

Committee:	Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness
Date:	30 June 2014
By:	Director of Children's Services
Title of Report:	Revised home to school travel policy
Purpose of Report:	The purpose of this report is to seek Lead Member's agreement to changes to the HTST policies which will help the County Council set out more clearly our future approach to HTST

Recommendation:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the changes to the School Transport / SEND Travel Assistance policies

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 In line with the department's MTFP there is a requirement to make 15% savings on the HTST budget. This report will support the delivery of £444k of the required MTFP savings through to the end of 2015/16.

1.2 In order to help us identify the opportunities for service improvements and for savings, iMPOWER were commissioned in Autumn 2013 to look at ways we could manage demand. They also undertook detailed financial analysis and gave assurance that savings were achievable and that the financial opportunity assessment that they made (£444K) is conservative.

2. Supporting information

2.1 iMPOWER's report confirmed that there are significant opportunities in the service for improving how travel assistance is delivered to achieve service improvements and make savings. They identified the following demand management options:

- a move away from the primary offer for transport assistance for SEND pupils of a taxi to a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) and/or independent travel training (ITT).
- Setting clear expectations for families that travel assistance is not automatically offered for pupils with a statement or EHC plan
- Emphasising to families that transport assistance will be subject to regular review

2.2 Lead Member should also note that alongside these changes and in line with the agreed MTFP in December 2013 Lead member approved the proposal to apply means testing to post-16 young people with SEND, with an agreed fee of £370 per annum per student unless their family can demonstrate a low income.

2.3 THE SEND reform agenda is also key to achieving many of these changes and workforce development plans are currently being put in place. The introduction of EHC Plans and phasing out of Statements are reflected in policy wording. It has been decided to keep the ESCC HTST policy separate from the SEND Travel policy to achieve maximum clarity.

2.4 Both policies have been amended to clearly outline our offer and statutory responsibilities. Research into the policies from other authorities that operate PTB / ITT has been undertaken in order to ensure that we learn from best practice. Both policies have been reviewed for plain English.

2.5 Although the policies have been rewritten to make things clearer, the actual changes are subtle; whereby there is really just a change in emphasis moving away from what has sometimes been a default position that eligible children will be transported by taxi, to looking

at the more cost-effective options – such as independent travel training and personal transport budgets.

2.6 We have considered the need for an Equality Impact Assessment for the changes in the SEND Travel policy. However, taking legal advice it has been clarified that we are unable to compel families to accept the offer of a PTB or ITT as we still have a statutory responsibility to provide suitable transport; which may result in the need for hired transport. As a result these policy changes do not require an EqlA although individual assessments will need to pay due regard for equality.

2.7 Since the changes to the SEND Travel Assistance policy were approved by CMT in May, an issue which has potential inflationary impact on the HTST budget has emerged; this was not highlighted in the iMPOWER report, nor raised by other local authorities. Families who were previously taking their children with SEND to school without financial help are able to access a PTB (and 25% of children at special schools do not currently claim any travel assistance). In response to this we have added a clear new message to the policy, stating that if parents are able to, ie they have an appropriate vehicle or are within walking distance, they are expected to continue to take their child to school without additional support.

2.8 In addition there are a few cases where the cost of a PTB is more than the existing transport provision. Given the choice and control agenda, we still think it is right to offer a PTB which will be reviewed on a regular basis. However to ensure costs do not escalate the PTB offer should be capped if a less expensive existing transport route is in operation, with review on a regular basis. We are stating in the policy that "A PTB is offered at the discretion of the Council" (page 3 of the SEND Travel Assistance policy).

2.9 Our Legal Services have reviewed the adjusted policy in the light of the latest guidance on our statutory transport and equalities duties, and have advised that they are happy with the content; although as with any policy, there is still a risk that it could be challenged.

2.10 The twin policies are attached as

- **Appendix 1 'The School Transport Policy'** (which caters for all cases excluding children with special educational needs and/or disabilities)
- **Appendix 2 'Travel Assistance for children with SEND'**

2.11 For ease of reference, the key changes are detailed in Appendix 3, with the previous policies attached as Appendices 4 and 5.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

3.1 Revising our HTST policies in line with our statutory requirements and introducing the PTB/ITT offer will support efforts to maximise efficiency and reduce HTST costs, as well as offering families more flexibility over how their children and young people with SEND travel to school or college.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Lou Carter, SD Communications Planning and Performance

Local Members: All

Background Documents: None

School Transport Policy



Last updated: April 2014

Appendix 1

Document summary

This document sets out the East Sussex County Council's home to school transport policy for students who live in the county. This policy follows what we need to do by law.

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Qualifying criteria for home to school transport.....	2
2.1.	Statutory walking distance	2
2.2.	Route safety	2
2.3.	Low income groups	2
2.4.	Pupils with medical conditions	3
2.5.	Disabled parents and carers of primary aged children.....	4
3.	Travel assistance for eligible children	4
3.1.	Using the bus and rail network.....	4
3.2.	Mileage payments	4
3.3.	Travel by taxi or minibus	5
3.4.	Service standards for hired transport.....	5
4.	Review of transport provision.....	6
5.	Transport for sixth form students	6
6.	Application process.....	6
7.	When transport is not supplied	6
8.	Appeals and complaints procedure	8

1. Introduction

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to that their children attend school regularly. This includes arranging travel to and from school, meeting the costs and accompanying their child as necessary.

In some cases, the Council has a legal obligation to provide suitable free school transport. Transport will be provided in the most cost effective and appropriate way for the child's needs. This policy summarises the categories of eligible children, the provision offered, circumstances when assistance is not provided, and how to appeal against a decision.

A second document sets out the additional provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND):

- [SEN Travel Assistance Policy](#)

2. Qualifying criteria for home to school transport

The following circumstances explain when support can be given to children of compulsory school age. If your situation does not fit into the policy, then we are unable to provide any transport support.

2.1. Statutory walking distance

We will provide free transport between home and school for children over eight years of age who live more than three miles away from the designated school, or two miles for children under eight years of age. This is known as the **statutory walking distance**.

Distances are measured by the shortest available walking route using our Geographical Information System, taking account of public footpaths.

The designated school is the school suitable to the child's age and ability which serves the area in which the child lives. If there is more than one school, this is the nearest school to the home which is suitable for the child and at which a place is available.

