

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KINGSTON
LEARNING AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SEN HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY
JANUARY 2007

INTRODUCTION

1. The Royal Borough of Kingston Council is committed to meeting the needs of as many children as possible within local schools alongside other children of the same age. In most cases this will mean that children can walk to school with their parents/carers. This policy sets out how we will help the small number of children who will be unable to travel to school without some assistance.

2. The Local Authority (LA) aims to promote inclusive opportunities to enable people with additional needs to fulfil their educational and social potential. This policy is, therefore, intended to facilitate joint working between pupils, parents, school and the LA to encourage independence wherever possible and to provide transport support to pupils which is appropriate to their assessed needs.

STATUTORY DUTY TO PROVIDE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

3. The Local Authority has the duty to assist parents by providing free transport in the following cases:
 - 3.1 If a child is under 8 years of age and lives over 2 miles from school
 - 3.2. If a child is aged 8 years or over and lives over 3 miles from school

In both of the above cases, the child must be attending the nearest suitable school (one which the Local Authority deems to be suitable for the aptitude and ability of the pupil) and must be of statutory school age.

4. For pupils from low income families (who are eligible for free school meals or who are from a family who is on the highest rate of Working Families Tax Credit) free transport will be provided if the child is of secondary school age and is attending one of three nearest schools between 2 and 6 miles away or is of

primary school age and is attending one of three nearest schools over 2 miles away.

5. Assistance will also be provided to pupils who are attending the nearest suitable school which was chosen on the grounds of religion or belief; this school can be up to 15 miles away. Children who attend faith schools will be deemed to have chosen the school on the grounds of religion or belief for the purposes of this policy.
6. The above statutory criteria apply to children attending both mainstream and SEN schools/units.

RBK HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

7. Free transport is available to all pupils in London under the age of 18 if they are in full time education. The LA expects pupils to make use of the free travel available through this scheme. Additional support is provided in some cases and is set out in the Home to School Transport Policy.
8. The above policy applies to all pupils, whether or not they have SEN. However, in recognition that pupils with SEN may need some additional assistance, the LA can offer further support.

ADDITIONAL TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN WITH SEN

9. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) states that if you are a parent of, or responsible for, a child who is registered at school (between ages 5-16) you will need to ensure they attend school regularly.
10. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school. However, the LA may offer assistance to parents' of children with Special Educational Needs to enable them to get to and from school.

ASSESSING TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE ENTITLEMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH SEN

11. The LA will consider the individual needs of children and take professional advice (e.g. from the Educational Psychologist, Medical Officers) and consult with parents and teachers in arriving at a final decision. Consideration will also be given to the child's physical and medical requirements (including any disabilities they may have). Assessment may include face-to-face contact with the pupil in assessing eligibility and the results will be recorded on the Transport Assessment Form.

12. The LA will have regard to the following factors:
 - 12.2. The age of the pupil.
 - 12.2. The distance of the pupil from school to home.
 - 12.2. Whether the walking route is appropriate for the child.
 - 12.2. The Special Education Needs of the pupil.
 - 12.2. Whether the pupil has physical, medical, or a social communication difficulty that would prevent them from using public transport.
 - 12.2. Whether suitable public transport is available (e.g. for wheelchairs, specialist seating etc).
 - 12.2. Whether the pupil may be vulnerable and at risk of danger if they use public or other transport.
 - 12.2. Whether the pupil would be a danger to drivers, other passengers and the vehicle if using public or other transport.
 - 12.2. The efficient utilisation of resources.
 - 12.2. Any other individual circumstance.

The above list is for guidance only, and satisfaction of one or more of the criteria does not automatically entitle a child to transport assistance.

Schools, parents and transport providers cannot use the LA's pre-arranged transport without authorisation. Places (on bus, taxi or any other transport assistance) will not normally be available to anyone who does not qualify for transport assistance, and has not been authorised as such by the LA.

13. Attendance at a Special School does not automatically entitle a pupil to transport assistance. Any transport assistance must be authorised by the LA.

14. Eligibility for transport assistance is related to the child's needs. The LA may take into account some family circumstances (for example, if a child has other siblings attending schools not local to the SEN provision offered to them, or if a child is offered SEN provision at a school which is not their local provision) both when considering applications for home to school travel assistance and when determining the type of assistance to be provided. However, the LA cannot consider other family circumstances (e.g. parents attending work, or looking after other children not of school age).
15. The LA will not provide transport assistance to help with attendance. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school.

