

SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Including 'Frequently Asked Questions'

October 2012

This document is still being developed so if you think we have missed anything please let us know at:
admissions@buckscc.gov.uk

This booklet includes:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. The School Transport Policy (in full) as agreed in February 2012.**
- 3. Eligibility for free travel**
- 4. Exceptional Circumstances, Appeals and Complaints**
- 5. Discretionary Travel**
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Section 1: Introduction

A new school transport policy was agreed on 27 February 2012 following a full consultation. This booklet brings the policy together with many questions parents ask about school transport in one place. There is also more information about school transport on our website at <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page>

What does school transport cost the council?

It currently costs the Council on average £600 per pupil for a seat which includes the cost of the hire (including fuel) costs of the buses plus £76 for the administrative costs of organising the transport. Administrative costs cover making and communicating the decision on each child's eligibility, printing and distributing bus passes, the security vetting of staff, the letting of contracts, compiling and allocating pupils to routes and monitoring the performance of contracted bus companies including making regular routine safety checks.

Do you make a profit on the transport?

No, we do not make a profit, the charges we make for paid for (discretionary) school transport do not cover the whole cost. As in many parts of the UK school transport remains a subsidised service but we are obliged to keep that subsidy as low as we reasonably can.

Who runs the transport?

The Council has employed **Amey** to organise the transport and monitor its safety and performance. **Amey** is one of the UK's leading public services providers, working with public and private sector clients, supporting them to deliver services to the public more effectively. They work with a wide variety of mainly local transport contractors who obtain contracts through a public tender process.

Who still gets free school transport?

Free home to school transport is only normally available where you meet the rules set out in the [Home to School Transport Policy](#) (Section 2 of this booklet). In most cases we will advise you if we believe your child is eligible for free school transport when we allocate a school place.

What alternatives are there?

The paid-for (discretionary) scheme may suit your needs or there may be other initiatives, for example, your school may have a School Travel Plan that identifies and addresses congestion, safety, health and environmental issues associated with car use on the school journey. They may organise campaigns and projects, run initiatives and events and promote activities to reduce single occupancy car use for the journey. To explore these options, contact your school to find out if they have a Travel Plan and what initiatives and projects they organise to promote and encourage sustainable travel. In addition, the Travel to School leaflet and school travel planning website have information that you may find useful at:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/transport/school_travel_plans.page

The *Traveline* website also contains details of commercial bus/train services. Many bus and rail operators offer concessions to school pupils and students who can often pay on a daily, weekly, monthly, termly or annual basis for bus/train fares.

Section 2: Home to School Transport Policy

(The 'Guide' and 'Frequently Asked Questions' referred to have been incorporated into and replaced by this document.)

Eligibility for children and young people of statutory school age

1. Introduction

This policy sets out who is eligible for free transport to and from school at the beginning and end of the normal school day. It applies to Buckinghamshire residents only.

A guide to the policy gives information about how the policy operates and practical information such as how to purchase a bus pass. This will be primarily available on the Council web-site, but hard copies may be obtained on request.

The Guide and associated "Frequently Asked Questions" are kept under regular review so the latest version on <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page> should always be consulted when considering transport entitlement. The Guide does not form part of the policy.

The general assumption in the legislation is that the nearest suitable school for transport will usually be the physically nearest school by age [Primary/Secondary] and type [Mainstream/Special]. There is no general legislative entitlement to transport to the nearest school of a particular type e.g. by gender, faith, structure [academy, grammar, upper, free school] or catchment.

Historically, Buckinghamshire has made more generous provision than this and this edition of the policy begins to phase out some of these local additional provisions.

Admission and Transport policies are separate and not directly linked. This may appear surprising but this simply reflects the national legislation. So eligibility for a place at a school is not affected by this transport policy and obtaining a place at a school does not bring with it any entitlement to transport, even if a pupil is attending their catchment school.

The policy could change before a pupil completes their time at school e.g. up to 8 years following secondary admission choices. Therefore admission choices should not be made on the assumption that the same transport eligibility rules will apply throughout a child's education.

Eligibility is usually determined at the point of admission with some exceptions e.g. the development of a disability e.g. entering a low income category.

The nearest suitable school for transport purposes means the nearest school the pupil is eligible to attend with a place available during the normal admission cycle. It is generally considered that an upper school is able to provide an adequate education for a grammar qualified pupil.

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1 The Statutory Entitlement

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children get to and from school at the appropriate times each day. Buckinghamshire will continue to provide the statutory entitlement which is summarised in the table below. It is based upon distance and/or special circumstances (Special Needs or Disability; Low income; Safety of walking route).

There is no direct entitlement linked to catchment, religion or type of school (Academy/Maintained, Grammar/Upper, Male/Female) other than basic distinctions: Primary/Secondary, Infant/Junior, Mainstream/Special. The entitlements are set out in the 1996 Education Act and 2006 Education and Inspections Act. The main provisions are summarised on the Government's web site at:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Schoolslearninganddevelopment/SchoolLife/DG_10013990 and are set out there as follows:

Free home to school transport - does your child qualify?

Local authorities (LAs) must provide free home to school transport for children if they:

- are between 5 and 16 years old
- are attending their nearest suitable school
- live further away from the school than the statutory walking distances (2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for those aged 8 plus)

Children also qualify for free transport - no matter what distance they live from the school - if they are unable to walk for any of the following reasons:

- they have SEN
- they have a disability or mobility problems
- there is no safe walking route

Safe walking routes are those which usually include road crossings, good lighting and well maintained pavements and footpaths. LAs are required to assess the suitability of walking routes.

