

Bracknell Forest Council
Education Transport Travel Arrangements
Operational handbook

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Please note that the information contained within this handbook provides further details to the Council's published Home to School Travel policies. This handbook is intended to help answer your questions about transportation to school for your child.

Transport is for children of statutory school age only.

How transport assistance will be offered

Transport assistance will be offered in the most cost-effective manner considering the route to be covered. The following kinds of assistance are available:

- A car mileage allowance paid to the parent /carer
- A pass for use on public transport (which may be a bus or a train) *
- Accompaniment of a learning support assistant during a walk to school
- A Council contracted hire vehicle (which may be a coach, minibus or taxi)

*When transport, in the form of a bus pass for use on public transport, is given to primary-aged students as a result of the nearest school to the home being full, a pass will also be offered to the parent/carer to travel with the child.

A passenger assistant may be provided, but there is no legal requirement that one should always be in place. They will be needs based. In general, passenger assistants are not used for secondary school age students attending mainstream schools.

There is no obligation that a type of transport, once given, should be maintained: the type may be altered at short notice.

The Council tries to ensure continuity of vehicle, driver and passenger assistant, but this can never be guaranteed.

Assistance will be given for the trip between the home address or pick-up point of a pupil and the allocated school. It will not be possible to vary the pick-up or drop-off points. However, transport may be provided to respite care and registered child-minders, if this can be done without extra expense to the Council. Any such requests must be made in writing. A pupil can be asked to walk to a pick-up point, which will be within the statutory walking distance.

Parents/carers are asked to provide contact telephone numbers, including alternative numbers, to enable the operator or the Council to reach the parent/carer.

For pupils travelling by minibus/taxi – your child needs to be ready for collection by the specified time given. The vehicle will wait only for a period of three minutes after agreed pick up time, after which time the parent/carer will be responsible for attendance at the school. The parent/carer should be at home at the end of the day to receive the child. If the parent/carer is unavailable, the child cannot be taken to another address.

If a child can't be dropped at home, then the driver must take the child to Children's Social Care. The parent/carer will then need to arrange to collect the child at their own cost. If the pupil cannot be taken to Children's Social Care, the driver will go to the nearest police station. These measures are only to be taken as a last resort. At the same time all attempts to reach the parent/carer by phone will be made.

Where a change is required from the normal arrangement, this will not be regarded as a precedent for that child, that address or that situation.

Work Experience Placements and Off-Site Activities

Transport is not usually provided for work experience or any other courses/activities outside the venue. It extends to all pupils if any special travel arrangements are needed it will be for the parent or the school to make them at their own cost.

Transport is offered for pupils only at the beginning and end of the reported school day; it will not normally be provided for additional activities, e.g.:

- Breakfast clubs
- After school activities
- Induction / open day / interview visits
- Medical and dental appointments
- Respite Care
- Removal from school following an exclusion or detention
- In the event that a child becomes unwell at school
- Work experience

Pupils Living in Temporary Accommodation

If the Council places a pupil of statutory school age and its family/carer in temporary accommodation, consideration will be given to the providing education transport for a limited period of time. Every case would be considered based on the specific circumstances (e.g. reasons for the relocation, age of the child(ren), possible timescales, parent/carer's circumstances). The case will be thoroughly examined and reviewed by all the relevant authorities, and the decision of the council will be final.

If transportation is to be offered, it will be the best value for money by whatever means the council considers to be the most suitable. It may be given free, or it may require a contribution. Transport will stop when appropriate accommodation within Bracknell Forest has been given to the family, subject to the "statutory free transport" right specified in the current policy.

Fair Access Protocol

If a child has been admitted to a school that has been agreed by the Fair Access Panel, it may be necessary for transport to be provided. A decision will be taken at the panel meeting as to how transport should be offered.

Changing Schools

Where a parent/carer wants to change the school for their child after they have started, they are then responsible for taking their child to that school.

Boarding and Alighting Points

Where the child can be expected to walk to their travel provision, then suitable boarding and alighting points will be assessed by the Education Transport team. To meet their transport, pupils are required to walk to and from the home address. The average distance for every pupil to a boarding point usually does not exceed one mile.