2.2. Route safety

Where parents challenge the suitability of a walking route to school, the Road Safety Engineering Team will assess the route and will report on its safety against nationally set standards. The standards assume that the child is accompanied by a responsible adult. To qualify for assistance, the child must be attending the designated school. If alternative safe routes are available within the statutory walking distance, then no transport support can be given.

2.3. Low income groups

Children from low income families are defined as those able to get free school meals or whose families are entitled to the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC).

To qualify as low income you will need to be in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Job Seeker's Allowance (income-based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income-related)

- Support under part six of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee credit element of Pension Credit
- Or you are entitled to Child Tax Credit, you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and your family's annual income (as assessed by the Inland Revenue) is not more than £16,190
- Maximum level of Working Tax Credit

You can tell if you are in receipt of the maximum WTC from your tax credit award notice issued by HM Revenue and Customs. Part 2 entitled 'How we work out your tax credits' includes details of WTC elements other than child care. It then lists 'any reduction due to your income'. You are in receipt of the maximum where the reduction shows as £0.

Primary age pupils – Children over eight whose designated school is more than two miles but less than three miles from their home will continue to receive transport help if they are from a low income family.

Secondary age pupils – Children from low income families will qualify for free transport to one of their three nearest schools from where they live, provided the school attended is more than two miles but less than six miles away. Distances up to two miles are determined by using the shortest available walking route whereas the six mile upper limit is measured using roads only.

Secondary age pupils attending church aided schools – Children from low income families attending the nearest church school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, will qualify for free transport to that school if it is more than two miles but less than fifteen miles away from home. Confirmation of baptismal status or support from the parish priest or minister is required.

If you believe that your child is entitled to school transport on low income grounds, the quickest way is to download one from here:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/transport/financialhelp/lowincomeform.htm

If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Information For Families team on 0345 6080192.

2.4. Pupils with medical conditions

Some children may be unable to walk even a short distance to school. We may be able to assist with travel assistance if all other solutions have been looked into. For example, if arrangements with another parent or discussions with the school about travel options have been unable to provide a solution.

To qualify for help, your child must be attending the designated school. We will need to see medical evidence from a consultant or GP who must confirm your child's medical condition and that your child cannot walk the statutory distance. Please note that a fee may be charged for supplying the medical evidence and you would need to pay any costs. We will also need to know how long transport assistance is required and an indication of what type of travel is appropriate. If transport assistance is agreed, your case will be reviewed regularly.

If you believe that your child needs help with the home to school journey due to a medical

need, you should call the Specialist Transport Officer on 0345 60 80 190 or email sen.transport@eastsussex.gov.uk for more advice.

2.5. Disabled parents and carers of primary aged children

If you are prevented from accompanying your children on the home to school journey because of a disability, we may be able to assist with travel assistance if all other solutions have been looked into. For example, if arrangements with another parent or discussions with the school about travel options have been unable to provide a solution.

To receive help, your child must be attending the designated school. We will then look at the distance to school. Where the distance is very short, assistance may not be agreed, especially for a child in Year 5 or 6.

You will need to complete an application form and attach medical evidence from a consultant or doctor which must not be older than three months from the date of application. Please note that a fee may be charged for supplying the medical evidence and you would need to pay any costs. Transport cannot be arranged until the medical evidence is provided. If transport assistance is agreed, your case will be reviewed regularly.

3. Travel assistance for eligible children

3.1. Using the bus and rail network

It is for the local authority to decide on the travel arrangements to get pupils between home and school at the beginning and end of the school day. In most cases, we provide a ticket for use on public transport, or by providing a seat on a hired coach.

Students are collected as near to their home as possible, although they may have to walk a short 'reasonable' distance to meet the transport. This will not usually be more than one mile from their home address. The responsibility for making sure a child's safety in getting to and from the picking up point is with the parent or carer.

There are no legal guidelines for what is a reasonable journey time. This will depend on the age and individual needs of the child. However, we aim to make sure that no child will have a journey of no more than 75 minutes, with the exception of school placements outside of the county.

3.2. Mileage payments

If there is no suitable public transport or hired vehicle, parents willing to make their own travel arrangements will receive help with the cost of two return journeys a day. This is based on the distance between home and school. Payment is made on a family basis since the cost will be the same for two or more children, with changes to this cost if children are at different schools.

This is not available to parents who prefer to make their own arrangements to transport their child to their designated school despite public transport or a hired vehicle being available.

3.3. Travel by taxi or minibus

In cases where the home address is not served by public transport, hired transport will be provided to get pupils between home and school at the beginning and end of the school day.

Once authorised, new transport arrangements will normally take 10 working days to organise.

In the morning, you will need to have your child ready at the agreed collection time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes from the agreed time before leaving. It is also the responsibility of the parent or carer to get the child into the vehicle and the school's duty to get the child from the vehicle into the school building.

In the afternoon, you will need to make sure that a responsible adult is at home to receive your child at the agreed time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes after the agreed drop-off time before leaving, as delays could impact other children and their families. Failure to make sure that a responsible adult is at home to receive the child may result in the child being taken to a safe place such as Social Care premises. It is the parent or carer's responsibility to arrange for their travel home and to pay any costs.

3.4. Service standards for hired transport

Licensing and training of drivers and escorts

Drivers of coaches will possess PCV licenses. Taxi drivers will have been approved by the local Borough or District Council licensing officers. The County Council offers training to drivers and escorts to support them in their role, including additional guidance about individual pupil's needs.

Disclosure and Barring Service

All drivers and escorts of taxis, minibuses and hired coaches on council paid transport are subject to a DBS check (previously known as a CRB). This does not currently apply to those driving public transport.

Suitable vehicles and equipment

Vehicles used to transport children will be appropriate to the needs of the child. Where children need to be transported in their wheelchairs, a specialist vehicle will be provided. Other essential items of equipment will also be transported.

Contract information

All parents or carers will be provided with detailed information about the travel arrangements. Such as, driver name and phone number, pick up and drop off times, parental responsibilities and handover arrangements.

Monitoring operator performance

If parents have any concerns about the service being provided they should contact staff in the Client Transport Services in Communities, Economy and Transport Department so that the concerns can be raised with the provider of the transport service. Please phone 01273 335067. Service performance is subject to a contract between the operator and the council.

4. Review of transport provision

Travel assistance will be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the child's needs.