Category	Statutory Entitlement
Pupils up to the age of 8 (year 3)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school ¹ if it is more than 2 miles walking distance from home.
Pupils between the ages of 8 and 16 (years 4 to 11)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school if it is more than 3 miles walking distance from home.
Pupils from low income ² families aged between 8 and 11 (years 4 to 6)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school if it is more than 2 miles walking distance from home.
Pupils from low income families aged between 11 and 16 (years 7 to 11)	Free transport to one of the three nearest qualifying schools if it is between 2 and 6 miles away. Or the nearest school preferred by reason of a parent/carer's religion or belief that is more than 2 miles by the shortest available walking route and not more than 15 miles away.
Pupils with Special Educational Needs	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school,

or disability or mobility problems	where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance from school and where due to their special needs or disability they are unable to walk in reasonable safety even when accompanied.
Pupils living within the statutory walking distance but who are unable to walk in safety to school because of the nature of the route	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school, where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance from school and where, due to the nature of the route, they are unable to walk in reasonable safety even when accompanied.

As required by law³, Buckinghamshire County Council either provides or pays for free transport by the most economic means, for pupils resident in the county, who meet the above criteria. "Door to Door" transport is not provided other than in exceptional circumstances.

1 The phrase "qualifying school" is defined as meaning, inter alia, "a community, foundation or voluntary school... or an Academy" (see paragraph 15(2) of Schedule 35B to the 1996 Act). Therefore, all grammar schools and upper schools within Buckinghamshire would fall within the definition of a "qualifying school".

2 Entitled to free school meals or whose family is in receipt of maximum working tax credit.

3 Sections 508A and 508D of the Education Act 1996, and sections 508A, 508B, 508C, 509AD and Schedule 35B of the Act which were inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

2.2 Additional Entitlements Provided in Buckinghamshire

Category	Additional Buckinghamshire Entitlement
Those living closest to a non Buckinghamshire School	In addition to the statutory entitlement to transport to the nearest school, qualifying pupils will also be offered transport to the nearest Buckinghamshire School unless in a particular locality there is an existing admissions arrangement or significant pattern of parental choice for a non-Buckinghamshire school. A list of these out County schools will be published each year in time for the annual admissions process.
Reception Intake	Statutory School age begins the term after the child has turned 5, but children are usually admitted to school earlier. The Council does not wish to encourage the transport of unaccompanied 4 years olds on school transport. But in the term the child becomes 5 then the Council will consider the application of the transport eligibility rules to these pupils. This will be subject to a safety assessment so parents should not assume automatic entitlement.
Transfers from Infant Schools at the end of Key Stage 1	In these transfer admissions the normal school transport rules apply. In addition transport will also be offered to the linked Junior or Combined school[s] set out in the County's Admissions Handbook, as these are the schools with a planned

	intake. Where there is more than one linked Junior or Combined school listed then transport will usually be provided to the closest with a place.
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2.3 Residual Additional Entitlement from Previous Editions of the Buckinghamshire Policy

Buckinghamshire County Council's previous policy has been to provide free transport to school in the following additional circumstances. These entitlements are phasing out between September 2011 and August 2017. But in recognition of this, from September 2012 these pupils, although keeping their transport, will be required to pay an administrative charge to cover the cost of arranging it.

[i] Transport has been offered prior to 2012 entry but does not meet the criteria set out in 1.1 and 1.2 above.

These pupils will keep their transport entitlement but pay the administrative charge.

[ii] The former "agreed travel area" for a faith school is a consideration as follows:

- The child attends "on denominational grounds" (religious reasons) the denominational school serving your area, as long as you live within the "agreed travel area" for the school. Not all schools have an agreed travel area.
- This provision ceased for those starting primary or secondary school from September 2011 onwards so as not to withdraw transport from pupils already in receipt of free transport.

It was replaced by the following provisions:

- a] Pupils whose parents are on a low income would still be entitled to free transport, under the provisions in the Education & Inspection Act 2006 relating to transport to faith schools.
- b] Wherever possible pupils will be offered the opportunity to buy transport places on a designated school bus.

2.4 There is an exceptional circumstance

The Council will fairly take exceptional circumstances into consideration. Here there is no automatic entitlement, and the phrase "exceptional circumstances" primarily refers to the circumstances of the pupil rather than those of the parent. Illness or disability of the parents may be taken into account, but parental work commitments or having children in more than one school is not deemed "exceptional".

In considering exceptional circumstances the general expectations are that:

- If one parent cannot take the pupil to school the other parent, another relative or a friend will help
- The distance criteria will usually still apply
- The family's financial circumstances significantly limit their ability to find their own solution
- Exceptional provision will usually be time-limited
- Where necessary independent evidence will be required [e.g. consultant's letter]

Examples of situations that might be considered here are:

2.4.1 The pupil is “looked after”, also known as “in care”

The normal rules apply, but if a pupil is ineligible the situation will be considered on a case by case basis.

2.4.2 Enforced Move of Home

The family’s move is temporary, following homelessness or domestic abuse, and they have been placed in hostel or refuge accommodation.

2.4.3 Enforced Move of School

The closest school is not deemed to be a safe environment for the particular pupil due to safeguarding factors.

or

The pupil has been placed at school by the Pupil Placement Panel.

or

The pupil has been excluded from their closest school and they have been placed at an alternative school or Pupil Referral Unit

or

The pupil is the subject of a “managed move” from the closest school.