At the correct time, parents/carers are responsible for the safety of their children in getting to and from the boarding and alighting point. Parents/carers are also responsible for their children as they wait for transportation and when they leave the transport at the end of the day.

Boarding arrangements for a pupil will not be changed without prior agreement with the Education Transport team, in consultation with the relevant school concerned, and then only for purposes of personal protection of the pupil. The Education Transport team will then reissue the bus passes where necessary.

Behaviour and Suspension of Transport

Working in partnership, parents, schools, pupils, transport providers and the council all share responsibility for ensuring acceptable behaviour is maintained to ensure safe and stress-free school travel for all.

For those children who can, make sure that your child understands the standard of behaviour required whilst on transport. Transport can be removed if the conduct of a young person is persistently disruptive and jeopardises the safety of the vehicle, other passengers or road users. The provision of transport may be discontinued for a period or on a permanent basis and the offer of assistance by the local authority will be in the form of reimbursement.

An alert email is usually sent to parents/carers prior to transport being withdrawn. However, if any incident is deemed significant enough, the removal of transport may be immediate, following an inquiry by the Education Transport team. In this situation the responsibility for ensuring school attendance should remain with the child's parent/carer.

Transport Provided in Error

Where free transportation has been offered in error, or where substantial improvements have been made to the route to school, the provision shall be revoked.

Nonetheless, transport will continue for no more than six weeks from when the error was notified, in order to allow parents/carers to make alternative arrangements.

Siblings

Siblings have no automatic right to transport. If the policy has changed since any older sibling received free transport (e.g. for transport to denominational schools or there has been a change to the designated area), then the younger sibling will be subject to the policy in place at the time of their application and planned start date.

Mileage Reimbursement

In some cases, the most suitable form of transport to and from school may be provided by parents themselves.

This choice is available where there are no available contracted home to school routes and the child is attending their nearest suitable school, their designated school or school

in which they have been placed by the School Admissions' Team which was not one of their choices, or due to the needs of the child.

Where a parent/carer makes their own arrangements and seeks reimbursement, this must be agreed in advance before any such arrangement starts. Reimbursement will only start from the agreed date and will not usually be made for retrospective journeys.

If a parent/carer decides not to use the contracted route available, then no compensation would be made available unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The Council reserves the right to withdraw the reimbursement offer a contracted route is available at a later date, or circumstances change.

Where public/contracted transport is available, the Council can reimburse mileage upon request but only when it is cost-effective to do so.

Will it have an impact on other benefits?

No, reimbursement has no effect on any other benefits that you may receive.

How will this be calculated?

The Council will take the distance from the shortest journey between your home and the school's published address - this is based on the shortest route on Google Maps, irrespective of what route is taken, and allows 2 return journeys per school day – please see example below:

- If the distance between home and school is 10 miles, we would allow 40 miles per day travel
- The mileage would be multiplied by 35p per mile making a daily payment of £14.00.
- Payment would be made monthly or termly depending on the return of your completed claim forms, signed and stamped by school.

If you take up the offer of reimbursement, you can claim for up to 4 journeys per day to and from school which can be used in ways such as: -

Contribute towards:

- Buying a travel pass for an adult to accompany the child to and from school;
- Paying for a travel escort to walk with the child to school.
- Assist with the cost of driving or cycling with your child to school.
- Share travel arrangements with other parents.
- Assistance with childcare for siblings, to allow parents to take their child to school.

Fare Paying Scheme

Pupils who are not entitled to free home to school travel and whose parents/carers enquire about transport to schools will be directed to apply for a seat on a public transport route. Parents/carers may be given the option to apply for a fare paying seat for their child on one of the Council's contracted services.

Where spare capacity exists on current vehicles that have been contracted to provide home to school travel for entitled pupils, the Council may make these seats available for purchase by non-entitled pupils, subject to the following:

- the seat being withdrawn with 5 days' notice should it be required for an entitled pupil
- larger and/or extra vehicles will not be contracted specifically for fare payers.