5. Transport for sixth form students

Increasing the participation age

The government has increased the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training, requiring them to continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17, and from 2015 until their 18th birthday.

This does not mean young people have to stay in school to continue in education or training. Options include full-time study in a school, college or with a training provider. They can also go into full-time work or volunteering combined with part-time education, training or an apprenticeship. As a result, any travel support given to students up to and including Year 11 does not go past the compulsory school age.

Travel assistance available to sixth formers

Sixth form or further education students from low income families who live more than three miles from their nearest suitable college or sixth form may be able to get help with their transport costs. These students will be given a coach permit, a bus season ticket or a grant towards their travel costs. To download the application form (PS1) and read the full policy go to: www.connexions360.org.uk/workandmoney/fesupport/Pages/main.aspx

6. Application process

Children's eligibility is assessed when school places are allocated so that the majority do not need to apply for assistance.

7. When transport is not supplied

Transport services other than at the start or end of the school day

Our duty is to provide assistance to get children to and from school at the beginning and end of the school day. It is the responsibility of parents or carers to arrange and pay for transport at other times. For example, we do not provide transport for:

- Breakfast or after-school clubs or extra-curricular activities
- Medical appointments
- Pre course visits or 'taster' days
- Parents' evenings
- Work experience or work placement
- Fixed-term exclusions
- Off-site educational placements

Independent or private schools (including nurseries)

Assistance is not given to children attending schools in the private sector unless the placement has been made by the Special Educational Needs team and transport has been recommended by the Specialist Transport Officer.

More than one home address

We only accept responsibility for the transport of children between their **main** residence and school. If children have more than one address, a decision needs to be made as to which address the children live. This would usually be where most school nights are spent but may include factors such as where the child is registered with a doctor, or where the child benefit is paid to.

Family circumstances

When looking at eligibility for travel assistance, we cannot take the following factors into consideration: parent's or carer's working hours, parents or carers taking other children to other schools, or parents or carers looking after other children.

Denominational primary schools

There is no policy to support children attending a denominational church aided **primary** school for reasons of religion or faith.

Vacant Seats Scheme

Requests are sometimes received from parents who would like their children to use a hired vehicle when they do not qualify for travel assistance. If spare places exist, the parent may purchase a travel permit.

Payment must be made in advance and the cost is £120 per term for a secondary school student and £60 per term for students attending a primary school (based on the six term year).

A second or subsequent child from the same family is entitled to a 25% reduction in the cost. These costs are reviewed yearly.

Where there is more demand for places than seats available, the following priorities will be used to decide who can travel:

1. If students are attending their designated school but do not qualify for free school transport, then those living furthest from the school are given priority.
2. If students are not attending their designated school, then those living nearest to the school are given priority.

Places on hired vehicles cannot be guaranteed and it must not be expected that this scheme will always be available. For instance, if a statutory traveller needs a place on a hired vehicle, **non-statutory** travellers will not have priority to use this transport. Full details of the Vacant Seats Scheme are available from the Client Services Transport Team on 01273 335088.

8. Appeals and complaints procedure

Reconsideration of cases and special circumstances

Staff in the Children's Services Department are not able to change the policy outlined in the section **Qualifying for home to school transport** on page 2. Where applications for assistance with transport are not accepted, parents or carers may appeal to the **Transport and Student Support Panel** which can consider personal or financial circumstances. The Panel is made up of three elected County Councillors who consider applications for assistance with transport that fall outside of the stated policy. Assistance is only agreed in the most exceptional circumstances. The Panel's decision is final and there is no further appeal locally.

Parents will need to fill in an application form and supply any supporting evidence. You can call the Principal Admissions and Transport Officer on 0345 60 80 190 for more details.

How to complain

The County Council is here to help and support the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, polite and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.

Sometimes things do go wrong and parents or carers may not be happy with the service they have received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Parents should let us know if they feel that the council has failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or discourteously.

Contact the Departmental Complaints Officer who will be able to give advice, the contact details are shown below. Written complaints can be sent by email or addressed to the department involved and addressed to the Departmental Complaints Officer at: County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1SW.

Contact details for complaints officers

For issues related to eligibility:

Children's Services

01273 482511

childrenservices@eastsussex.gov.uk

For issues related to daily operation:

Transport and Environment

01273 482317

tecomplaints@eastsussex.gov.uk

Contact your County Councillor

Parents can also contact their local County Councillor – details can be found on our website.

Ombudsman

If we do not resolve your complaint, you may wish to take your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint. They will usually only look into your complaint after you've given us a chance to deal with it.

Phone: 0300 061 0614

Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Travel Assistance for children with special educational needs or disabilities



Last updated: June 2014

Appendix 2

Document summary

This document details the policy on giving assistance with home to school travel for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It should be read with the School Transport Policy.

Contents

1. Qualifying for SEND travel assistance	2
1.1. Reception to Year 11	2
1.2. Early years.....	2
1.3. Respite care.....	3
1.4. Residential schools	3
1.5. Speech and language support in primary school	3
2. Travel assistance and support for SEND children and young people	3
2.1. Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs).....	3
2.2. Independent Travel Training (ITT)	3
2.3. Hired transport	4
2.4. Use of escorts	4
3. Review of transport provision for SEND students	4
4. Transport assistance for Post-16 SEND students	4
5. Application process	5

1. Qualifying for SEND travel assistance

Travel assistance for children living in East Sussex is given when one of the criteria set out below are met, regardless of SEN or disability:

- Statutory walking distance (the distance to the designated school is more than three miles for children over eight, and two miles for those under eight years old)
- Families on low incomes
- Disabled parents or carers

Please see the School Transport Policy for more details.

As many already do, we appreciate that many families will make their own arrangements to get their child to school rather than requesting a taxi. We also encourage parents and carers to work with the Local Authority to enable their child with SEND to travel independently if and when appropriate.

Travel assistance is not automatically given just because a child has a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care (EHC)¹ Plan, and many students with SEN and disabilities are able to travel to school without additional support from the Local Authority. However, some children with specific needs will require more support, often for an agreed period of time.

Some children with SEND may not be able walk or travel by public transport to school because of their needs, and there may be parents/carers who are unable to take them to school themselves as they do not have an appropriate vehicle or do not live within walking distance. A student's individual needs will determine the support they are given and evidence will be taken from a range of professionals and from parents or carers. Where relevant, a risk assessment will be carried out before the student begins travelling to make sure that the transport provided meets their needs. These will include a detailed breakdown of the child's needs and control measures, detailing how they will be kept safe while travelling. This will include whether an escort will be required and any medical protocols that may be needed.