2.4.4 Other Significant Factors

Sometimes there may be other significant factors affecting a parents’ ability to get their children to school e.g. ill health or disability, e.g. special responsibilities as a carer.

2.4.5 Social Care Transport

It may be possible that some children qualify for transport under different legislation as “children in need” as defined by the 1989 Children Act. This would usually need to be assessed by a social worker.

3. Appeals

The Council will maintain an appeal process regarding eligibility decisions made under this policy, and information about this will be available on the Council web-site.

Section 3: Eligibility for free travel

The policy (See Section 2) explains that, in general, transport will be provided to your nearest school only, subject to the statutory walking distances. There are other particular circumstances where you may also be provided with entitled transport.

How can I check which school is my nearest school?

There is a checker on the website which you can use to work out which is the nearest school. The checker measures the distance using the Ordnance Survey Integrated Transport Network (ITN) data which is the base data for many online mapping and routing applications. The route measured will start at the point on the road network that is closest to the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) point of the pupil's home and will end at the point on the road network closest to the nearest school gate. The measurement is taken along the centre of the road and only includes footpaths that appear on the ITN dataset.

This is the definitive distance calculation that we will use to determine transport eligibility.

How do I apply for transport?

Usually if we believe you are entitled to transport we will send you a transport application form with your school place allocation letter. We will also put as much information as we can on our website – this page will be the main starting point:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page>

If you think you are entitled or qualify under the exceptions (e.g. unsafe walking route) and we do not send you a letter you can check this with the Admissions and Transport Team (contact details in Section 9).

To whom does the school transport policy apply?

The eligibility policy applies to statutory school age pupils (5-16 years old) resident in the Buckinghamshire local authority area and the general rules set out in the policy apply in all cases. Out-county pupils may purchase discretionary fare places where they already exist on convenient routes, however they should refer to their home authority to see if they have an eligibility to free transport to a Buckinghamshire School.

What happens if I choose a school that is not the nearest?

If you do not qualify under either the main policy or the exceptions then you will not qualify for free transport, but there may be a school bus where you can purchase a ticket or you may apply for a paid-for (discretionary) seat on the bus, subject to availability.

What does the Council mean by 'statutory walking distance'?

The national definition for 'statutory walking distance' is two miles for children under eight and three miles for children aged eight and over. The measurement of the 'statutory walking

distance' is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route ('safe walking route') along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. The presence or absence of street lighting on a route is not considered to be a factor in the safety of the route.

What do the Council mean by 'safe walking route'?

Generally roads and footpaths are deemed safe unless they have been specifically evaluated as 'unsafe'. The Council uses national guidelines to establish whether a route is a 'safe walking route'. When undertaking a risk assessment we take into account the age of the child; whether potential risks might be mitigated if the child were accompanied by an adult; the width of any roads travelled along and the existence of pavements; the volume and speed of traffic travelling along any roads; the existence or otherwise of street lighting; and the condition of the route at different times of year and at the times of day a child would be expected to travel to and from school (Extracted from Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, DfE publication).

Is transport provided for children living in Buckinghamshire but attending schools outside of the County?

Yes, in some circumstances where the school is their closest school and is either further than the statutory walking distance or is shorter than the statutory walking distance but the route is considered to be an unsafe walking route.

My child attends our nearest grammar school, but it is not our nearest school, am I eligible for free transport to grammar school?

Not usually (although there are some exceptions that could apply in your case- see below).

Our policy follows the national transport policy and in this policy it sets out that the nearest suitable school for transport will usually be the geographically nearest school by age [Primary/Secondary] and general type [Mainstream/Special].

So, for example it does not take into account whether the school you want your child to attend is the nearest boys or girls school, or the nearest school of a particular faith, or the nearest school of a particular type such as grammar school, academy or free school, or that it is, or is not, the catchment school serving your address. Transport legislation does not refer to County boundaries or school catchments.

It is generally considered that an upper school is able to provide an adequate education for a grammar qualified pupil. Upper schools cover the national curriculum and many Buckinghamshire upper schools are now all-ability academies. On this basis we have included upper schools when measuring distances for grammar school pupils.

So, in what other circumstances would I be eligible for free transport? (These may apply to both upper and grammar schools as indicated). They may also apply to primary age pupils

1. If we could not offer you your preference nearest school then we may assist with transport to the next nearest school if you expressed this as a lower preference. You will be expected to have applied for and been refused a place at your nearest school (which may be an upper school even if your child is qualified to attend a grammar school). We also expect you to have continued to apply for a place at this school by going onto the waiting list and appealing for a place at your nearest school. The latest we will withdraw a transport offer should your nearest

school become available after the main allocation is the last working day in July in any allocation year,

or:

2. If we could not offer you any of your preferences and the school we did offer is at some distance from your home. You will be expected to have applied for and been refused a place at your nearest school (which may be an upper school even if your child is qualified to attend a grammar school). We also expect you to have continued to apply for a place at this school by going onto the waiting list and appealing for a place at your nearest school. The latest we will withdraw a transport offer should your nearest school become available after the main allocation is the last working day in July in any allocation year.

3. The following schools are considered to be 'Adjacent Schools' and for the purposes of school transport are considered to be on the same site or campus because their main gates are separated by only 0.2 miles or less. If you are entitled to free transport to one of these schools then you are also entitled to the other school on the same site.

