

Home to School Travel

For children and young people with special educational needs

SERVICE STANDARDS

Manchester City Council
Children's Services
Travel Coordination Unit

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
ASSISTANCE FOR HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SIGNIFICANT SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

SERVICE STANDARDS

These service standards are intended to provide clarity for parents/carers in relation to the travel assistance solutions offered to children with special educational needs.

Underlying these standards is the principle that, if Manchester City Council agrees to provide travel assistance, it will be provided in a safe and cost effective manner, taking account of the child's specific needs and with regard to the best use of the Council's resources.

1 Service Personnel

It is recognised that the quality of travel assistance to and from school can often affect the emotional welfare and behavioural characteristics of a child. All Drivers and Travel Assistants undertaking the service will show understanding and empathy with the children, the parents and the school staff. They will treat children with respect and in a dignified manner appropriate to the child.

All Drivers and Travel Assistants will greet passengers and parents politely and ensure that all passengers travel in comfort and safety.

All Drivers and Travel Assistants will have undergone a training programme and will be in receipt of Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Travel Assistants will be provided as part of travel assistance solutions where they are necessary to support the safe operation of vehicles or safe walking buses and the care of children.

The Council recognises that in certain situations change can be unsettling. As a result the Council will make every effort to ensure the same Driver and/or Travel Assistant is used on a regular basis. This may not always be possible due to illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations. Changes may also be necessary from time to time to ensure the efficient use of Council resources. In these circumstances the Council will provide a period of notice wherever possible and, where practicable, put in place a transition plan that minimises the distress to the child.

2 Vehicles

All transport will be provided in accordance with contractual standards and legislation.

All vehicles will be properly licensed and roadworthy, and will offer the standards of comfort and safety as prescribed in relevant Statutory Law.

Regular monitoring of quality and service standards will take place on all vehicles.

Vehicles will have specialist wheelchair access and wheelchair tie down and occupant restraint systems where necessary.

3 Travelling times

The Council will endeavour to ensure that pupils arrive at school fit to learn and recognises that the length of the journey to school can affect this aim. We expect the maximum length of journey for a pupil will be no more than 1 hour. On occasions there are factors outside the Council's control e.g. unforeseen traffic congestion or bad weather that may affect these.

These journey times do not apply where pupils are travelling to schools and colleges outside the city of Manchester.

In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the Council to vary planned routes and this may affect pick up and drop off times. Where this is the case the Council will provide 5 working days notice to parents/carers.

3 Vehicle waiting times

To keep journey times down to an absolute minimum and ensure that all pupils arrive at school on time, all vehicles will adhere to strict waiting time limits as follows:

- a) If a child is not ready, or not at the agreed pick up point, the vehicle will wait for a maximum of 2 minutes after the agreed pick up time and then move off. If this means the child is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
- b) If the vehicle arrives early for a pick up it will wait until the official set time and then a further 2 minutes before moving off. If this means the child is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
- c) If the vehicle arrives late for a pick up it will move off as soon as all the children have boarded.
- d) When a vehicle arrives at a pick up or drop off point, the horn will **not** be sounded.

If more than two occurrences of delay are caused by parents/carers or children not being available at the official time, travel assistance will be reviewed and may be suspended or permanently withdrawn. In such circumstances parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school

4 Absences

Where a child cannot attend school or college on any particular day due to illness it is the parents/carers responsibility to;

- a) Contact the Council's Travel Coordination Unit the night before travel is required, if it is known that the child will be off school the next day or;
- b) Contact the Council's Travel Coordination Unit as early as possible in the morning of the day their child is due to travel, if the child has only just begun to show signs of illness.

When travel assistance is cancelled due to illness, ***it will only be reinstated*** when the parent/carer notifies the Travel Coordination Unit. This advice should be given on ***the day before*** the child is due to return to school.

Where parents/carers, on more than two occasions, fail to cancel travel assistance for their child before it arrives, the child's transport provision will be reviewed.

Travel assistance will be reviewed, and may be suspended for a period of time or permanently withdrawn, if it becomes apparent that vehicles are not being cancelled with sufficient advance warning. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school in such circumstances.

6. Making alternative arrangements

In the event that a parent/carer is unable to meet their child at the specified time and location, transport providers are instructed to take children to the nearest place of safety and notify a Children's Services Social Worker.

Parents/carers must provide an emergency address, located within one mile of their home address or the pick up point, where their child can be dropped off.

At times, parents/carers may need to make emergency alternative arrangements for the handover of their child to a nominated responsible adult. In these cases parents/carers must notify the Travel Coordination Unit and make suitable arrangements to ensure their child's safety.