1.1. Reception to Year 11

Travel assistance is provided to the child's *nearest suitable school*. This is the nearest maintained school or academy to the child's home that can meet the child's SEND. If, by parental choice, a more distant school is attended, any transport shall stay the responsibility of the parent. If the child has a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, this may name the parents' or carers' choice of school but this does not mean that the Council must provide travel assistance if, in the Local Authority's view, the child's needs could be suitably met at a nearer school.

1.2. Early years

Children below compulsory school age attending a maintained special school for assessment purposes may be entitled to home to school transport for distances below the usual walking distances in exceptional circumstances.

¹ From September 2014, statements of Special Educational Needs will start to be replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans under the Children and Families Bill 2013

1.3. Respite care

Travel assistance can be changed to transport children directly from school to their respite care placement during school term time, if enough notice is given.

1.4. Residential schools

Where a child attends a residential school and is entitled to transport assistance, this is provided at the start and end of each half-term or, at the start and end of each week depending on the boarding arrangements. Transport is also provided for official school closures. Transport will **not** be provided at other times or for parental visits for meetings.

1.5. Speech and language support in primary school

Children selected to attend sessions at specialist facilities in an alternative school, are transported from their main school for these sessions. School staff will arrange the transport at the same time as arranging the placement. Parents or carers will be asked to give their permission before transport can start.

2. Travel assistance and support for SEND children and young people

Once eligibility for transport to a school or college placement has been confirmed, the offer of a **Personal Travel Budget (PTB)** for families will be looked into. For children at secondary school or college, **travel skills training** can enable the learner to use public transport or travel independently as part of their transition into adulthood.

Hired transport by taxi or minibus will be provided in exceptional cases, or if there is no suitable alternative.

2.1. Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs)

A PTB is offered at the discretion of the Council. We need to ensure that the offer of a PTB does not increase costs for the County Council at a time when government grants are reducing, whilst ensuring families have the opportunity for increased choice and control".

The PTB payment can help you to arrange your child's travel to school or college in a way which suits your circumstances and could offer more flexibility. The amount you receive is calculated using the distance for a return journey from your home to your child's nearest suitable school or college. The PTB can work flexibly, for example, around breakfast and after-school clubs.

Payments are made from the Council into the parent's designated bank account on a monthly basis, and do not affect any other benefits. The Council can be asked for advice on the PTB, and how the PTB can be changed or cancelled; but please note that a month's notice is needed to arrange alternative travel assistance.

If a student's punctuality or attendance at school is becoming affected by a PTB, the arrangement will be reviewed by the Council.

2.2. Independent Travel Training (ITT)

ITT can help support independence by developing personal, social and life skills by looking at the needs and capabilities of a young person. As part of an ongoing review, we will

consider the capability of a young person to travel independently. If they are assessed as suitable, we will expect secondary aged students to start travel training to become independent travellers.

The training will be given by an approved programme in partnership with schools and colleges, and includes communication with parents or carers. The Council will try to make sure that ITT is available to children and young people with SEND across the county as requested, to support them to travel independently.

2.3. Hired transport

Hired transport such as a taxi or minibus will be provided in exceptional cases, or if there is no suitable alternative. Transport is usually shared with a number of other children, which can result in longer journey times. Alternatively, there may be a school coach service which your child will be able to use. Please see the main School Transport policy for service standards and guidelines on when hired transport is not supplied.

2.4. Use of escorts

Escorts are provided on hired transport only where the child has a severe physical condition, a medical condition requiring immediate treatment, or severe behavioural difficulties meaning the health and safety of the child, driver or anyone else travelling in the vehicle would be at risk. The use of an escort will be reviewed regularly since the need may change as the child grows older.

An escort's duty is to supervise students on a vehicle and to help with boarding and leaving the vehicle where the pupil has physical, sensory or medical difficulties. However, they are not able to collect pupils from home or take them into school if that would mean leaving other vulnerable children unattended.

3. Review of transport provision for SEND students

Travel assistance will be reviewed with parents and education and care professionals who know the child and are part of the statement or EHC Plan review. The Council may also review eligibility by a scheduled meeting or by telephone contact. Parents will be told of all decisions in writing. We need to ensure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the student's assessed needs.

4. Transport assistance for Post-16 SEND students

Wherever possible, students with learning difficulties or disabilities should be treated in the same way as those students without them. For example they should walk or travel by public transport to their place of learning. A Disabled Person's Bus Pass gives free travel after 9.30am and if entitled, the Council expects students to use it if they are able and if there is a suitable bus service.

In order to qualify for help from East Sussex County Council, you will need to meet all of the criteria below. If you do not meet all four requirements, you may still be able to get help through your learning provider's 16-19 Bursary Fund. You should ask at your school or college for further information.

Students with Special Educational Needs will be given travel assistance if all of the following apply:

1. Where the planned further education course or a course appropriate to the child's needs is at the nearest school or college to the student's home address
2. The course is full time, for instance a minimum of 12 hours assisted learning a week
3. The shortest walking route to the nearest appropriate centre is more than three miles away or the student has learning difficulties or a disability, with medical evidence, meaning that they are unable to manage the journey
4. The family is able to provide proof of low income (as set out in the 'Qualifying criteria' section)

If a student is able to meet numbers 1 to 3 of the above criteria but not number 4, parents will be charged £370 a year towards the cost of the transport, or have £370 deducted from their travel budget for new applications from September 2014.

Where help with travel is agreed, it will be by one or more of the following, as appropriate:

- A. A Personal Travel Budget (PTB)
- B. By taxi, in exceptional cases only and usually only for students with severe disabilities

To apply for help, parents or the young person themselves will need to complete an application form explaining the reasons why assistance is needed. The form can be found here: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/sen/hometoschooltransport/feform.htm

If you are referring to medical evidence, this must be attached to your application. Please be aware that you may be charged by your doctor or consultant for supplying relevant medical evidence. The application will be considered by a panel of officers from the Children's Services department who will decide whether to assist or not. Cases agreed will be subject to regular reviews.

For those cases where a taxi is agreed, arrangements will be confirmed by the Council once payment in advance is received at the start of each half-term.