The Royal Latin Grammar School / Buckingham Upper School
Aylesbury Grammar / Aylesbury High
Beaconsfield High School / The Beaconsfield School (affects girls only)

4. The policy includes four out-county secondary schools as 'virtual' Buckinghamshire schools for transport purposes.

They are: **Icknield School in Watlington, Lord Williams School in Thame, Tring School and Wheatley Park School**, and for the areas of Buckinghamshire where one of these schools is closest and where there is a 'significant pattern of parental choice' for the out county school then free transport will be provided to that school.

Where these schools are closest but there is a 'significant pattern of parental choice' for a local Buckinghamshire school that is further away then free transport will also be provided to that school as well. This particularly affects Tring School as currently Marsworth and Pitstone have a 'significant pattern of parental choice' for Tring School and transport would be provided there whereas Cheddington, Dagnall, Ivinghoe Aston and Edlesborough all have a 'significant pattern of parental choice' for Cottesloe School and are provided with transport there. The schools included at this point will be reviewed annually

5. Secondary school age children living in the primary school catchment areas of Tilehouse/Denham Infant, Iver Village Infant/Junior and Iver Heath Infant/Junior will be provided with transport to Chalfonts Community College under a pre-existing promise made when Evreham School closed even if Burnham Park E-ACT is closer (plus, transport would still be provided to Burnham Park E-ACT).

6. In addition to transport (subject to the normal rules) to the nearest school, transport will be provided to junior school age pupils attending the junior school described as linked to the infant school attended when the application is made even where this is not the nearest primary school.

7. At primary age where there is established, pre-existing school transport to a primary school designated as serving the area of the child's home, then transport may also be provided.

What is meant by the phrase “a school that you are eligible to attend”?

- The school must be appropriate by age
- The school must be appropriate in terms of whether it is a special school or mainstream school
- A pupil must meet the entry criteria for a Grammar school for that school to be deemed their nearest school
- An upper school is able to provide an appropriate education for a grammar qualified pupil.
- A pupil must be of the appropriate gender to attend a single sex school

Will I get transport to the nearest school and then be able to make my own way to a further school?

No, for your child's security the transport is only agreed to the school your child attends.

I think the route is unsafe, what do I need to do?

Where we are aware of a route being unsafe we will usually have identified, on allocation, that your child is entitled to free school transport even though you live less than the age related relevant distance (2 or 3 miles) from the school. If we have not advised you the route is unsafe you can ask us to consider the safety of the walking route to your nearest school. Please note this is the safety of the route to your nearest school, not to the school your child attends/ will attend, if this is a different school instead of providing transport.. We may suggest a longer (but safe) route to your school where the relevant distance (2 or 3 miles) is still not exceeded. You will need to contact the Admissions and Transport Team (contact details in Section 10).

My income is low; can I apply for low income assistance?

Yes, in some circumstances you can apply for assistance to schools other than your nearest school and on the basis of your low income the charge will be waived. This is only applicable to Buckinghamshire residents and usually only where the family is eligible to receive free school meals. At primary age the school attended should be the nearest qualifying school and more than 2 miles walking distance from home, and at secondary age the school attended should be one of the three nearest qualifying schools and be between 2 and 6 miles away, or the nearest school preferred by reason of a parent/carer's religion or belief that is more than 2 miles by the shortest available walking route and not more than 15 miles away. A low income application form and more detailed information about the rules are on the website at:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page>

My child is attending a faith school, what is the situation for them?

Transport to faith schools is discretionary unless it is your nearest school.

The application process and charges are still the same as for other discretionary fare places - £380 during statutory school age or via the 16+ scheme. As a transition measure, children on existing primary transport will continue to receive free transport until they leave the school or move to the secondary phase (see note below re St Michael's Catholic School).

The faith schools that this applies to are:

St Louis' Catholic Primary (AV)

St Joseph's Catholic Infant (AV)

St Edwards's Catholic Junior (AV)

St Joseph's Catholic Primary (CSB)

St Peter's Catholic Primary (WYC)

St Michael's Catholic (Primary and Secondary) (WYC) – For Y7 pupils at this school, transport entitlement will be reviewed irrespective of whether the child attended the primary phase of the school to determine secondary transport entitlement.

My child has special educational needs

Where parents choose to send their children to a particular mainstream school, special resourced provision or special school, other than the nearest appropriate school that can meet the special needs proposed by the Local Authority, parents will be responsible for providing home to school transport. There is no automatic link between possession of a Statement of Special Educational needs and the provision of transport. Decisions on this matter are made by the Special Educational Needs Team.

To assess transport needs for a pupil with special needs the SEN officer will assess, in consultation with other relevant professionals and parents/carers, what types of transport will meet the young person's needs. These will be fully documented on the referral form e.g. whether the child/young person:

- Can make use of existing school transport routes, and would benefit from developing more independence.
- Can use designated transport pick-up points.
- Can travel by minibus or car with other children
- Requires individual transport
- Requires a Passenger Assistant. There is no automatic entitlement to passenger assistants.
- Whether a break in the journey to out county placements is required

A detailed risk analysis will be undertaken before deciding upon the transport needs of a child with special educational needs. More information is available from the Special Needs Team and in Section 9. If your child has SEN, arrangements are normally made for the crew to meet with you prior to transport commencing. Specific risk assessments relating to vehicle access / seating etc. are made by *Amey* on behalf of the Council.

Section 4: Exceptional Circumstances, Appeals and Complaints

You have refused me free school transport, is there anything I can do?

Where families have been refused free school transport, you may (in limited circumstances) apply to be considered under the exceptional policy or you may complain. In both cases we cannot indicate either the likelihood of you being successful or the circumstances under which you might be successful as each case will be looked at separately.