THE STATEMENT, ANNUAL REVIEWS AND APPLYING FOR TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE

16. The SEN Code of Practice 2001 indicates that transport should only be specified on the Statement in exceptional circumstances. Every child's claim for transport assistance will be considered individually on its merit.
17. All parents requiring transport assistance for their child should submit an application for transport assistance. Children with Statements of SEN and/or attending a Special School will not automatically be entitled to home to school transport provision. Only upon receipt of an application, will transport assistance be considered. There are cases where children have Statements of SEN and attend Special Schools, but do not receive home to school transport. Equally, there are cases where children have no Statement of SEN and do not attend Special Schools, but do receive home to school transport (in these cases, transport is usually approved on the basis of the child's physical and medical requirements).
18. The LA's guidance to schools states that schools should review each pupil's individual transport needs at least once per year and advise that this review could be completed as part of the Annual Review. This is of particular importance for pupils reaching the end of their school career and who will not be receiving further transport assistance (unless they apply for post-16 travel

assistance to continue their education). These children need special developmental training, for which schools are responsible.

Based upon the outcome of Annual Reviews, the LA will make any changes necessary to transport, which may be as a result of changes in need (for example, an escort may no longer be required). Any interim changes in circumstances may also result in a change in eligibility for transport assistance (for example, a child's SEN may have improved, or parents may have moved house to be closer to the school). It should be noted that once a child is eligible for transport assistance, this is no guarantee that they will continue to be eligible in the future.

The provision of transport assistance will also be reviewed to reflect any changes in national policy.

NEAREST SUITABLE SCHOOL / PARENTAL PREFERENCE

19. The nearest suitable school is one that the LA deems to be suitable for the specific needs of the pupil.
20. Schedule 27 of the Education Act states that parents may express a preference for the maintained school they wish their child to attend, and LAs must consider the parents' requests and arrange any relevant meetings before the final statement is issued, naming a school.
21. However, if a parent does express a preference for their child to attend a school further away than the nearest suitable school, then the LA reserves the right to reject transport assistance to that school.

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

22. It is part of a current Department for Education and Skills (DfES) objective to encourage independent travel training for children with disabilities and SEN, so that pupils can make use of public transport. Schools are responsible for providing independent travel training to children with SEN, where appropriate. In some cases, it may be possible for a member of school staff to initially

accompany children on public transport to increase their awareness and travel skills. However, this is heavily dependent on the resources available to each school, and is not guaranteed.

23. Independent travelling increases the self-confidence of these pupils, develops their social skills and reduces their sense of reliance on family members and friends, while at the same time providing them with many skills necessary for later employment.

PUPILS OUTSIDE STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE

24. The LA does not have a statutory duty to provide transport assistance for pupils who are under the compulsory school age.

PRE-SCHOOL TRAVEL (NURSERY PROVISION)

25. For children with special needs who are of pre-school age the parents are encouraged to transport the children to nursery units.
26. The LA does not currently have a duty to provide or arrange free transport to or from the nearest suitable nursery for children, since these children have not yet reached statutory school age.
27. However, this LA is committed to its strategy of early intervention and reducing barriers to learning. So the LA will consider transport assistance, but only when the LA has recommended a place at a special nursery unit which is not the local nursery for that child. Although eligibility and the type of transport assistance will be considered following evaluation of criteria shown in 4.1, when considering applications for pre-school travel for children of nursery age, the LA will pay particular attention to the following: -
 - 27.1 The age of the pupil.
 - 27.2 The distance between home and nursery.
 - 27.3 The Special Education Needs of the pupil.
 - 27.4 The reasons for the placement, and
 - 27.5 Whether the child has other siblings (of an age where it is not reasonable

to expect them to travel alone) attending schools a significant distance away from the provision proposed for this child.

28. The following will apply for all pupils attending pre-school provision (where the provision is recommended by the LA):
 - 31.1 If a pupil lives over 2 miles from school, assistance will be offered, where an application for Home to School transport is received.
 - 31.2 If a pupil lives between 1 mile and 2 miles from school, transport assistance may be offered – taking into account early intervention and the need to provide access to the support offered. The LA will still look at these cases on an individual basis, and there should be no expectation on the level of support that will be provided.
 - 31.3 If a pupil lives under 1 mile from school, transport will not be offered, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Only upon receipt of an application, will transport assistance be considered.