Where emergency arrangements are put in place on more than two occasions, travel assistance will be reviewed and may be suspended or permanently withdrawn. In such circumstances parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school.

In circumstances where vehicles are delayed or late arriving the parent/carer should contact the transport provider directly. These details will be provided on commencement of the travel assistance or following a change in provider. If there are more than 3 instances of a vehicle being late in any 4 week period the Council's Travel Coordination Unit should be contacted. The Travel Coordination Unit will take steps to directly address the situation with the provider.

7. Extra journeys

The provision of travel assistance extends only to journeys to and from school at the beginning and the end of the school day. Travel assistance is not provided on any other occasions, for example, travel between schools, sports facilities, for work experience, other curriculum activities and medical appointments.

Where a child attends more than one school, they may require additional transport. The school, which is the child's main school, will be responsible for arranging and meeting the cost of such transport.

Where a child is based full time at a school, but visits other schools or a Pupil Referral Unit, the school where the pupil is 'on roll' will be responsible for arranging transport and for the cost of such transport. Parents/carers should, in these circumstances, address any issues directly to the child's school

8. Travel Assistance for parents/carers to attend meetings/events

Where a parent/carer is required to attend school for a meeting/event, it is their responsibility to make their own travel arrangements. However, subject to the following conditions, parents/carers may be allowed to travel on their child's vehicle:

- (a) Permission is granted by the Travel Coordination Unit prior to the journey (**this is essential for insurance purposes**);
- (b) There is a spare seat available on the vehicle;
- (c) The vehicle is not diverting from its regular route.

9. On vehicle medical assistance

Travel Assistants are trained in basic First Aid and receive additional training specific to the child's needs where necessary. However, in the event of an emergency, Transport Assistants and Drivers will contact 999 to request a paramedic crew.

Children are not permitted to consume food or drinks whilst on board a vehicle. This standard will be enforced to ensure the continuing safety of children whilst travelling.

10. Safeguarding children

The nominated Child Protection Officer will be advised of any safety issues that may be encountered during the provision of travel assistance. The nominated officer will take appropriate action to safeguard the child as deemed appropriate and in line with Council procedures. The school, social workers and other agencies may be contacted depending on the individual circumstances.

11. Expected behavioural standards for children

As a result of their special educational needs, any child may experience behavioural difficulties as a direct result of their particular needs. In these cases the Council will make every effort to work with the schools, parents and transport providers to manage instances where the child exhibits these extreme behaviour characteristics. Wherever possible these considerations will be taken into account when determining an appropriate and safe form of travel assistance. Advice will always be sought from the child's school regarding whether the bad behaviour is directly linked to the special educational needs and appropriate action accordingly taken.

It is however recognised, that general poor behaviour, not directly attributable to a child's particular special educational needs and circumstances, cannot be taken into account when determining an appropriate safe travel plan. It is therefore paramount to have and to enforce clear standards of acceptable behaviour in the interests of ensuring a safe journey for all pupils and staff as well as other road users.

In consultation with schools, the Council may be required to instigate permanent or fixed periods of exclusion from travel assistance. Parents/carers will be responsible for transporting their children during any period of exclusion and ensuring their child's regular attendance at school.

When considering whether to exclude any child from travel assistance the Council will require written statements from Drivers and Travel Assistants in relation to the alleged bad behaviour. Consultation will also take place with the relevant Head Teacher and other relevant specialists.

The application of any sanctions as detailed below does not prejudice the rights of any individual to instigate criminal proceedings against a person resulting from bad behaviour.

1. Verbal abuse:

The first instance of offensive verbal abuse to staff, other passengers or the general public will result in a formal warning

The second instance of verbal abuse will result in a written warning.

The third occurrence will result in a five-day exclusion from travel assistance.

2. Vandalism:

The first instance of vandalism to a vehicle will result in five-day exclusion. The costs of making good the damage will be charged to the parent/carer.

The second instance of vandalism will result in permanent exclusion from travel assistance. The costs of making good the damage will be charged to the parent/carer.

3. Physical abuse:

The first instance of physical abuse will result in a two-week exclusion from travel assistance pending full investigation. Travel assistance may be reintroduced when the Head Teacher and The Travel Coordination Manager are both satisfied (and in line with school's specific behaviour policies) that the child's behaviour has improved satisfactorily – Any further occurrence of physical abuse will result in permanent exclusion from travel assistance.

12. Complaints/comments and questions

The Council is constantly seeking ways to improve the quality of services and encourages feedback from parents/carers, children and young people and school staff.

If you have a complaint, a comment or a question related to the provision of travel assistance or these service standards, please direct these to the council's customer service centre 0161 219 6400.