Assistance with travel to Programme Led Apprenticeships is not included in this scheme. Travel assistance is not normally provided for retakes or repeat periods of study. It does not cover the cost of journeys to work placements and students are expected to pay these costs.

If your family income is too high to qualify for free transport, but then you get less income during the year because of redundancy, illness or divorce, please write to us explaining the circumstances. Please include any official evidence and we will reconsider your case.

Please also refer to the post-16 Transport Statement for further information on support:

www.connexions360.org.uk/workandmoney/fesupport/Pages/main.aspx

5. Application process

Parents and carers will need to apply for travel assistance to school by completing the form found here: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/SENDtravel

Then return it to:

Specialist Transport Officer, Access and Disability
Children's Services Department, County Hall
St Anne's Crescent, LEWES
BN7 1SG

If you believe that your child needs help with the home to school journey due to their disability or medical need and require further information, you should call the Specialist Transport Officer on 0345 60 80 190 or email sen.transport@eastsussex.gov.uk

Page	Description of change	New / revised wording
Stat P4	Children with disabled parents/carers – change in emphasis	'we may be able to assist...if all other solutions have been exhausted. Secondary pupils are expected to undertake the journey to school unaccompanied'
SEND P1	The SEND policy is renamed	'Travel Assistance' rather than School Transport
SEND P3	Emphasis of PTB/ITT as our...	'primary offer'
SEND P3	Within the description of Independent Travel Training:	'There is a strong expectation that all older pupils attending mainstream schools and some older pupils at special secondary schools will be supported to become independent travellers at the earliest opportunity'
SEND P4	The offer of hired transport...	'provided in exceptional cases, or if there is no suitable alternative'
SEND P4	There is a new section on review / eligibility:	'Travel assistance will be reviewed with parents and education and care professionals who know the child on a regular basis, and at least annually as part of the statement or EHC Plan review. The Council may also review eligibility by means of a scheduled meeting or via telephone contact. Parents will be notified of all decisions in writing. We need to ensure that the provision continues to be appropriate for the student's assessed needs'
SEND P4	New section on post-16 SEND travel assistance (as agreed by Lead Member in Dec 2013)	<p>Students with Special Educational Needs will be provided with free transport provided all of the following apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where the proposed further education course or a course appropriate to the level of needs is at the nearest school/college to the student's home address; 2. The course is full time; 3. The shortest walking route to the nearest school or college is more than three miles or the student has learning difficulties or a disability (evidence will be required) meaning that they are unable to manage the journey; 4. The family is able to provide proof of low income <p>If a student is able to meet numbers 1 to 3 of the above criteria but not number 4, parents will be charged £370 per year towards the cost of the transport for new applications from September 2014.</p> <p>Where help with travel is agreed, it will be by one of the following, as appropriate;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) B. By taxi, in exceptional cases only, usually only for students with severe disabilities



School Transport Policy

Date: modified on 5.9.13

Appendix 4

Document summary

This document sets out the East Sussex County Council's home to school transport policy for pupils and students who are resident in the county. This policy takes account of obligations and discretions set out in the relevant legislation and regulations.

Contents

<i>Qualifying for home to school transport</i>	<i>Page 2 onwards</i>
Statutory walking distance	
Route safety	
Low income groups	
Pupils unable to walk to school	
Disabled parents/carers	
Permanently excluded pupils returning to a school	
Attendance at College Central	
<i>Travel provision given to 'eligible children'</i>	<i>Page 4 onwards</i>
Mode of travel	
Pick-up points	
Journey time	
Payments to parents	
<i>Circumstances when transport is not supplied</i>	<i>Page 4 onwards</i>
Provision other than at the start or end of the school day	
Independent or private schools (including nurseries)	
Dual addresses	
Living within the statutory walking distance	
Denominational primary schools	
<i>Pupils with special educational needs</i>	<i>Page 5 onwards</i>
Who is eligible?	
<i>Spare seats on hired vehicles</i>	<i>Page 6 onwards</i>
Vacant Seats scheme	
Seat allocations	
<i>Post 16 transport</i>	<i>Page 6 onwards</i>
Commitment	
<i>Appeals and complaints procedure</i>	<i>Page 6 onwards</i>
Transport and Student Support Panel	
How to complain	
Contact details for complaints officers	
Contact your County Councillor	
Ombudsman	

Qualifying for home to school transport

The following circumstances explain when support can be given. If your situation does not fit the policy, then you will be responsible for making the transport arrangements.

Statutory walking distance

We will provide free transport between home and school for children over 8 years of age who live more than three miles (4828 metres) from the designated* school, or two miles (3218 metres) for children under 8 years of age. This is known as the **statutory walking distance**.

Distances are measured by the shortest available walking route using our Geographical Information System, taking account of, for example, passable public footpaths.

*The designated school is either the school suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude which serves the area in which the child lives, or if there is more than one school, the nearest school to the home which is suitable for the child and at which a place is available.

Route safety

Where parents challenge the suitability of a route to school, the Director of Transport and Environment will assess the route and report on its safety using nationally set standards. The standards assume that the child is accompanied by a responsible adult. To qualify for help the child must be attending the designated* school. If alternative safe routes are available within the statutory walking distance then no help will be given.

Low income groups

Children from low income groups are defined as those who are entitled to free school meals (for criteria go to - eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/meals/free) or those whose families are entitled to the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC).

You can tell if you are in receipt of maximum WTC from your tax credit award notice issued by HM Revenue & Customs. Part 2 entitled 'How we work out your tax credits' includes details of WTC elements other than child care. It then lists 'any reduction due to your income'. You are in receipt of the maximum where the reduction shows nil (£0.00).

Primary age pupils – Children who qualify for assistance until age eight because their designated* school is more than two miles but less than three miles from their home, will continue to receive transport help if they are from a low income family.

Secondary age pupils – Children from low income families will qualify for free transport to one of their three nearest schools from where they live, provided the school attended is more than two miles but less than six miles. Distances up to two miles are determined by using the shortest available walking route whereas the six mile upper limit is measured using roads only.

Secondary age pupils attending church aided schools – Children from low income families attending the nearest church school preferred on grounds of religion or belief will qualify for free transport to that school if it is more than two miles but less than fifteen miles from home. Confirmation of baptismal status or support from the parish priest/minister is required.

Pupils unable to walk to school

Some children with SEN and/or a disability may not be able to walk even relatively short distances to school. Similarly, children with a mobility problem (including temporary medical conditions) may also be unable to walk to school.