These criteria do not apply in cases where children are attending a nursery by means of parental preference (see 19-21 for more information).

POST-16 TRAVEL

29. Where the LA decides that a school age child is eligible for transport, the entitlement to this provision can continue up to and including the academic year in which they turn 16 years old (although, please see 19, current eligibility is no indication of future eligibility).
30. The LA does not currently have a duty to provide or arrange free transport to or from 6th form provision or college for students aged 16 years or over (studying in year groups 11 and above) since these young people are above statutory school age. The LA may decide to continue providing transport assistance for pupils aged between 16-19 if their statements of special educational needs continue after reaching 16 years of age, and the LA deems it necessary to provide assistance.

31. Each student in full time education (at least 12 hours guided learning per week) aged 16-19, is entitled to apply for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) although not all students in this age range will receive a payment. EMA are issued directly by central government rather than each LA. EMA is a weekly payment of £10, £20 or £30 depending on household income. The money is intended to help with the day-to-day costs at school or college, such as travel, books and course equipment. For more information about applying for an EMA, either call 080 810 16219 or log on to the following website: -

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/ema>

32. Prior to requesting Post-16 travel assistance, the LA would expect all students to be in receipt of, and spending at least a third of their EMA on travel (the LA has the discretion to provide assistance in other cases, see chart below).

33. This LA is committed to working with its local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Further Education Colleges and other key local organisations to ensure that young people with SEN have the same opportunities to continue their education as those without SEN.

34. When considering applications for post-16 travel for students, the LA will pay particular attention to the following: -

34.2. Whether this student is in current receipt of an EMA, and to what value

34.2. the location of the 6th form unit or college the student would like to attend (if this is not local provision, the LA would need to know that the course being taken is not available locally)

34.2. whether the 6th form unit is an extension to the school previously attended by the student, and named in their Statement of Special Educational Needs; and

34.2. the Special Education Needs of the student

35. Where the LA agrees to provide travel assistance to young people in year groups 11 and above, the assistance will take one of three forms: -

35.2. Reimbursement of train/tube travel, where students have received independent travel training and are able to use public transport to make solo journeys (parents would need to provide written evidence, either from the student's last

Annual Review at school or from the college SEN Co-ordinator or in the form of a parental statement to confirm that this person is unable to travel independently)

- 35.2. Mileage reimbursement, where students are not able to travel independently, but where parents are able to provide transport , or
- 35.2. A standard travel bursary, equivalent in value to a mileage reimbursement, which can be put towards the cost of alternative transport support, where students are not able to travel independently, and parents are not able to provide transport
36. The reimbursements, and standard travel bursaries, are calculated in accordance with the scales used for EMA eligibility.

For the academic year **2006/2007**:

If your household income is:	Reimbursement percentage
Up to 20,817 per year	100% of transport costs
20,818 – 25,521 per year	65% of transport costs
20,522 - 30,810 per year	35% of transport costs
More than 30,810 per year (i.e. student not entitled to any EMA)	Discretionary, dependent on total value of household income and total cost of transport

These criteria do not apply in cases where students are attending the 6th form of a school which was initially chosen by means of parental preference (see 3.3 for more information).

TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

37. Transport is co-ordinated and managed by the LA Contracts Officer. Each transport provider (whether taxi or private bus) will also have a nominated Transport Manager who is the first point of contact for schools and parents and who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service.

ESCORTS

38. Escorts will be provided where recommended on the SEN Transport Assessment Form. The provision or non-provision of an escort on a route is based on several factors:
- 38.2. the age of the pupil.
 - 38.2. the distance between home and school.
 - 38.2. the Special Education Needs of the pupil.
 - 38.2. the number of children travelling on this route.
39. There is no minimum or maximum age that determines whether an escort will be automatically provided and the LA will look at age in conjunction with all of the above factors in arriving at its decision.
40. Where a child travels on his/her own, the LA encourages parents or a person known to the pupil to act as the pupil's escort (providing that person is aged 18 or over). Payment is not made in such cases. Provision of an escort at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement and the requirement for an escort will be reviewed in the child's Annual Review, or in the event of a change in circumstance.