However as the circumstances in which transport will be provided are very limited then the likelihood is that you will be unsuccessful in gaining transport over and above the current policy unless you are able to clearly demonstrate

- (i) that you are not able to transport your child yourself both logistically and financially,**
- and**
- (ii) that there are strong educational reasons to keep your child at their current school rather than move to a more local school where they could walk to school or be entitled to transport within the policy.**

1. There are some transition arrangements and permitted exceptions within the policy. Read the policy carefully. If you feel you have exceptional circumstances that should be taken into account you may ask that an exception to the policy is made. There is a form provided for this purpose, which should be read in conjunction with section 2.4 of the new policy and completed in full. You can find the application form here:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/Home_to_School_Transport_Policy_2012.pdf

We will keep closely to the areas considered exceptional within the policy and you should provide evidence to demonstrate your case when asked. Please be aware that exceptional transport is only considered when a parent can also provide evidence of low income and is normally only provided for short periods of time if agreed.

Applications will be administratively considered against the policy and either refused or agreed within 5 working days of the full information being received. If you complete the application form but your case does not fall within the exceptions within the policy then your application is very unlikely to be successful at review.

If your application is refused, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed by the School Transport Exceptions Panel. This is an officer panel comprising a minimum of three officers which meets regularly. They will consider your case and will check that the policy has been correctly applied in your case, or whether you should have been considered as an exception. Once the decision is made you will be advised of the panel's decision within 5 working days of the full information being considered by the panel.

If your application is still refused by the School Transport Exceptions Panel you can appeal in person to the Appeals and Complaints Committee. This is a Committee of elected Members of the Council. The decision of the committee is binding on the Council and the parent. The focus of the Committee's work is to consider the correct application of the policy. The focus is NOT to

consider or allow new grounds of eligibility that change the policy. If they choose to assist then the support may well be timelimited.

2. You may complain about the home to school transport policy and the way it affects your child. Details of the complaints procedure are here:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/sites/bcc/about_your_council/Feedback_and_Complaints.page

The complaints procedure explains

- that complaints about the quality of the service provided will be handled by the service area (see 3 below) .
- complaints about council policy will be referred to an appropriate councillor. Complaints about the policy, if it has been both correctly consulted upon and applied by officers are unlikely to result in changes to the policy.

3. If you wish to complain about the way transport officers have interpreted and applied the eligibility transport policy then you will need to request that the application of the policy in your case is reviewed . In the instance that the officer has interpreted the policy correctly and there are no exceptional factors in your case but the outcome is not to your satisfaction, then your complaint is limited to being a complaint about the policy and so it should be directed to the Councillor responsible (see above).

If you wish to complain about the application of the discretionary policy/guidance then you should initially direct your complaint to the Contract Manager, Amey Client Transport who will consider any request to vary the standard operating arrangements carefully. If, following his response you remain unhappy then the only option remaining is to follow the complaints process.

4. If your complaint is about the operational running of the School transport you should direct your complaint to the Contract Manager, Amey Client Transport. If, following his response you remain unhappy then the only option remaining is to follow the complaints process.

Section 5: Paid-for (Discretionary) Travel Scheme for Statutory School age pupils

What is the paid-for (discretionary) travel scheme?

Although the County Council only has a legal duty generally to provide free transport between home and school for children who live more than three miles (two miles for the under 8s) and attending their nearest school, it also has the discretion to offer transport for other children where there is spare capacity on the bus route.

Where there is spare capacity on school buses, places will be sold to non-entitled pupils usually on a 'first come first served' basis. During statutory school years the Council will subsidise the cost of each seat. The fares for post 16 students and non Buckinghamshire residents are higher because they are not subsidised and they are based on distance travelled. For an individual journey, either charge could cost more or less than public transport, if available. Full details on the fares charged can be found here:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/admissions/Discretionary_Fares_201213.pdf

The County Council can never guarantee that a bus place will be available from anywhere in the County to any chosen school.

Priority on transport is always given to eligible pupils so the number of seats available to sell on a discretionary basis cannot always be established immediately. However, they will be released as soon as they can from July to October.

Applicants should be aware that on all routes, a small number of seats are reserved for children with a statutory entitlement who 'transfer in' to a school during the school year. This means that those seats are not available for *Amey* to sell to paid-for (discretionary) travellers. It is also the case that where there is no spare capacity, *Amey* cannot give a clear indication in advance of it being possible to make an offer of a place when such a place may become available, if at all during the academic year. Vacancies 'in year' only normally become available as a result of:

- children moving address or leaving a school
- sixth form children passing their driving test and no longer purchasing a bus pass
- parents not continuing to purchase the pass
- parents failing to renew by notified dates

Discretionary applications should be made at the latest by the last day of the summer term in order to be included in the earliest paid-for ticket offers. **Later applications may find reduced availability of places and routes and/or longer delays in tickets being offered.**

It is not practical to sell spare capacity in taxis and minibuses, as their use can fluctuate considerably. A minibus is, for this purpose, defined as a vehicle of up to and including 8 seats.

The discretionary application form can be found here:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page>

Is a discretionary place guaranteed once I have been offered one?

No, however we recognise the importance of these arrangements to the families concerned and will do our best, once a discretionary transport place has been offered to a particular school, to maintain that offer throughout statutory school age as long as payments continue to renew their transport by the advised deadlines and with duly honoured payment within those advised deadlines. However, a complete guarantee cannot be given that a transport place will not be withdrawn at some future date. On those occasions when this becomes necessary, we will try to give at least one clear term's notice of our intentions to enable parents to make alternative arrangements. That notice will not be less than half a term.