- the Council is under no legal obligation to provide transport for non-entitled pupils
- these seats will be allocated on a first come first served basis
- the Council's decision on this will be final.

The Council may need to withdraw a fare paying seat for several reasons, including

- a seat is required for an entitled pupil
- a route is down-sized (i.e. a smaller vehicle is being used to operate a route)
- the unacceptable behaviour of the pupil

Should the Council need to withdraw a fare paying seat, fare paying pupils will be removed based on last on, first off.

The rate charged will be pro- rata as to the number of students on route, this rate can go up and down.

Standards required of Hackney Carriage, Private Hire, Home to School drivers and Passenger Assistants providing education transport

The driver and passenger assistant should always carry identification. It is expected the vehicle should have an effective means of communication with its base such as a mobile telephone or two-way radio. Among other items, this will be used to alert the operational base to any significant delay so that parents/carers may be updated.

If a pupil becomes seriously ill during the journey, the vehicle will either re-route to the nearest accident and emergency department or will stop and call for assistance. Arrangements will be made as soon as possible for other pupils to complete their journey.

Drivers and passenger assistants should have general experience in the needs of the pupils they are transporting. The Education Transport team will pass on to the operator relevant information provided by parents/carers regarding the special educational needs, and alerts about any medical conditions. This information will be provided to the crews. All the information the operator and the Council holds is subject to GDPR.

Drivers and passenger assistants may call in person to introduce themselves to a new pupil and their family before their first trip to school, if requested. In some cases, this may not be feasible, such as when an arrangement needs to be made quickly, or in the case of a replacement driver or passenger assistant. Parents/carers and schools are asked to see every unknown driver's ID before handing over a child to their care.

The Council undertakes relevant checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service for all potential drivers and passenger assistants. These are renewed every three years.

The responsibilities of the driver and passenger assistants are restricted only to the vehicle. The parent/carer is expected to take the child to and from the vehicle. At school, a member of the school staff would be expected to collect the child from the vehicle and take the child to the vehicle as appropriate and according to the needs of the child.

When a family is provided with transport to and from school for primary aged children in temporary housing, the parent may be required to serve as a passenger assistant in the vehicle and will have to provide either child or booster seats for all children who need them.

Frequently asked Questions - Education Transport

How do I contact the Education Transport team?

You can ring us on 01344 352002 between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday (during term time) where a member of the team will be happy to discuss your specific needs. Please leave a message outside of these times and we'll return your call as soon as we can.

We understand Education Transport can be an emotive subject. The team will try to assist you, wherever possible. All parties need to ensure that they stay calm and courteous in their interactions with drivers, passenger assistants and Education Transport staff. Bracknell Forest Council will not tolerate any threatening or aggressive behaviour towards any employees. Incidents, including verbal and physical aggression are taken very seriously and can result in the withdrawal of transport and reimbursement would be the only assistance offered.

The email address for the team is: education.transport@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Will the transport crew know how to transport my child?

The information provided by parent/carers on the application form, is vital to the success of the transport provided. It is imperative you give as much information as possible. If a Risk Assessment is required, we will request this information from school. The Education Transport team must ensure that drivers and passenger assistants are provided with the details you have given about your child and that they are appropriately trained.

How can I check that the transport crews are authorised to transport my child?

All passenger assistants are issued with a Bracknell Forest ID badge that includes a photo, an expiry date and the name of transport provider they are working for. All drivers have their ID badge from Licensing. Occasionally, due to illness, leave of staff etc., a driver and/or passenger assistant may need to be changed at short notice. We request that transport providers contact parents and the Education Transport team to remind them of any changes, as soon as possible. It is the duty of the parent/carer to check ID badges of drivers and/or passenger assistants particularly if they haven't transported their child beforehand. If parents have any questions, please contact the Education Transport team.

What type of training do the drivers and passengers assistants have?

All drivers have passed the required driving tests and are licensed accordingly.