To qualify for help, your child must be attending the **designated*** school. We will need to see medical evidence from a consultant or GP who must confirm the medical condition and that your child cannot walk the statutory distance. We will also need to know how long transport assistance is required and an indication of what mode of travel is appropriate. Where agreed, cases will be subject to review.

If you believe that your child needs help with the home to school journey due to their SEN or disability, you should call the Specialist Transport Officer on 0345 60 80 190 or email sen.transport@eastsussex.gov.uk for more advice.

Disabled parents/carers

If you are prevented from walking or accompanying your children on the home to school journey because of a disability, we may be able to assist with travel costs. This generally applies to parents of primary aged children as secondary aged pupils are expected to undertake the journey to school unaccompanied.

To receive help, your child/children must be attending the **designated*** school and in deciding whether to assist, account will be taken of the distance to school. Where the distance is very short, assistance may not be agreed, especially for a child in the upper juniors.

You will need to complete an application form and must attach medical evidence from a consultant or doctor (note – a fee may be charged for supplying relevant medical evidence and any costs would be met by the parent). We will not pay for this evidence. Transport will not be arranged until relevant evidence is provided. Cases agreed will be subject to regular reviews.

Transport assistance is not provided when parents are not available to accompany their child to school for other reasons.

Permanently excluded pupils returning to a school

Transport to a more distant school will be given if a child has been permanently excluded and can no longer attend their **designated*** school provided that they meet the distance or low income rules. Transport will be in place on the sixth day following the exclusion.

Attendance at College Central

Children attending College Central (formerly known as a Pupil Referral Unit) will be considered for assistance with transport in the same way as children attending **designated*** mainstream schools i.e. distance/low income reasons.

Travel provision given to 'eligible children'

Mode of travel

In most cases, we provide transport to get pupils between home and school at the beginning and end of the school day. This is done by supplying a ticket for use on public services or by allocating a seat on a hired vehicle.

Pick-up points

Pupils and students are collected as near to their home as possible although they may have to walk a 'reasonable' distance to meet the transport. This will usually not exceed one mile from the home address. The responsibility for ensuring a child's safety in getting to and from the picking up/setting down point rests with the parent/carer.

Journey time

There are no legal guidelines for what is a reasonable journey time. This will depend on the age and individual needs (e.g. SEN) of a child and the nature of the journey. However, we aim to ensure that no child will have a journey of no more than 75 minutes with the exception of school placements outside of the county, which will inevitably take longer.

Payments to parents

When there is no suitable public service or hired vehicle, parents willing to make their own arrangements receive help with the cost of two return journeys per day based on the distance between home and school. Payment is made on a family basis at the current rate of 25p per mile since the cost will be the same whether a parent takes one child or more.

Assistance will not normally be given to parents who prefer to make their own arrangements to transport their child to the **designated*** school where a public service or a hired vehicle is available.

Circumstances when transport is not supplied

Provision other than at the start or end of the school day

Our duty is to provide assistance to get children to and from school at the beginning and end of the school day. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to arrange and pay for transport at other times. For example, we do not provide transport for:

- Breakfast or after school clubs/extra curricular activities
- Medical appointments
- Parents evenings or 'taster' days
- Work experience
- Fixed term exclusions
- Off site educational placements

Independent or private schools (including nurseries)

Assistance is not given to children attending schools in the private sector unless the placement has been made by the Special Educational Needs team and transport has been recommended.

Dual addresses

We only accept responsibility for the transport of children between their **main** residence and school. Where children have more than one address, a determination needs to be made as to which address the child/ren in question habitually reside. This would generally be where most school nights are spent but may include factors such as where the child is registered with a doctor or where the child benefit is paid.

Living within the statutory walking distance

No assistance with travel costs will be given where the distance between home and either the designated school or the school attended is less than three miles (two miles for children under the age of 8 or low income families) unless the route has been classified as unsafe **or** the child/parent has a disability **or** the Transport and Student Support Panel has agreed to make an exception to the normal policy.

Denominational primary schools

There is no policy to support children attending a denominational church aided **primary** school for reasons of religion or faith.

Pupils with special educational needs

Who is eligible?

Children are entitled to assistance with transport in accordance with the policies outlined earlier in this statement. As a result, transport is not automatically given just because a child has a statement of special educational needs.

Some children with special educational needs, especially those attending special schools, will require extra help and we will consider the additional needs of each individual child. This includes; a) the physical ability of the child to walk the prescribed distance and b) the capability of the child to walk (bearing in mind it is assumed that the child will be accompanied by a responsible adult). Transport is **not** provided because of working commitments.

It should be noted that we are obliged to consider transport to the *nearest suitable school*. If by parental preference a more distant school is named in the child's statement but in the authority's view the child's needs could be suitably met at a nearer school, any transport shall remain the responsibility of the parent.

A separate document detailing the full transport policy for pupils with special educational needs is available.

Spare seats on hired vehicles

Vacant Seats Scheme

Requests are sometimes received from parents who wish their children to use a hired vehicle when they do not qualify travel assistance. If spare places exist, the parent may purchase a travel permit.

Payment must be made in advance and the cost from September 2013 is £120 per term* for a secondary aged pupil and £60 per term* for pupils attending a primary school (*based on the six term year).

A second or subsequent child from the same family is entitled to a 25% reduction in the cost. These charges are subject to a yearly review.

Seat allocations

Where there is more demand for places than seats available, the following priorities will be used to determine who can travel.

1. Pupils attending the **designated*** school but do not qualify for free school transport. Those living furthest from the school are given the highest priority.
2. Other pupils. Those living nearest to the school are given the highest priority.

Places cannot be guaranteed and it must not be assumed that this scheme will always be available. For instance, if a statutory traveller needs a place on a hired vehicle, **non-statutory** travellers will have to be removed. If this is the case, it will be for parents/carers to decide how to get their children to school in the future. Full details of the Vacant Seats Scheme are available from the Client Services Transport Team on 01273 335088.