What are the paid-for (discretionary) fare costs?

The fares chart for 2013 can be found here.

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/admissions/Discretionary_Fares_201213.pdf

This scheme is not guaranteed to be the cheapest way to travel, nor to offer the most flexible means of payment and parents are advised to make their own enquiries about possible alternatives (for example by consulting the *Traveline* website) that may be cheaper.

How do I apply?

To apply for a paid-for (discretionary) fare place you need to download a discretionary form from our website at <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page> and either email or post as instructed to *Amey*.

If a paid-for place can be offered you will be asked to pay and to provide a recent passport-style photograph of the child. Without this photograph the ticket cannot be processed and the form will be returned to you. Without a photograph the issue of the bus pass will be delayed and your child cannot travel on the bus without it.

How do I pay?

You will not be required to pay until a place has been offered to you. When paying by annual, termly or half termly instalments you will be required to pay in the timescales indicated on the renewal form by post or online. Payment may be made by cheque, postal orders, Switch, Delta, MasterCard or Visa Card

Cheques should be made payable to 'Buckinghamshire County Council'. Payments cannot be taken over the phone.

Please take note of any deadlines for the receipt of payment that may be advised to you. Failure to pay by the required date may result in the place being offered to another child.

You must ensure payment is made for transport in advance of your child travelling. If your child is caught travelling without a valid pass and/or payment is outstanding you

will be responsible for full payment for the whole term in which your child was caught. A fine may also be levied.

If your child travels without a valid ticket they can be declined travel either by the driver or by a member of the Amey Client Transport Enforcement Team.

How do I renew my ticket online?

Visit www.buckscc.gov.uk/schoolbuspass to renew your child's ticket. This must still be paid for in the timescales indicated on the renewal form. Failure to pay by the required date may result in the place being offered to another child

How do I renew my ticket by post?

A renewal slip will also accompany each ticket you buy that you can use if you choose to not use online payments.

This should be returned accompanied by your payment (cheque, postal order or credit or debit card payment details). Failure to pay by the required date may result in the place being offered to another child.

How quickly will my bus ticket arrive?

It is not possible to say as it will depend on whether it is a free or paid-for ticket, whether a route change is required for an entitled child and whether we already have a photograph and any payment required. Make sure you leave sufficient time between your application and the date your child is due to start back at school. At busy times it can take several days before the ticket arrives.

Keep to any application and payment deadlines we advise you about- they are there to ensure you receive tickets in time for the start of term.

My income is low; can I apply for low income assistance?

Yes, in some circumstances you can apply for assistance to schools other than your nearest school (or for transport to your nearest school between two and three miles) and on the basis of your low income the charge will be waived. This is only applicable to Buckinghamshire residents and usually only where the family is eligible to receive free school meals.

A low income application form and more detailed information about the rules are on the website at: <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page>

Alternatively contact the Admissions and Transport Team

I have more than one child attending secondary schools, is there a deduction?

Yes, where there are three or more children in the same family resident at the same address paying either year 7 or post 16 transport then a £100 discount will be refunded. To claim a discount you will need to keep evidence that you have paid the transport charges in full. A discount is not payable where the pupil has to pay the administration fee only and, where parent

have chosen to pay by instalments will only be paid following the final instalment. At this point you should email admissions@buckscc.gov.uk or write to the Admissions Team enclosing the evidence and detailing the children you have paid for.

Can I get a refund?

Refunds are approved on student tickets only for those students who have returned their tickets as they are no longer required in the following circumstances either:

- following failure to secure a school place for which transport was being arranged
- as a consequence of a change of parental home address
- pupil is agreed as an eligible pupil after payment has been made

Not having used the transport is not a sufficient reason for a refund.

The bus stop checker does not show a bus route to school/ local bus stop for my preferred school?

This could be for one of three reasons:

1. Where the school attended is an out county school there may be no existing transport going to the school. In this case transport would only be organised for entitled travellers where the school was the nearest school to the home address.
2. The area is rural and served by a minibus or taxi. In these cases you may register your interest in a discretionary place by completing a discretionary application and putting your home address in the 'stop required' box. We will then review the provision and consider whether a discretionary place can be arranged (for example by amalgamating taxi routes onto a small bus). Our aim is to ensure as many families as possible can access school transport.
3. There has never been transport provided to that school. It is unlikely that, unless there are entitled pupils that transport would be added. If you are prepared to get your child to a bus stop that does serve the school you can apply for a paid-for (discretionary) place.

My child is now over 16 (16+), why do they have to pay a higher discretionary fare?

The government does not subsidise 16+ pupils and the council does not have a duty to provide school transport for 16+ pupils.

New transport applications for 16+ pupils are discretionary and are not subsidised apart from those pupils who qualified for assistance because they held a statement of special educational need naming a particular school (whilst in year 11) or where they qualified under low income rules.

Parents may wish to apply to purchase a discretionary fare paying place on the bus and they will need to do this at:

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/schools/transport.page>

16+ discretionary charges are banded according to the length of the journey. The fare costs can be viewed here:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/admissions/Discretionary_Fares_201213.pdf

SECTION 6: Travelling to school

This section applies to all pupils travelling but where eligible and paid for (discretionary) transport differ we say so below

Are there any rules whilst my child is travelling?

