observed:
 - (a) In appropriate cases pupils in primary schools will share transport with that associated with secondary school pupils;

- (b) Where possible, a circular route will be arranged so that the pupils uplifted first in the morning will be taken home first in the afternoon (and vice versa) provided that no additional cost is incurred by doing so.
- 5.4 No specific limit is set to the overall length of day for a pupil from leaving home to returning there.
- 5.5 Transport is not provided at lunch times for those schools where the P1 class finishes at that time for the first two weeks of the session, although an exception to this may be made for pupils with additional support needs. Transport arrangements will be made for the P1 pupils at the later finishing time of the school in the afternoons.
- 5.6 Transport is not provided for pupils to travel to/from their home at lunch times.
- 5.7 Transport is not provided for pupils travelling to/from a place other than their registered place of residence (as indicated on their Pupil Progress Record).

Safety, Discipline and Supervision

- 6.1 The Council provides a seat for every child who has been authorised to travel. It is very important that pupils travel on the vehicle to which they have been allocated. Where more than one vehicle is operating from an area to a child's school, parents should ensure that their child is fully aware of which vehicle to board. It is important that pupils follow the instructions of drivers. Operators do receive guidance on what to do if disciplinary problems arise. In the first instance the driver/escort will warn the pupil(s) about their behaviour and ask them to stop misbehaving. In cases of more serious, or repeated, misbehaviour the driver/escort will take all reasonable steps to check the misbehaviour and to identify properly the pupil(s) concerned. The driver/escort may ask for and retain the pupils season ticket or travel pass (where issued) as proof of identity. Having identified the pupil(s) the driver/escort (or his/her employers) should report the incident directly to the school. A report form for drivers will require to be completed and copies passed to school, Transport Team and Schools and Learning Transport Co-ordinator.

In particular, pupils should remain seated with their seat belt fastened at all times during the journey, and at no time should they touch or attempt to open or close the doors of the vehicle. All school transport vehicles carry a mobile phone or equivalent communication device for emergency use.

- 6.2 Drivers/escorts have been instructed not to eject a school pupil from a vehicle for misbehaviour. In a severe case of misbehaviour which affects the safety of the vehicle and/or other passengers, the driver/escort will seek assistance from school staff or the police. Registered bus routes have the right to bar disruptive passengers and contracted school transport providers

similarly have the option to refuse to carry passengers who have previously demonstrated inappropriate behaviour in consultation with the Council. Appendix 2 Transport Code of Conduct contains details.

- 6.3 Parents/carers are responsible for the behaviour of their children whilst on school transport. Issues with behaviour may result in action taken by the school which can include allocating pupils to specific seats on the bus, exclusion from School Transport or any other sanction deemed appropriate by the school. During any exclusion, the parent assumes full responsibility to transport the child to and from school.
- 6.4 Appropriate arrangements will be made by schools to facilitate the safe alighting/boarding of pupils from/onto school transport. Children and young people must show passes when boarding the vehicle on every journey, failure to show the pass or a letter of authorisation from the school when requested will be treated as a breach of the Behaviour Code.
- 6.5 The Council will assist contractors in identifying pupils who damage or deface vehicles and support any reasonable action taken against a pupil who is found to be behaving in this way. Equally we will support pupils, parents and schools if they have a justifiable complaint against the contractor or operational staff.
- 6.6 **Concerns regarding Drivers and Escorts**
All contractors and staff must adhere to all legislation requirements regarding the maintenance and operation of school transport vehicles. The Council monitors various aspects of school transport provision, in particular, service reliability and adherence to the contract specification, including the size and type of vehicle(s) allocated to the service. In addition, Council staff monitor service performance in terms of: the cleanliness of the vehicle; whether the vehicle is heated and/or suffering from excessive condensation; the condition of the interior and seats; and, the conduct of staff. Parents who have any concerns regarding the reliability of the transport service for pupils, should contact the Transport Team at the Council.
- 6.7 **Registering of Complaints**
Any complaints can be made through the Council's Accessline system by telephone or e-mail.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 7.1 Where parents think their transport entitlement decision may be wrong, they should contact the school transport helpline number 01307 476305 during office hours. Confirmation of entitlement will be provided and an exact measurement and route map can be provided if required. However, if a parent remains dissatisfied with the measurement or route taken then they can appeal in writing by e-mailing the Schools and Learning Service Leader (Locality).