Post 16 transport

Commitment

The providers of post 16 education in East Sussex believe in the principle that no student aged 16 to 19 should be deprived of the opportunity to continue their learning because of the lack of transport or the finance to enable them to use transport. The providers have, therefore, developed policies which ensure there is provision for students in greatest financial need by assisting in whole or in part towards the cost of transport. A statement is revised annually and is available online - connexions360.org.uk/workandmoney/fesupport

Appeals and complaints procedure

Transport and Student Support Panel

Staff in the Children's Services Department are not empowered to deviate from the stated policy outlined in the section **Qualifying for home to school transport** on page 2. Where applications for assistance with transport are refused, parents may appeal to the Transport and Student Support Panel which can consider particular personal and/or financial circumstances. The Panel comprises three elected County Councillors who consider applications for assistance with transport that fall outside of the stated policy.

The Panel exercises the discretion available to them very carefully, and it is only in the most exceptional circumstances that assistance is agreed. The Panel's decision is final and there is no right of appeal.

Parents will need to fill in an application form and supply any supporting evidence at the same time. Call the Principal Admissions and Transport Officer on 0345 60 80 190 for more details.

How to complain

The County Council is here to serve the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, courteous and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.

Sometimes things do go wrong and parents/carers may not be happy with the service received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Complaints will be looked into fully and fairly. If it is found that something is wrong it will be put right. Parents should inform us if it is felt that the council has *failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or discourteously*.

Contact the Departmental Complaints Officer who will be able to give advice – the details are shown below. Written complaints can be sent via email or addressed to the department concerned marked for the attention of the Departmental Complaints Officer at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1SW.

Contact details for complaints officers

for issues related to eligibility:

Children's Services

01273 482511

childrenservices@eastsussex.gov.uk

for issues related to daily operation:

Transport and Environment

01273 482317

tecomplaints@eastsussex.gov.uk

Contact your County Councillor

Parents can also contact their local County Councillor – details can be found in the leaflet 'A guide to your Council and Councillors' available in council offices and libraries, or on our website.

Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may wish to refer your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint. They will usually only investigate your case after you've given us a chance to deal with it.

Contact details:

Phone: 0300 061 0614

Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

School transport for pupils with special educational needs



Date: modified on 3.01.2012

Appendix 5

Document summary

This document details the policy on providing home to school transport for children and young people with special educational needs. It should be read in conjunction with the School Transport Policy.

Contents

<i>Qualifying for free school transport</i>	<i>Page 2</i>
Reception to Year 11	
Early years	
Post 16 education	
Application process	
Respite care	
Speech and language support in primary school	
<i>Travel arrangements for 'eligible children'</i>	<i>Page 3</i>
Mode of travel	
Pick up points	
Travel to residential schools	
Payments to parents	
<i>Service standards</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
Commencement of transport	
Journey time	
Risk assessments	
Escorts	
Licensing and training of drivers and escorts	
Criminal Records Bureau checks	
Suitable vehicles and equipment	
Contract information	
Monitoring operator performance	
<i>Circumstances when transport is not supplied</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
Provision at times other than at the start or end of the school day	
Independent or private schools (including nurseries)	
Dual addresses	
Dual placement	
Other family circumstances	
<i>Spare seats on hired vehicles</i>	<i>Page 6</i>
Vacant Seats scheme	
<i>Reconsideration of cases/Special circumstances</i>	<i>Page 6</i>
Transport and Student Support Panel	
<i>Complaints procedure</i>	<i>Page 7</i>
How to complain	
Contact details for complaints officers	
Contact your County Councillor	

Qualifying for free school transport

Reception to Year 11

Free home to school transport is granted on the basis of fulfilling the eligibility criteria set out below.

These are:

- Statutory walking distance
- Route safety
- Low income groups
- Pupils unable to walk to school
- Disabled parents/carers

(Please see **page 2** of the School Transport Policy for a full explanation of the criteria)

As a result, transport is not automatically given because a child has special educational needs and/or a disability. Transport is provided to the child's *nearest suitable school*. If, by parental choice, a more distant school is attended, any transport shall remain the responsibility of the parent. If the child has a statement of special educational needs, the statement may name in Part 4 the parents'/carers' choice of school but this does not commit the Council to provide transport if, in the authority's view, the child's needs could be suitably met at a nearer school.

Early years

Children below compulsory school age attending a maintained special school for assessment purposes may be entitled to home to school transport for distances below the usual walking distances. If parents/carers would like transport assistance they should discuss this with the Specialist Transport Officer on 01273 482028.

Post 16 education

The transport needs of students over the age of 16 attending special schools will continue to be assessed as for those of compulsory school age.

Students with special needs attending local further education colleges or school sixth forms may receive additional help with transport if they are unable to use public transport due to those needs. A vehicle will normally be arranged to transport the student between home and college, wherever possible with other students. Transport is not normally provided to a non local college based on a personal preference.

Parents or young people themselves will need to complete an application form setting out the reasons why assistance is required. Any medical evidence must be attached to the application. Please be aware that doctors or consultants may charge for supplying relevant medical evidence. The application will be considered by a panel of officers from the Children's Services department who will decide whether to assist or not. Cases agreed will be subject to regular reviews.

Application process

Parents and carers may apply for home to school transport by completing the relevant application form and returning it to:

Specialist Transport Officer
Access and Disability
Children's Services Department
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
LEWES
BN7 1SG

Application forms can be downloaded from our website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/sen/hometoschooltransport/form.htm or by phoning the Specialist Transport Officer on 01273 482028.

Respite care

We will arrange for children who are normally transported from home to school to be taken directly to their respite care placement during school term time, provided adequate notice is given.

Speech and language support in primary school

Children selected to attend specific sessions at specialist facilities in an alternative school are transported from their main school for those sessions. School staff will arrange the transport at the same time as arranging the placement. Parents/carers will be asked to give their permission before transport can commence.

Transport arrangements for 'eligible children'

Mode of travel

Transport is provided to get pupils between home and school at the beginning and end of the school day.

This is done by supplying a ticket for use on public services. Where public services do not exist or are not appropriate, we will allocate a seat on a hired vehicle ie coach, taxi etc

Pick-up points

Public services and coaches - Pupils and students are collected as near to their home as possible although they may have to walk a 'reasonable' distance to meet the transport. This will usually not exceed one mile from the home address. The responsibility for ensuring a child's safety in getting to and from the picking up/setting down point rests with the parent/carer.

Minibuses and taxis – Outward - It is parents'/carers' responsibility to get the child into the vehicle and the schools' duty to get the child from the vehicle into the school building.