PUPILS FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

41. Pupils who live outside the Borough are not the responsibility of this LA and will not therefore be provided with transport assistance. However, some out-borough pupils may be allowed to take up spare places on the LA's transport if it is cost effective and agreed by the home authority. This will be subject to transport capacity. Kingston LA will then make a charge to the LA responsible for that pupil. Kingston LA may need to withdraw such places in the event of an in-borough pupil requiring transport assistance.

APPEALS

42. If the LA declines a request for transport assistance, the parents will be advised in writing of the decision and given details of how and when to appeal. Appeals

will be referred to a panel of elected members.

43. During any appeal, transport assistance will not be provided (although it will continue for those pupils already entitled to transport, when parents appeal against a change being made to transport).

TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

44. Where transport assistance is provided it may take one of the following forms:

- 44.2. Use of the free travel provided by transport for London by the Oyster Photocard.

- 44.2. Provision of TfL Tavelcard.

- 44.2. Reimbursing mileage costs for parents and carers who transport children to school.

- 44.2. Provision of a private bus service.

- 44.2. In exceptional circumstances, transport may be provided by individual taxis or licensed private car hire.

45. The LA will allocate transport in the most cost-effective manner.

46. Upon receipt of an application from parents, transport will normally take a minimum of 10 working days to arrange, and in some special cases may take longer (e.g. where there is a need for a specialist vehicle).

47. Parents will be informed of the transport arrangements in writing, in advance of travel. Parents will be provided with a Parent Guide booklet which sets out the arrangements and the duties of the Local Authority and the transport provider, along with responsibilities of the parents. Parents will be requested to confirm agreement to the arrangements by signing and returning a letter of agreement. Transport will not commence until the signed agreement is received.

48. Availability of transport is not guaranteed.

49. Separate transport will not be provided and children/parents must expect to travel with other children unless there are exceptional circumstances.

PARENT TRANSPORT

50. It should be noted where a parent transports a child, this does not mean that the child will no longer qualify for other transport assistance (e.g. a taxi). Temporary assistance by way of a taxi may be provided in those instances when the parent cannot transport for a period of time (e.g. due to illness). However, please note that transport arrangements can take up to 10 days to arrange (again, where there is a need for a specialist vehicle, this may make take longer). Where parents are in receipt of assistance to support them in transporting their child, this assistance will cover the round-trip.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

51. If the LA agrees to provide either private bus transport or taxi transport for a child, it may be necessary to complete a risk assessment of this child's physical and medical needs on board transport. Until this risk assessment is completed, transport between home and school will be the responsibility of the parents.
52. In addition, some children with SEN have physical and medical conditions which deteriorate over time. If, at any point, it is felt by the Transport Manager and/or Contacts Officer that a further risk assessment may be necessary to ensure that a child's physical and medical needs are being met on board transport as well as possible, this risk assessment will be planned and completed. Up until the date of this assessment, and until recommendations from the assessment are complete, it will be the responsibility of the parents to transport this child between home and school. As a result of an assessment of this type, it may be necessary to make changes to transport provision (e.g. to safety & support equipment used on board or to resources on board transport).

MEDICATION

53. Transport staff are not currently permitted to carry or administer medication on board a vehicle. If an emergency were to occur while a child were on board transport, the procedure would be for the escort to call 999 and ask for a paramedic crew to attend the scene. It will be for the parents to decide whether

they would like their child to travel on regular transport under these circumstances.

NOTE: These arrangements are currently under review.

PICK-UP/DROP-OFF ARRANGEMENTS

54. Transport providers are authorised to make pick-ups and drop-offs at authorised pick-up points only. The authorised points will usually be those specified on the Statement (normally the home and school address), or in the case of bus journeys, an allocated bus stop. Parents should provide one alternative address (which must be within 1 mile from the usual address) wherever possible, to be used in the event they are unable to meet their child. Any changes to these addresses, whether permanent or temporary, must be communicated in writing to the Contracts Officer who will make the necessary arrangements. Until such communication is received, the only other authorised place will be the nearest Children & Family Services' centre. It should be noted that a change of address is effectively a change in circumstances, which may also affect eligibility for transport assistance.

TIMING

55. The timing for pick-up/drop-off will be specified by the appropriate Transport Manager and parents must ensure they are aware of the correct times.
56. In order to minimise journey times for every child on the transport it is requested that children are available within 3 minutes of the specified time of pick-up and that parents are available within 3 minutes of the specified time of drop-off. If the child/parent is not available within that time, the driver is instructed to leave that pick-up/drop-off point and move onto the next pick-up. Should the transport move on without the child, transport to school will then become the responsibility of the parent for that journey. Should the parent be unavailable for pick-up on school-home journeys, the child will be transported to the nearest place of safety (see 63). Transport assistance may be removed if there are ongoing delays.