Drivers and passenger assistants are required to take part in any appropriate courses to assist them in their role. Both drivers and passenger assistants must complete:

- Safeguarding Children and Young Adults
- Basic First Aid

The passenger assistants also need to attend a briefing session on their roles and responsibilities to be a passenger assistant along with awareness of Behaviour Management.

How do I know who the driver/passenger assistant will be?

The transport provider will contact you to arrange for the crew to meet you and your child, if requested and if ample time is available before transport begins. If you do not hear from the transport provider before transport is due to start you should phone them on the contact number provided in the email/paperwork you receive.

Why is transport occasionally late in picking up/dropping off my child?

Unfortunately, this can happen, there are various unavoidable reasons why transport may be delayed including:

- Traffic conditions / road works
- Weather conditions
- Breakdowns
- Potential delays in pickups if a child becomes ill during transport or is not ready for when the transport arrives.

When the Education Transport team are informed of any delays, they or the transport provider will try and let parents/carers know as soon as possible.

Can transport pick up/drop off my child at an address other than the home address?

Transport is provided from home to school and return only, therefore transport should not pick up or drop off your child at any other address or other time of day unless previously agreed by the Education Transport team.

Can the transport wait if my child is not ready at the agreed collection time?

Transport can only wait for 3 minutes otherwise it could make the transport late for the other children on the vehicle and the knock-on effect means that they all arrive late for school.

What should happen when transport collects/drops off my child?

Parents/carers are responsible for taking and collecting the child to and from the vehicle. There is no requirement for drivers and passenger assistant to exit the vehicle and drivers should not sound their horn. When a child needs a car seat, it is the duty of the parent/carer to provide and install the car/booster seat inside the vehicle.

Please ensure your child is collected from the vehicle by a responsible adult upon returning home. If after 3 minutes no-one appears to collect your child, the driver/passenger assistant must alert their base who will contact the Education Transport team. If we cannot reach parents/carers or any other emergency contacts that you have given, we will contact Childrens' Social Care who will determine any appropriate action.

Why did I not receive notice that transport was going to change?

Wherever practicable, the Education Transport team will inform parents and carers that their child's transport has to change. We accept that certain pupils may be affected by the shift in transport. Unfortunately, there are times where transport must be changed at very short notice, such as when a driver or passenger assistant is ill or when the vehicle breaks down and circumstances are outside of our control. If this happens, we make every effort to inform parents/carers. The Council seeks to ensure continuity of vehicle, driver and passenger assistant, but this can never be assured.

Can my child's medication be transported?

Passenger assistants are not authorised to give medication to pupils so please alert the Education Transport team if your child has any medication they need to take to school. To be transported, it should be in the original container it was dispensed in, with the child's name and the name of the medicine. All medication should be signed in and out at the school.

How parents/carers can keep us updated about their child's needs

There are many ways parents/carers can support us to keep the transport running efficiently. Please notify the Education Transport team:

- If you have any concerns regarding your child's transport, or with the driver or travel escort.
- If you change your telephone number or other contact details
- If you are planning to move to a new address, please give us at least two weeks' notice so that we can check that your child is still eligible for transport and make the necessary changes if applicable
- When your child is unable to attend school for any reason so that we can inform the transport provider. This is especially important if your child has lone transport.

What is statutory or compulsory school age?

Education transport applies to compulsory school-age children. A child becomes of mandatory school age at the start of the term following their fifth birthday. Mandatory school age ends in the school year on the last Friday in June when the young person reaches the age of 16.

What if I want my child to attend a grammar school?

Where there is another suitable school that is closer, which does not need to be a grammar school, but the parents want to send the child to a grammar school further away, travel would not be made available.

What do I do if I have moved to a new house?

The address used to assess education transport requests will be where the child mainly lives, usually with someone who has parental responsibility. Proof of residence may be requested to confirm that a child and their family is resident at a given address. The following are examples of items that may be used as evidence:

- copy of Council Tax Statement
- copy of Rental Agreement

This list of documents referred to above is not exclusive and the Council can request permission to access other Council information, such as Council Tax or Housing Benefit records.