Homeward - It is parents'/carers' role to ensure a 'responsible' adult is at home to receive their child at the agreed time. Failure may result in the child being taken to a suitable safe place ie Respite care, and parents having to make arrangements to get the child home.

Travel to residential schools

Where a child attends a residential school and is entitled to transport, this is provided at the start and end of each half term or at the start and end of each week depending on the actual boarding arrangements. Transport is also provided for official school closures. Transport will **not** be provided at other times or for parental visits for meetings etc.

Payments to parents

When there is no suitable public service or hired vehicle, parents willing to make their own arrangements receive help with the cost of two return journeys per day based on the distance between home and school. Payment is made in arrears and on a family basis at the current rate of 25p per mile since the cost will be the same whether a parent takes one child or more.

Assistance will not normally be given to parents who prefer to make their own arrangements where a public service or a hired vehicle is available.

Service standards

Commencement of transport

Once authorised, new transport arrangements will generally take 10 working days to organise. Sometimes it can take longer to arrange based on the specific needs of the child, for example, an adapted vehicle needs to be sourced or a dedicated escort will require specific training *before* transport starts.

Journey time

There are no legal guidelines for what is a reasonable journey time. This will depend on the age and individual needs (e.g. SEN) of a child and the nature of the journey. However, we aim to ensure that no child will have a journey of no more than 75 minutes with the exception of school placements outside of the county, which may inevitably take longer.

All children are required to wear seat belts and restraints in taxis and mini-buses and coaches.

Risk assessments

Where appropriate, children eligible for assistance are risk assessed before they begin travelling to ensure that the transport provided meets their needs.

Escorts

Escorts are provided only where the child has a severe physical condition, a medical condition requiring immediate treatment, or severe behavioural difficulties meaning the health and safety of the child, driver or anyone else travelling in the vehicle would be at risk. The provision of an escort will be reviewed regularly since the need may change as the child grows older.

Escorts duties are to supervise pupils on a vehicle and to assist with boarding and leaving the vehicle where the pupil has physical, sensory and/or medical difficulties. However, they are not able to collect pupils from home or take them into school if that would mean leaving other vulnerable children unattended.

Licensing and training of drivers and escorts

Drivers of coaches will possess PCV licenses. Taxi drivers will have been approved by the local Borough/District Council licensing officers. The County Council offers training to drivers and escorts to support them in their role including additional guidance about individual pupil's needs where required.

Criminal Records Bureau checks

All drivers and escorts of taxis, minibuses and hired coaches on council commissioned transport are subject to a full CRB check. This does not currently apply to public transport.

Suitable vehicles and equipment

Vehicles used to convey children will be appropriate to the needs of the child. Where children need to be transported in their wheelchairs, a specialist vehicle will be provided. Other essential items of equipment will also transported.

Contract information

All parents/carers will be provided with detailed information about the travel arrangements:- Operator name and phone number; pick up and drop off times; parental responsibilities; handover arrangements etc.

Monitoring operator performance

If parents have any concerns about the service being provided they should contact staff in the Client Transport Services in Economy, Transport and Environment Department so that the concerns can be raised with the operator. Please phone 01273 335067. Service performance is subject to a contract between the operator and the council

Circumstances when transport is not supplied

Provision at times other than at the start or end of the school day

As already stated, our duty is to provide assistance to get eligible children to and from school at the beginning and end of the school day. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to arrange and pay for transport at other times. For example, we do not provide transport for:

- Breakfast or after school clubs/extra curricular activities
- Medical appointments
- Parents evenings or 'taster' days
- Work experience
- Fixed-term exclusions
- Off site educational placements

Independent or private schools (including nurseries)

Assistance is not given to children attending schools in the private sector unless the placement has been made by the Special Educational Needs team and there is an entitlement under the stated transport policy.

Dual addresses

We only accept responsibility for the transport of children between their **main** residence and school. Where children have more than one address, a determination needs to be made as to which address the child/ren in question habitually reside. This would generally be where most school nights are spent but may include factors such as where the child is registered with a doctor or where the child benefit is paid.

Dual placement

Where children attend more than one school during a week and are eligible for transport assistance, transport will be provided by the Council to their main school base and it is the responsibility of that school to ensure that the child is transported to the alternative school.

Other family circumstances

Transport is **not** provided

- because of parents working commitments
- due to holiday commitments
- to assist parents with the home to school arrangements of other children in the family
- to improve attendance, or
- for house moves, whether temporary or permanent

Spare seats on hired vehicles

Vacant Seats Scheme

Requests are sometimes received from parents who wish their children to use a hired vehicle when they do not qualify for travel assistance. If spare places exist, the parent may purchase a travel permit.

Places cannot be guaranteed and it must not be assumed that this scheme will always be available. For instance, if a statutory traveller needs a place on a hired vehicle, **non-statutory** travellers will have to be removed.

This scheme is primarily designed for coach travel. We can sometimes offer the scheme on taxis or minibuses too provided there is no additional diversion costs to the Council.

Full details of the scheme are available from the Client Transport Services on 01273 335088.

Reconsideration of cases/Special circumstances

Transport and Student Support Panel

Where applications for assistance with transport are refused, parents may make an application to the Transport and Student Support Panel which can consider particular personal and/or financial circumstances. The panel comprises a small group of elected County Councillors who consider applications for assistance with transport that fall outside of the normal policy. Assistance is only agreed in the most exceptional circumstances. The panel's decision is final and there is no further appeal locally.

Parents will need to complete an application form and supply any supporting evidence at the same time.

Complaints procedure

How to complain

The County Council is here to serve the people of East Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, courteous and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.

Sometimes things do go wrong and parents/carers may not be happy with the service received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Complaints will be looked into fully and fairly. If it is found that something is wrong it will be put right. Parents should inform us if it is felt that the council has *failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or discourteously*.

Contact details for complaints officers

Contact the Departmental Complaints Officer who will be able to give advice – the details are shown below. Written complaints can be sent via email or addressed to the department concerned marked for the attention of the Departmental Complaints Officer at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1SW.

for issues related to eligibility:

Children's Services

01273 482304 or

Freephone 0800 389 1132

for issues related to transport matters:

Economy, Transport and Environment

01273 482317

csccommentscomplaints@eastsussex.gov.uk etecomplaints@eastsussex.gov.uk

Contact your County Councillor

Parents can also contact their local County Councillor – details can be found in the leaflet 'A guide to your Council and Councillors' available in council offices, libraries or on our website.