Yes, there are conditions of travel

- Pupils must behave well on the transport at all times. Appropriate action will be taken against children who misbehave on vehicles and in extreme cases this could involve the withdrawal of transport facilities.
- Pupils should carry their travel passes **at all times** as they will be required to show them when they board the vehicle and **pupils without a valid pass are likely to be refused travel.**

What happens at the beginning of term?

When your child has been allocated to transport the pass is printed and sent to you. For the majority of applications this will be for September in which case passes will be posted to you during the last two weeks of August. If you made an application on time, have paid where necessary and are expecting a pass which has not arrived 4 days before the term you should contact us.

How do I know the bus timetable?

A copy of the route/boarding points and timetable will also be printed on the back of the letter accompanying your child's bus pass. If there are significant amendments to the route or timetable during the year you will be notified of the changes in writing. Minor changes to the route or timetable may be relayed to the students through the driver or school. A replacement timetable for your child's service can be obtained from Amey Client Transport .

What happens if we move house?

If you currently get free transport to your nearest school your child's transport eligibility is likely to be affected. Please contact the Admissions and Transport team (contact details below) to see whether your child still qualifies for arranged transport or Amey Client Transport to establish whether you can access a discretionary place from your new home address.

It is your responsibility to advise us of any changed address. If you do not your child may be travelling illegally or alternatively paying for transport when they need not. We correspond by post with many parents and you may not get important information such as renewal forms if you do not tell us of a changed address.

What happens if my child moves school?

You must notify us.

The Admissions and Transport Team will check to see whether your child still qualifies for arranged transport. If not you will need to contact Amey Client Transport to establish whether you can access a discretionary place from your new home address.

What if my child loses or damages their bus pass?

If your child has mislaid their pass they may be declined travel. All schools can provide a temporary 5 day travel pass free of cost which can be issued to your child immediately and without charge. Before issuing a temporary pass they will contact Amey Client Transport to verify that your child is eligible for a free or paid for ticket in the first place. This 5 day period should be used to apply for a replacement. Emergency tickets are not issued where a discretionary application has not been completed. In addition, if transport is required on an occasional basis, for example where a pupil would like to visit a friend for tea, then this can be sold at a cost of £2 per day and your child should arrange this with the School Office.

Is there a charge for replacing a lost pass?

Yes, you need to pay for a replacement pass irrespective of whether the pass was a free or paid-for pass. Replacement passes can be provided for which there is an administrative charge see the charges summary here:

http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/assets/content/bcc/docs/schools/admissions/Discretionary_Fares_201213.pdf

How long will the journey be?

Our standard is to limit the journey to a maximum 45 minutes each way at primary school age and 75 minutes at secondary school age. However, in some cases, the distances involved mean that some children will have longer journeys. Please note that 'return' journeys are not constrained by specific times at intermediate stops with the result that homeward journeys may be quicker than advertised.

Can I choose the service on which I travel?

No. However, if you request a specific service you may be able to be put on a waiting list and the team will then contact you if a place subsequently becomes available. You can choose a specific bus stop along the route to which you are allocated however you cannot determine the *location* of a bus stop for your child.

Is transport between school and home only?

Free school transport covers transport to school or home only (e.g. it does not cover transport to work experience, to relatives or childminders). It is home to school transport only in line with the statutory requirements.

Paid-for school transport could be to a location of your choice even if it is not the closest stop to your child's home.

In certain circumstances children may qualify for social care transport under different legislation e.g. as "children in need" as defined in the 1989 Children Act, but that does not form part of this home to school transport policy, and this is usually assessed by a social worker.

Can I travel from more than one address?

Only one address at a time can be used for free school transport entitlement. If you have shared residence the transport will normally be provided to the address upon which the allocation has been made.

Discretionary fare places can be purchased to a second address if the route pre-exists and there is space on it.

Can I purchase a 'one way' bus pass as a discretionary traveller?

No – there is one charge for a place and you can choose to travel as much or as little as you wish to and from school but there are no refunds for irregular travel.

Are passes transferable to other routes?

No. Once issued for a particular route passes are not transferable and if pupils wish to travel on other services at any time, contact should be made with the Amey Client Transport Team to see whether this will be possible and the discretionary fare charge.

At what times is transport available?

Transport is only provided at the beginning and end of the normal school day which is formally published by the School. It is not possible to provide transport to or from extra curricular activities later or earlier in the day.

Can I choose the form of transport?

No. The type of assistance offered will be determined by the Council or its agent based upon needs, and may include for both mainstream and SEN pupils:

- A School Bus (where necessary supplemented by other methods as appropriate)
- Bus or train season ticket on public transport for child (and parent where necessary)
- A place in a taxi or minibus (normally shared with other children and, even if not shared initially, could become shared over time)

In some particular cases where free school transport, SEN or exceptional transport is agreed this may be a walking escort (up to 2 miles) or a walking bus created or a contribution may be made to parents petrol costs where this proves more economical.

For routes where there is a safe walking route under 2 miles long, a walking assistant (paid or volunteer) may be provided

If there are problems with the bus service my child is using, how can I find out?

Amey Client Transport work to avoid or minimise transport disruption. As part of the Place Service (BCC). the Team liaise closely with colleagues responsible for highway gritting and maintenance. However, bad weather, road works and traffic incidents can all lead to disrupted transport.

The BCC School Status website enables schools, parents / carers, pupils not only to check the status of individual schools within the County but also any amendments / delays to specific home school transport services associated with each school.

http://apps1.buckscc.gov.uk/efrms2005/SSSchoolStatus/school_transport.aspx

This does not give true 'real time' information, but is updated by contractors and Amey Client Transport who operate the services to help minimise any inconvenience when services are delayed, re-routed or cancelled.

