

# HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

**A GUIDE FOR PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE**

The aim of this document is to promote co-operation in order to provide safe, punctual and pleasant journeys between home and school.

Medway Council arranges home to school travel assistance for approximately over 1,000 children and young people who have special educational needs. We offer a wide range of travel assistance from personal transport budgets, mileage/cash payments and travel cards. Some pupils travel on minibuses and taxis hired for this purpose and some others travel on scheduled local bus services. We ensure that the type of transport provided is the most suitable for each child and young person.

We are, of course, concerned that these journeys should run smoothly, are problem free and that the children and young people are not put at any unnecessary risks. To keep our standards high, we have issued Codes of Practice for transport operators and passenger assistants.

In maintaining these standards, we ask that parents take an active role in upholding their child’s behaviour.

All hired transport services are operated by private companies on behalf of Medway Council.

Before any company can be registered with the Council, they must first undergo a rigorous compliance process which includes checking their motor and public liability insurance, vehicle and driver licensing, DBS checks of all drivers/passenger assistants etc. This enables Medway Council to be assured that only companies that are able to meet these high standards are permitted to provide transport services to children and young people who have special educational needs.

## Transport services are usually contracted for a fixed period of time. This means that it is likely that your child’s transport will change a number of times during their school career. All travel assistance is reviewed on a regular basis and you will be required to reapply for continued travel assistance on an annual basis.

Other changes may arise if it becomes necessary to reorganise routes because new children and young people join the school or move home address. We will always try to give you notice of any changes to your child’s transport in good time. However, we would expect you to notify Medway Council of any changes in your circumstances including change of home or education address.

Before any new arrangements commence, we expect each driver to contact you directly to discuss your child’s needs and to arrange a pick up time. At the same time, you will need to let the driver have an emergency telephone number and address. You should be available when your child is dropped off at home. If no one is available to receive your child, we will refer to Children’s Services and your child will be taken to a place of safety.

TRANSPORT PROVIDERS and their staff ARE expected to:

* Drive carefully and safely;
* Make every effort to be punctual;
* Provide clean vehicles;
* Treat children and young people courteously;
* Ensure children and young people are correctly secure in their seats;
* Ensure that all children and young people are seated before moving off.

**TRANSPORT PROVIDERS and their staff ARE NOT expected to:**

* Convey children and young people whose behaviour is threatening the safety of others;
* Delay the vehicle by waiting for a child/young person who is not ready at the allocated pick up time, the vehicle will wait 3 minutes after the allocated pick-up time;
* Knock at the house to collect the child/young people from the door;
* Transport the child/young person’s siblings for whom travel assistance has not been authorised;
* Drop off or collect a child/young person at an alternative address or time;

SCHOOLS ARE expected to:

* Keep this guidance in the forefront of children/young people’s minds;
* Provide a point of contact on transport matters;
* Support drivers in maintaining orderly boarding and disembarking of vehicles at school;
* Co-operate in investigating incidents brought to their attention;
* Consult Medway Council in accordance with the appropriate regulations about changes in school times.

**PARENTS ARE expected to:**

* Encourage their children to adhere to this guidance;
* Co-operate with the transport providers, Medway Council and education provider;
* Ensure that their child is ready at the allocated collection time;
* Ensure a responsible adult is available to receive your child from the transport each afternoon
* Take your child to the vehicle each morning and collect from the vehicle each afternoon.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE expected to:

* Be considerate and courteous to fellow passengers and employees of the transport provider;
* Act in a responsible manner whilst boarding and alighting the vehicle;
* Always wear/use a seatbelt/harness/child seat as instructed.

MEDWAY COUNCIL is expected to:

* Monitor and review travel assistance arrangements on a regular basis;
* Liaise with schools on proposed changes to transport arrangements;
* Investigate complaints or concerns raised by schools, parents or pupils

## BEHAVIOUR

The driver/escort is responsible for the welfare of the children and will attempt to deal with misbehaviour either on the spot, or will report to the Head teacher.

Children are not allowed to eat or drink on school transport, except in exceptional circumstances, including medical emergency and agreed by Medway Council.

Where a child/young person causes wilful damage to a vehicle, where appropriate, parents will be held financially responsible for any damage their child/young person causes to vehicles and other property.

As mentioned above, Transport providers are not expected to convey children and young people whose behaviour is threatening the safety of others. If there are repeated incidents on transport that pose a risk to safety then the following three-stage procedure will be observed:

·  **A verbal warning** – This will be issued from the driver or staff on board transport at the time of incident.

·  **A written warning-** Thiswill be formally issued from the SEN transport department at Medway Council offering additional support.

·  **A final written warning-** This will be issued from the SEN transport department at Medway Council and transport will be terminated.

Where transport is withdrawn, parents will have to make their own arrangements to get their children to school. We unfortunately cannot continue to operate transports that continually pose a risk to staff or other pupils.

## *PARENTS RESPONSIBILITIES*

Whilst every effort is made to accommodate family needs, it is not always possible to arrange transport at exactly the times to suit your individual requirements. An alternative method of travel assistance or personal travel budget may allow you the flexibility to make alternative pick up/drop off arrangements for your child.

If your child is sick or not attending school, please let the transport operator know at the latest by 7am in the morning and the date of absence and date of return.

Please notify Medway Council and the transport contractor for any absences over 3 days by email to sentransport@medway.gov.uk

If your child has medication, please give this to the driver/passenger assistant who will hand it over to school staff.

## EMERGENCY/BAD WEATHER ARRANGEMENTS

Local radio stations and websites help us to provide up to the minute news of school closures or cancellations of transport because of bad weather. In the case of severe weather, it is advisable to listen for broadcasts and check school and radio station websites. Head teachers and transport contractors will decide whether children and young people should be taken home early when there are difficult road conditions. If this is necessary, head teachers will contact you to let you know. It is important that the emergency contact details for children are known by the school and the driver and are updated regularly.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Should you have any problems or concerns about your child’s transport, please contact by email at **sentransport@medway.gov.uk**

or by post **Children and Adults Commissioning Team, Level 3 Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR**

**Childs Name**…………………………………………**School**……………………………..

**Parent/ Carer**

Name.…………………………………………………Signature……………………............

Date……………………………………………………………………………………………

**Transport Provider**

Name………………………………………………….Signature……………………………

Date…………………………………………………………………………………………….