If you are moving to a new house, then it is your duty to immediately inform the Education Transport team of any change in address or telephone number. Failure to do so may result in a request for a refund of any money owed if appropriate.

Do you review routes?

The Council reserves the right from time to time to check the walking and driving routes. This could involve reconsidering the protection of existing route, and possibly the introduction of new routes as a result of area expansion or road adoption. If such a review causes an entitled child to become disqualified, a parent shall be given at least six weeks' notice.

How do you check that the routes are safe?

The closest walking route available is measured in light of the safety of the route. If the safety of the route is disputed, its status will be assessed in accordance with the guidelines issued by Road Safety GB titled "Assessment of Walked Routes to School".

How are the walking distances measured?

The statutory walking distance has a specific significance for the purposes set out in the legislation. For a child under 8 years of age or a Low Income family, the distance is 2 miles. For a child over 8 it is defined as 3 miles.

'Walking distance' is measured by the shortest route available that a child could reasonably be expected to take in view of their age. Such a route would normally have a prepared surface (such as tarmac) and there will be a public right of way over it. Usually a route is only 'open' if it can be used during the academic year. The Council usually expects a child to be accompanied by a responsible adult, as required.

The distances are laid down by legislation. The lengths of two and three miles are considered the 'statutory walking distances. In practice, however, the distances are taken in accordance with the pupil's age and complexity of the route which the pupil might reasonably be expected to follow. Separate distances apply to children belonging to a low-income family (explained below). The Council relies on a computer system to measure the nearest walking route available. If there are any disputes about the distance, then an independently qualified and/or experienced officer should use a pedometer to objectively calculate the route. The route is taken from the curtilage (the front edge of the property) of the home address to the nearest entrance of the school.

What happens if I need to change the transport at short notice?

When requested, the Council will seek to make arrangements at short notice. This cannot be guaranteed, however, in the case of emergency, parents of children who rely upon assistance may need to make their own plans at their own expense. The Council would not be held accountable for any arrangements so made by a parent.

What happens when my child turns eight during an academic year?

For the remainder of that academic year, a child living over two miles but less than three miles from school and receiving assistance will therefore continue to receive assistance until the end of the summer term in the academic year in which they become eight years of age.

Will my child continue to receive assistance when he is over 16?

Not necessarily. Your child will have to remain in some sort of education or training until they are 18 - this doesn't have to mean just staying at school, it can be:

- full-time education, e.g. at a school or college
- an apprenticeship
- full-time employment (over 20 hours a week) combined with part-time education or training
- If your child is working out of their national curriculum year group, then please ensure you refer to the relevant policy according to their age.

Please see the separate Post-16 Transport Policy.

My child is not entitled to assistance– are there any arrangements for purchasing season tickets at preferential rates?

The council does not receive preferential rates on public transport. You are advised to contact the relevant transport provider directly; you can find their details online.

What if I have exceptional circumstances not covered by the Transport Policy?

Please phone/email the Education Transport team if you have extenuating circumstances that you feel we need to know about. It is also open to you to appeal against refusal of assistance with transport.

My child has an Education, Health & Care Plan, is the Policy different?

The policy is applicable to both mainstream and SEN students.

Can I appeal against a decision?

If you are refused on application for education transport, then you have a right to appeal against this ruling. However, appeals can only be made in respect of a refusal to provide transport and not for a change in an already existing provision. The appeal process can be found in the current education transport policy on the public website for Bracknell Forest Council.

The Education Transport Team
Bracknell Forest Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell
RG12 1JD

Phone 01344 352002

Email education.transport@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Useful Contacts

First Great Western

Tel: 01189 083678

Web: www.qwr.com

Courtney Buses

Tel: 0118 973 3486

Web: info@courtneybuses.com

White Bus Services

Tel: 01344 882612

Web: www.whitebus.co.uk

Fernhill Travel

Tel: 01344 421423

Web: www.fernhill.co.uk

Reading Buses

Tel: 0118 959 4000

Web: www.reading-buses.co.uk

Traveline South West

For journey planning

Web: www.traveline.info