Parents have the right of appeal against any refusal to provide transport where the appeal is based on road safety. The case will be considered against agreed criteria. Where appropriate a site visit will be carried out with Police Scotland and other agencies and a decision reached as to whether transport should be provided on safety grounds. Parents who wish to lodge an appeal against a refusal to provide school transport should in the first instance submit their appeal in writing to the Head of Schools and Learning. It is assumed that a child will be accompanied by a responsible adult when walking to/from school and that the route is not already covered by a public service bus.

- 7.2 Where a pupil resides within a tenth of a mile of the 2 mile (primary) and 3 mile (secondary) travel limits for free school transport then, a parent/carer can request a physical re-measure of the travel route should they have been refused free school transport. This appeal will be undertaken by an individual not involved with the original decision and referred to a Service Leader for final determination.
- 7.3 Appeals will not be considered for pupils attending a school as a result of a placing request.

Early Closure

- 8.1 On the last day of term prior to the Christmas holidays, and on the last day of summer term, all schools have official permission to close at 3.00 pm. School transport operators have been advised to uplift all children within thirty minutes of the early school closure time (whenever practicable).
- 8.2 The Transport Team have advised all operators of their responsibilities during periods of adverse weather conditions. The operator will liaise with parents, schools served and escorts, regarding the operation and routing of vehicles. The driver has the authority to use his/her own discretion to decide whether a road is passable or not.
- 8.3 A driver may, in adverse weather conditions, abandon a morning journey and return all pupils already picked up to their pick up point and into the care of a responsible adult. In such cases the operator will not be responsible for conveying pupils home in the afternoon. Where a parent/carer has subsequently delivered the child or young person to school they will be responsible for collecting them in the afternoon.
- 8.4 Since many transport arrangements serve more than one school it is essential that schools co-operate regarding emergency closures. If a school decides to close early, school transport operators will respond as soon as practicable after notice of the closure is given but this may take some time. Likewise, operators may also request that homeward journeys operate earlier than usual if weather conditions are deteriorating. Operators and schools/colleges should liaise directly concerning the issue of early closures.

- 8.5 On homeward journeys, pupils should always be set down at the usual set down point. If in adverse weather conditions the contract vehicle is unable to take pupils to that point, the pupils will not be allowed to walk home without the accompaniment of a responsible adult. If this is not feasible, the operator should contact the Transport Team for advice. An alternative venue has been identified for each contract and the children and young people will be placed in the care of the head teacher(s) or nominated person. In the case of children and young people with Additional Support Needs, it is very important that the operator and school(s) have agreed appropriate set-down arrangements with each pupil's parent/carer.
- 8.6 In the event that transport becomes stuck because of blocked roads, pupils should wait on the vehicle until rescue can be organised. If the circumstances are deemed to be dangerous, the pupils should be guided in an orderly manner to a place of safety.