57. Where children are picked up/dropped-off at home, the parent is responsible for accompanying the child to and from the door to the vehicle. The parent should keep a lookout for the vehicle's arrival since the vehicle will not sound its horn (it is against the law to sound a horn from a stationary vehicle, see Highway Code point 92). In exceptional circumstances (e.g. where the child travels alone in a taxi with an escort) the escort may call at the door, although this is at the discretion of the crew. Any variation to the usual procedure must be agreed with the Transport Manager. Parents must ensure that there are no delays in making children available for the journey (or collecting them in the evenings) as this is one of the main factors affecting total journey times.
58. In some cases, to recognise the needs of the individual pupil, the 3 minute waiting time will need to be flexible. In these cases the LA will advise the transport operator of the pupil's SEN which may affect the 3 minute timings.

ABSENCES

59. Where a child cannot attend school on any particular day (e.g. due to illness), it is the parents' responsibility to contact the transport company immediately. For long term absences, parents should contact the Contracts Officer.
60. Parents should contact their respective transport company the night before travel if they know then that their child will be off ill the following day, or as early as possible on the morning of travel, if their child only shows signs of being ill on the day they are due to travel.
61. All transport which is not cancelled in advance of the vehicle arriving at the home address must be paid for by the LA whether or not the child, living at that address, boards the vehicle. Where parents repeatedly fail to cancel transport provision for their child (as a result of the child's illness) before it arrives at the home address, or where a child suddenly decides not to travel in transport which has arrived on any given day (without any prior notice having been given to the transport company), the child's transport provision will be reviewed.

62. Where it can be established that public funds are being used inappropriately, as a result of vehicles not being cancelled with enough prior warning, children may be excluded from transport for a period of time. Parents will be responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

63. Transport providers are instructed to take children to the nearest place of safety in the event that a parent or carer is unable to meet the child at the specified drop-off point/time. Parents, schools and the Transport providers will receive instructions from the LA on what to do if this happens. Children & Family Services may be notified and/or Transport Assistance may be withdrawn if this happens frequently. Parents or schools should contact the Transport Manager or Contracts Officer if there are any emergency changes. Likewise, the Transport Manager will have a duty to advise parents/schools if there are going to be any foreseen major delays to the delivery of the service.

PARENTS WITH OTHER COMMITMENTS

64. The LA is not able to take into account family circumstances when allocating pick-up and drop-off times for children. The timing will be based on the most efficient route available. The efficient utilisation of LA resources (including routings) will always take priority.
65. A situation could develop where a number of parents, in similar family circumstances (e.g. other children to take to school, or work commitments) request the same pick-up time. If the LA were to consider requests for pick-up times from parents, then this would lead to inequality, since a vehicle cannot collect two children from different addresses at the same time. In addition, requests for pick-up times would also compromise route efficiencies – making them longer and less economical.
66. SEN Transport assistance is awarded to children with SEN and should not be considered a service which facilitates parents or carers working or looking after other children who are not yet of school age.

ADDITIONAL JOURNEYS

67. Transport providers are allowed to make agreed journeys from home to school, and from school to home only (where the home address is that agreed on the Statement or authorised by the LA).
68. Prior to any LA agreement to provide home to school transport, all parents are asked to provide an emergency address, located within 1 mile of their home address, to which their children can be dropped in emergencies. In cases when this emergency address is used, this is equivalent to a journey to the home address.
69. No additional journeys can be made under the terms of SEN Transport policy. This includes school trips, additional journeys to sports facilities, work experience, curriculum appointments or medical appointments. The LA will not make any payments to transport providers for these journeys, and they must be invoiced directly to the school or parent, depending on who arranged the journey.
70. Any additional journeys which are deemed to be 'home to school' transport must be authorised by the Contracts Officer, in advance of the journey taking place. The LA will not guarantee payment to transport providers for any additional unauthorised journeys.

RESPIRE & FOSTER CARE

71. Respite care is a short break away, providing 'time off' for children and their parents or carers. Foster care is a form of care, usually in a residence licensed by a public agency, for children who need some time away from their homes.
72. In some circumstances, we may be able to offer transport to respite care services in order to support carers in continuing their role. Equally, we may be able to offer transport to foster care placements to support the welfare of children.