Where advance warning is given by utility companies etc. amended transport arrangements for buses, taxis etc are put in place and school and parents advised accordingly with revised routes and timetables.

What happens if there is a breakdown?

If it is not possible for individual vehicles to complete their journeys, the contractor makes alternative arrangements / provides a replacement vehicle. In such circumstances pupils and students are encouraged to follow the guidance given by drivers / passenger assistants at all times. No responsibility can be taken by the County Council for the safety of those pupils who choose to leave the vehicle whilst not under supervision or direction of the driver.

Section 8: Quality and Safety

How can I be sure that the transport is safe?

There is always a degree of risk when travelling in a vehicle. Amey Client Transport and the Council try to ensure that any risks are minimised. All crew must hold a current, valid, CRB pass accredited by Buckinghamshire County Council. Amey Client Transport maintains an enforcement and risk assessment team that:

- checks vehicles at the roadside / beginning / end of journeys
- undertakes supplier depot checks
- follows up on complaints and queries from parents / carers / pupils and other stakeholders
- undertakes risk assessments on behalf of pupils using arranged transport
- participates in multi-agency impromptu road checks put in place by VOSA / police / District Councils in Buckinghamshire throughout the year
- provides mandatory supplementary training to the approved supply chain, some of which is nationally accredited.

These processes are monitored by the County Council also.

How do you ensure a quality service?

All transport operators, drivers and passenger assistants, are required to regularly complete a range of training provided by Amey Client Transport. All our trainers are nationally accredited and attend refresher courses to maintain their Tutor Status. Drivers and passenger assistants are required to also attend periodic refresher training. Their training includes:

- Passenger assistant training which deals with issues such as wheelchairs, Health and Safety, Guidance on Manual Handling & use of specialist equipment.
- Positive handling training (to develop acceptable and authorised responses to disruptive and aggressive behaviours in a manner that maintains positive relationships).
- Vehicle checks.
- Individual support plans and risk assessments, staffing levels, seating plans,
- Recording reporting, monitoring and evaluation of all incidents.
- Child protection awareness and reporting.
- First Aid Emergency at Work.

Do you monitor that standards are being maintained?

Amey Client Transport's Enforcement Team monitors the routes, checking the drivers and passenger assistants and making sure that the passengers on all contracts travel safely, in comfort and to time. This includes:

- Disabled users requiring specialist equipment and wheelchairs.
- Checking vehicles to ensure the contractors' vehicles and staff deliver a good quality of service.
- Ensuring operators have all the relevant staff records, legal documents and vehicle maintenance records required to carry out their duties on behalf of Amey and BCC.
- Supervision of the Aylesbury Schools Coach Park each afternoon.

- Bus pass checks to ensure that only pupils with passes are travelling and that the routes are not overloaded due to pupils without passes travelling.

Overall, there is robust accountability for performance in all of these areas / activities listed above via established governance arrangements overseen by the County Council.

Section 9: More detailed information about transport for pupils with Special Needs

What special arrangements do you make if my child has special needs?

If your child:

- has not travelled on home to school transport before or
- we are aware of changes to your child's needs which will affect transport

We would firstly ask a risk assessment officer to arrange a risk assessment with you and your child, so that we can find out any particular needs which might affect the type of transport which will need to be provided for your child.

Transport is usually on a grouped basis. In cases where it is more economic for us, parent mileage may be offered rather than a taxi.

Once your child has been allocated to transport, we would write to you with the details of the transport operator and the date on which transport will start and you can liaise with them directly to find out your child's pick-up and drop-off times, and to arrange to meet the taxi crew.

When we arrange transport, the operator will be given your child's details. If your child has had a Risk Assessment, the operator will also receive a set of 'Journey Safety Instructions' to advise them on your child's transport needs. This information is kept on a confidential basis by the contractor.

What are the handover arrangements for pupils travelling on taxis and minibuses?

If your child travels to/from school on a taxi or minibus, and has special needs he or she will usually be collected from and returned to your designated home address.

There are some important points to note in the terms and conditions of travel so please ensure you are familiar with them, they include:

- It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that there is a responsible adult, who has access to your property, at home when your child is picked up and dropped off.
- When your child's transport is first arranged, the transport operator will give you the pick-up and drop-off times; and it is important to be ready as the vehicle has a schedule and cannot wait
- You will usually need to accompany your child to and from the vehicle.

Is confidential information given to the company who are responsible for transporting my child?

In order for us to arrange transport, it is sometimes necessary to pass on information of a personal nature. However, all contractors have a contractual responsibility to ensure they comply with appropriate levels of data protection.

Section 10: Contacts

For general enquiries on bus boarding and alighting points, discretionary travel, 16+ renewals, bus passes, or complaints about discretionary transport decisions or the operational running of the transport:

Amey Client Transport (Complaints should be addressed to the Contract Manager)
Buckinghamshire County Council
County Hall, Aylesbury HP20 1YZ

Tel: 01296 387439 open from 8am term time and 9am non-term time
email: Ameytrans@buckscc.gov.uk

For enquiries on eligibility and entitlement for free home to school transport, exceptional transport and 16+ travel, or complaints about the administration of the school transport policy in the first instance should contact:

Admissions and Transport Team (Complaints should be addressed to the Admissions and Transport Manager)
Buckinghamshire County Council
County Hall, Aylesbury HP20 1UZ

Tel: 01296 383250
email: admissions@buckscc.gov.uk

For SEN enquiries contact your linked SEN Officer.