Pupil Lists and Bus Passes

- 9.1 A number of children who will be entitled to transport will start school during the academic year. Whilst these pupils' on-line application forms are being processed (this may take up to five working days), they can receive conveyance after being issued with a letter of authorisation from their school after consultation with the Transport Team. In the case of children and young people with Additional Support Needs, the Transport Team should be consulted regarding the transport arrangements to be offered.
- 9.2 Given that the travel passes are distributed to pupils by their schools on the first day of the new session, operators will allow all listed pupils to travel to school on the first morning without a travel pass.
- 9.3 The travel passes will be checked on each journey and only those pupils with a valid travel pass will receive free conveyance. Pupils who lose their travel passes, or whose passes become defaced or illegible, will be required to obtain replacements from the Transport Team and, whilst waiting for a replacement pass, the pupil's school should have issued them with a letter of authorisation. A replacement travel pass is available to purchase at £2.50 for a school pass and £5.00 for a college pass. This can only be purchased through the lpay system.
- Pupils who claim they have lost their travel pass will not be refused access to the school vehicle on their school-bound journey, but will be told to obtain a letter of authorisation prior to their homeward journey. Pupils who repeatedly fail to show their travel pass will be in breach of the Behaviour Code.
- 9.4 Every pupil who has been authorised to travel on a local bus service in Angus will be issued with an appropriate travel pass. The standard School/College Travel Pass will be used for all services. Travel passes are not issued to pupils travelling on Additional Support Needs contracts.

- 9.5 If any pupil in possession of a travel pass is required to undertake either leg of their daily return journey to/from school/college outwith the usual school/college transport travel times (eg during examination periods, or due to illness), the pupil concerned must be in possession of a letter of authorisation from his/her head teacher. If a child is not in possession of an authorising letter he/she will be charged the appropriate bus fare. Season tickets valid for travel on the route of one bus company cannot be used on another company's buses travelling on the same or similar route.
- 9.6 Travel passes issued for use on school contracts are not valid for use on local bus services.
- 9.7 If a pupil in receipt of free school transport (or who has applied for transport) leaves school, it is a formal requirement that the school advise the School Travel Co-ordinator using Form STL. Form STL shall be completed and returned as and when required, together with any travel passes (if issued).
- 9.8 If a pupil repeats a year, schools should notify the Transport Team so that the pupil's school transport record can be amended accordingly.

Additional Support Needs Contracts

- 10.1 Whilst the parent/carer of each pupil is responsible for accompanying the pupil between their home and the vehicle, the driver is specifically responsible for helping each pupil in boarding and alighting from the vehicle. Physical assistance will be given if requested by the pupil or his/her parent/guardian.
- 10.2 Unless instructed to the contrary, where an escort is provided they will sit in the rear of the vehicle where they can best supervise the pupils in their care.
- 10.3 If a pupil is not ready to join the contract vehicle when it arrives at the usual pick-up time in the morning, the vehicle is expected to wait for up to five minutes. If, however, this happens on more than one occasion, the Transport Team must be notified so that, with a view to preventing similar occurrences in future, the parents can be contacted.
- 10.4 On arrival at the school/college, the driver/escort will ensure the pupil(s) pass into the care of a responsible member of staff, as instructed by the /head teacher of the school/college concerned. For the return journey, the contractor will follow the instructions issued by the head teacher and/or Transport Team regarding pick-up arrangements at the school/college.
- 10.5 If on the contract's return journey there is no one at home to receive a pupil, for safety reasons the escort/driver must not leave the pupil alone or with a neighbour, unless specific approval for the latter has been previously given by the parent, the school/college, or the Transport Team. If no such arrangement exists, the escort/driver should immediately notify the Transport Team of the situation and the contract vehicle will then proceed with the remainder of the route. After the last point on the route has been served, the

contract vehicle will return to the pupil's home and, if there is still no one to receive him/her, the Transport Team should again be contacted for instruction on the appropriate course of action.

- 10.6 The driver and escort have been advised to be particularly sensitive when communicating with the children and young people. They have a wide range of Additional Support Needs; some may have physical, mental or emotional difficulties; some may have speech or hearing impairments; some may have several different disabilities and such difficulties and disabilities may affect their behaviour and/or ability to understand instructions. In addition, operators have been instructed to respect the confidentiality of information they receive about children and young people and their additional support needs.
- 10.7 The driver/escort will convey medications and messages between a pupil's home and his/her school/college.
- 10.8 Operators have been instructed that children should never travel on the lap of an adult.

General

- 11.1 Smoking by any person on a school conveyance contract vehicle is forbidden. Drivers/escorts will ensure that this is enforced.