73. Upon receipt of your application, transport will normally take a minimum of 10 working days to arrange, and in some special cases may take longer (e.g. where there is a need for a specialist vehicle).
74. It should be noted that where the LA agrees to support transport to or from respite facilities, this transport is in place of the relevant journey to or from the home address for that school day and it is ultimately the responsibility of the parents to supply the dates for respite to the Contracts Officer, on an ongoing basis, at least 10 working days in advance of travel.
75. Availability of transport is not guaranteed and all cases will be considered on an individual basis.

EXTENDED SCHOOLING

76. The LA will not normally provide transport for pupils to access extended schooling. In these cases, parents will need to make their own arrangements to get their children to and from any activity that is outside the school's normal hours.
77. In some cases, schools are able to arrange transport and parents may wish to make use of these services. However, it should be noted that schools are able to charge parents directly for this service at cost.
78. The LA will only consider providing transport assistance to extended schooling if it is at no extra cost to the Authority.

DUAL PLACEMENTS/INCLUSION

79. Dual placements (where a pupil attends more than one school) may require additional transport (such as transport at lunchtimes etc). The school will be

responsible for arranging and paying for the cost of such transport. Where a pupil is based full-time at a school but visits another for inclusion purposes, the school where the pupil is usually based will be responsible for arranging and paying for transport. If the LA transport provider is used, they will invoice the school directly for any such charges. These arrangements will also apply to pupil referral units.

80. The LA has the discretion to arrange transport for integration purposes in some cases.

PARENTS VISITING SCHOOLS

81. Transport assistance will not be provided for parents or family who wish to visit children at school whether in-borough or out-borough. However, in some cases, special arrangements are made by residential schools to allow parents to visit. The LA will not make any payments to transport providers for these journeys. If the LA's transport providers are used in these cases, services must be invoiced directly to the school or parent, depending on who arranged the journey.
82. Where the child attends an out-borough placement, the LA will fund one journey per academic year for parents to attend their child's school for the Annual Review.

TRANSPORT ROUTES

83. The most cost effective route will be used at all times. Bus stops will be used where possible to cut down on the number of stops a bus has to make. However, individual SEN/physical limitations will be taken into account and home stops may be necessary in some cases.
84. Routes will be reviewed regularly to take into account changes in needs and environmental pressures (e.g. changes in road layouts etc).

JOURNEY TIMES

85. The nature of transport congestion in the Borough means that travelling times can vary greatly. The LA, in accordance with DfES guidelines, expects that children should arrive at school safely and fit to learn, and journey times should reflect this. The maximum journey time for SEN transport has been set at 1 hour 15 minutes, although this may be affected from time-to-time by traffic pressures, road works and other environmental and operational conditions.
86. These times do not apply to children travelling to out-borough schools, where distances and frequency of journeys vary.
87. Any ongoing delays (e.g. due to major road works or weather) should be taken into account (e.g. altering routes if feasible) and parents and schools will be notified where possible.
88. To cut down on journey times, parents must ensure that children are ready for pick-up/drop-off on time.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

89. Pupils in boarding schools for the standard 40 week academic year (and who are eligible for transport assistance) will be provided with transport assistance between home and school for the start and end of each term period (generally half-terms). This totals 12 one way journeys, being four per term. Transport for pupils in 52 week schools will be determined individually.
90. Transport assistance for any pupils attending boarding school will not exceed the 12 one way journeys. However, if the school is closed on a weekly or fortnightly basis this will be reflected in the fees being paid by the LA for the placement and accordingly, transport will be provided to coincide with school closures.
91. Transport assistance may be in the form of regional pick-up points for bus services.

92. Transport assistance will not be provided to parents or family who wish to visit the school for any reason. Any arrangements of this nature will need to be agreed directly with the school. However, parents or carers may be provided with transport assistance to school once per year to attend the Annual Review.
93. Parents who wish to accompany their child on the first day of school will be expected to make their own arrangements. Where a school stipulates that a parent should attend on the first day, transport must be arranged with the school.

BEHAVIOUR STANDARDS

94. Any pupil may experience behavioural difficulties as a result of their SEN and the LA will work with schools, parents and transport operators to manage instances where the pupil exhibits extreme behaviour characteristics.
95. However, it is recognised that poor behaviour may affect the concentration of the driver, or the overall safety of the other pupils or any escort (if one is allocated to that run) and in some cases alternative arrangements will need to be made.
96. In consultation with schools, the LA may be required to issue periods of fixed or permanent exclusion from transport. Parents will be responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport. The DfES guidance states that non-provision of transport during these periods does not mean that the LA is not fulfilling its duty, merely that transport arrangements were made but as a result of behaviour, had to be removed.
97. When considering whether to exclude any pupil from transport, the LA will require written statements from the driver and escort in support of alleged unacceptable behaviour. Consultation will also be made with the Head Teacher and the Statutory Assessment Advisory Group (SAAG). Procedure, which will depend on the SEN of the pupil, the circumstances of the behavioural problem and consultation with the school and other parties will be as follows: -

Level	Incident	Outcome
1	Verbal abuse	First written warning.
2	Second incident of verbal abuse	Final written warning.
3	Third incident of verbal abuse	3 day fixed exclusion from transport services.
4	Fourth incident of verbal abuse	Exclusion from afternoon transport services for a period of time (transport available to take child to school). If behaviour improves, then reintroduce journeys to and from school.
5	Fifth incident of verbal abuse	Permanent exclusion from transport services.
*	Physical abuse (at any stage)	Instant exclusion from transport services for 2 weeks pending investigation, including written statements. Depending on the nature of abuse, it may be possible to reintroduce morning transport only for a period of time. If behaviour improves, then reintroduce journeys to and from school, but child will remain fixed on level 4. This means, one further incident of either verbal abuse or physical abuse will result in a permanent exclusion from transport service.

98. No eating, drinking or smoking will be allowed on any vehicle at any time. This includes at times when the children are not on the transport. In exceptional circumstances, a pupil may be allowed water on board (e.g. during extreme temperatures).

CONTINUITY

99. Every effort will be made to ensure that the same escort and driver continue to transport a child. However this will not always be possible (for example, when the driver is ill, or on holiday) and changes may need to be made to ensure the most efficient use of available resources.

100. All parents and schools are advised to expect some journeys not to be carried out by the same team as normal (due to illness, holiday entitlement, course attendance etc). In these cases, parents or schools must ensure that they take the name of the new escort and/or driver, ask to see their identification, and call into their transport company's headquarters to verify that person's identity.
101. In addition, the LA has a duty to spend public funds in the most appropriate and cost effective way. Routes will be reviewed regularly and separate routes, taking children to several different schools, may be brought together into one route where appropriate. These longer, larger routes will be reviewed periodically with the respective schools to ensure that concentration and attentiveness are not compromised by any change to the journey.

TRANSPORT STANDARDS

102. Transport provision will be in accordance with contractual standards and national legislation.
103. It is recognised that the quality of transportation to and from school, and other curricular activities, can often affect the emotional welfare and behavioural pattern of a child. So all drivers, escorts and other contractors' staff undertaking the service will show understanding of, and empathy with, the children, their parents and school staff. They shall treat all children with respect and in a dignified manner appropriate to their age.
104. All drivers and escorts will greet passengers and parents politely and ensure that all passengers travel in comfort and safety.
105. All drivers and escorts will have undergone a training programme and will be in receipt of Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks alert the LA to any possible criminal convictions. Husband and wife escort teams are permitted, assuming that the above checks and training have been carried out.

106. The competency of the driver and crew, the conduct of the vehicle during the journey and at the pick-up points will all be of a contractually prescribed standard.
107. The vehicles will be properly licensed and roadworthy, and will offer standards of comfort and safety as prescribed by relevant Statutory Law. Regular checks will be carried out on all vehicles. Vehicles will have modifications to allow for wheelchair access where possible.
108. The vehicle must be at its prescribed point of pick-up within 5 minutes of its allotted time (although traffic conditions and delays at the pick-up points for other passengers may affect these timings). Any major delays will be communicated, either via the relevant Transport Manager or the Contracts Officer, to the school or parents.

SHORT-TERM DIFFICULTIES

PUPILS

109. **Pupils who do not receive transport assistance:** Pupils who have short-term difficulties (e.g. a broken leg or other short-term illness) will not automatically be eligible for transport assistance to and from school. It is the parents' responsibility to make arrangements in these cases. However, consideration may be given during national curriculum years 11, 12 and 13 where the pupil is taking national examinations.
110. **Where pupil receives bus transport provision:** Where a child receives home to school transport from a private bus company, and cannot get to and from a collection point (e.g. due to a broken leg or other short-term illness) temporary assistance may be offered as replacement for this service. Although the child's SEN has not changed, temporary physical or medical constraints make it difficult for this child to access the service.

111. **Where pupil temporarily changes address:** Transport assistance will not be provided where a child who usually receives assistance moves to a different address in the short-term (e.g. due to family circumstances) if that address results in additional transport costs. The parent will be expected to pay any additional costs associated with the short-term move, or make their own arrangements.
112. The LA will only consider transport assistance for pupils with short-term difficulties after a period of two weeks.

PARENTS

113. If a parent is disabled (or has a short-term illness) and has difficulty in getting their child to and from school then additional support may be provided by the Health & Disabilities Team who are contactable on 020 8547 6364.
114. Parents who have short-term difficulties (e.g. a broken leg or other short-term illness) preventing them from being able to take their child to school will not be provided with transport assistance in these cases, as transport would not normally be provided, if parents were well.
115. **Where the LA has authorised a parental mileage claim:** Where parents transport a child themselves, and claim mileage reimbursements from the LA, this does not mean that their child will no longer qualify for other transport assistance (e.g. a taxi). Temporary assistance may be provided in those instances when parents cannot transport for a period of time (e.g. due to a broken leg or other short-term illness), because this child is normally taken between home and school by car. Please note that transport arrangements can take 10 days to arrange (and where there is a need for a specialist vehicle, this may make take longer).
116. **Where pupil receives bus transport provision:** Where a child receives home to school transport from a private bus company, and must be accompanied to and from a collection point by a parent (or guardian), no temporary assistance will be offered as replacement for this service if a parent (or guardian) is

unavailable to take this child to and from the collection point (e.g. a broken leg or other short-term illness). This is because the child's SEN have not changed and the transport service from the collection point is still available. The change in provision, to supply extended transport from the home address, has been requested as a result of family circumstances.

PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS

117. The LA expects all children attending pupil referral units to travel between home and the unit by bus. All bus transport for children aged 18 and under is now provided by Transport for London (TfL) free of charge with the use of a Child Oyster Photocard.

Application forms for Oyster Photocards may be obtained from main Post Office (some schools also keep a small stock of forms, although this is purely at the discretion of each school).

Further information can be found on Transport for London's website www.tfl.gov.uk or by contacting the helpline on 0870 443 1044.

COMMENTS / QUERIES / COMPLAINTS

118. The LA is constantly looking at ways to improve the service and it invites comments from parents, children and school staff on any issue relating to the SEN Transport Service.
- Queries (for example, regarding the standard of service or operational issues) should in the first instance be sent to the relevant Transport Manager for the bus or taxi provider who will notify the Contracts Officer if required. In the event that the Transport Manager cannot resolve a query, the Contracts Officer should then be contacted.
119. Formal complaints should be directed to the Contracts Officer. The LA complaints process will be in force for all complaints received.

120. The Royal Borough of Kingston also produces a leaflet called “Have your say....”. This leaflet contains many useful telephone numbers and email addresses for various departments within the Local Authority, as well as additional advice about our formal two-stage complaints procedure. If you would like a copy of this leaflet, you may either collect one from the Local Authority or request that one is sent to you. For those with access to the internet, more information is available at the following link:

http://www.kingston.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/contact_us/complaints/complaintsprocedure.htm

The Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames is committed to delivering a service to everyone regardless of their age, disability, gender, race, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation and economic status. We recognise that the above list is not exhaustive and that there are other forms of discrimination that should not be tolerated. We will ensure that our service will take account of the communication and access needs of our service users to enable them to benefit fully from our services.

We are committed to delivering a service that meets individual choices by taking into account their respective needs in a sensitive, meaningful and practical way. Where necessary the service user’s cultural, religious or any other specific needs that is brought to our attention will be considered and appropriate action undertaken in the delivery of the service.

We are committed to ensure that our services are delivered in a fair, equitable and transparent way. We will therefore collect data from our service users and analyse these to identify any negative impact on the equality target groups, including families entitled to the service due to their economic status.

Nothing within this policy, nor omission from it, shall be interpreted as relieving the LA from its legal duties under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, or any other statutory requirements.