



Notice of a Meeting

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Friday, 28 February 2025 at 10.00 am
Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND**

These proceedings are open to the public

If you wish to view proceedings, please click **on this [Live Stream Link](#)**.
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Membership

Chair: Councillor Nigel Simpson

Deputy Chair: Councillor Jenny Hannaby

Councillors: Liz Brighthouse OBE Andy Graham Michael Waine
Ian Corkin Sally Povolotsky
Trish Elphinstone Roz Smith

Co-optees: Hana G Toby Long Peace Nnaji
Fraser Long Katie N

Notes: ***Date of next meeting: 28 March 2025***

For more information about this Committee, please contact:

Committee Officer

Scrutiny Officer
scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

Date Not Specified

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

- All services and preventative activities/initiatives relating to children, young people, education, families and older people.
- Enables the council to scrutinise its statutory functions relating to children, adult social care and safeguarding. Includes public health matters where they are not covered by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- This committee will also consider matters relating to care leavers and the transition between children's and adult services

How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9.00 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents.

These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 4 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. Declaration of Interests

See guidance note on the back page.

3. Minutes (Pages 1 - 10)

The Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2024 and to receive information arising from them.

4. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

To facilitate 'hybrid' meetings we are asking that requests to speak or present a petition are submitted by no later than 9.00 a.m. four working days before the meeting, i.e., 9.00 a.m. on 24th February 2025. Requests to speak should be sent to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you are asked to submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that your views are taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9.00 a.m. two working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than one A4 sheet.

5. Committee Forward Work Plan (Pages 11 - 14)

The Committee is recommended to **AGREE** its work programme for forthcoming meetings, having heard any changes from previous iterations, and taking account of the Cabinet Forward Plan and of the Budget Management Monitoring Report (BMMR).

The BMMR from the 21st January 2025 Cabinet, can be found following the link: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AId=31293>

6. Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker (Pages 15 - 18)

The Committee is recommended to **NOTE** the progress of previous recommendations and actions arising from previous meetings, having raised any questions on the contents.

7. Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations

There are no scrutiny recommendations responses expected for this meeting.

8. Local Area Partnership SEND Update (Pages 19 - 30)

The Committee has requested an update on progress made across the Local Area Partnership in addressing the issues raised by the 2023 inspection.

The Committee has invited Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet member for SEND Improvement, and Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, to attend to present the report.

The Committee has also invited Lisa Lyons, the Director of Children's Services, and Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion; Matthew Tait, Chief Delivery Officer (ICB), Chris Wright, Associate Director of Place – Oxfordshire (ICB), and Niki Cartwright, Director of Performance and Delivery – All Age Mental Health, Community Services, All Age Learning Disability, All Age NeuroDivergence, All Age PEO LC & SEND (ICB), as well as Steve Crocker, the independent chair of the SEND Improvement Advisory Board.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

Members of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been invited to attend the meeting of the Committee and to participate in this item, at the discretion of the Chair.

9. Revised Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policies for Consultation (Pages 31 - 152)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Education and Young People's Services, Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director Education and Inclusion, and Stephen Good, Home to School Transport Programme Manager, have been invited to present a report on the proposed home to school transport policy and the post-16 policy statement that are currently the subject of public consultation.

The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any questions, and to **AGREE** any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet arising therefrom.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships
- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.

- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Agenda Item 3

EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 22 November 2024 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 1.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Nigel Simpson - in the Chair

Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Trish Elphinstone
Councillor Andy Graham
Councillor Sally Povolotsky
Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Michael Waine

Other Members in Attendance: Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement
Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services
Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance

Officers: Stephen Chandler, Executive Director (People)
Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education
Jessie Dobson, Partnership Youth Development Manager
Alex Potts, Lead Officer: Tribunals, Resolutions and Compliance
Joanna Goodey, Education Inclusion Manager
Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director of Provider Services
Teresa Rogers, Head of Service: Adopt Thames Valley
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

42/24 YOUTH TAKE-OVER DAY

(Agenda No.)

The Chair invited Katie N, as part of the Youth Take-Over Day, to Chair the committee for its first three agenda items.

43/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Toby Long.

Cllr Graham and Cllr Waine apologised that they would need to leave the meeting early.

Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, had apologised that she was unable to attend in person but attended online.

The Director of Children's Services' apologies were noted.

Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, also attended online.

44/24 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

45/24 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The Committee **AGREED** the minutes of the 20 September 2024 meeting were a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

- The bottom paragraph of page 3 should expand on what was meant by 'enquiries' and whether complaints were included; and
- Under the first bullet point of page 4, the Head of SEND stated they could provide data about numbers, refusals, etc. This should have been recorded as an action.

Upon the conclusion of this item the Chair asked the committee to give their assent for the items undertaken under the guest Chair. The Committee so **ASSENTED**.

46/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4)

Angus Wilkinson voiced concerns about Oxfordshire County Council's approach to Co-production. He noted that the Youth Forum's reporting seemed controlled and lacked genuine input, particularly when its request for representation on the improvement board was ignored. Mr Wilkinson praised the proposal to include two knowledgeable young people in the committee as a positive step but criticised the Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) draft policy for lacking true collaboration, noting a nine-month delay in its development and limited parent and carer involvement.

Kimberly Morgan, a single disabled mother to an 8-year-old son, shared her struggles with Oxfordshire County Council's EOTAS package. Despite having it since June 2024, her son lacked essential resources like textbooks. She had taken legal action due to unsatisfactory education provision. Ms Morgan criticised the decision-making process for rejecting EOTAS without proper consultation, causing delays. She found the proposed EOTAS policy inadequate and non-compliant with the law and urged the Council to consult families directly to improve the policy.

Katie N shared her experiences with the EOTAS package. She criticised the EOTAS policy for excluding young people from its creation and the Council from its outreach events. Miss Ne highlighted issues such as the lack of consultation with children and parents, the need for educational flexibility, and the mandatory inclusion of subjects like Maths and English even when triggering for the individual. She called for the policy to be redone with proper input from young people to better meet their needs.

Claire Brenner, a parent of an EOTAS primary-age child, voiced concerns about the current EOTAS policy and its development. She called for a proper co-production process, noting that the policy wrongly described EOTAS as short-term and reintegrative, akin to alternative provision. Dr Brenner cited a July 2023 Ofsted inspection highlighting undervalued co-production and unheard voices of children and young people. She urged the Council to ensure officers upheld effective co-production due to EOTAS's specialised nature and limited impact on families.

Vicki Selby, with 20 years in education policy, stressed the importance of co-production in developing the EOTAS policy, and noted that, despite her rare level of expertise, she had not been consulted. She saw EOTAS as essential for families facing significant challenges and believed it should address children's emotional, social, and psychological needs. Ms Selby called for a trauma-informed approach, involving diverse practitioners, and ensuring children feel safe and valued. She also emphasised including parents and children in the co-design of EOTAS packages to create effective educational environments.

Jules Francis-Sinclair, representing the Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum (OxPCF), discussed the development of the EOTAS policy. She highlighted a lack of co-production, which caused distress among families. Initially committed to co-production, the Council later drafted the policy internally, frustrating families. Feedback from a September 2024 event emphasised early intervention, personalised pathways, trauma-informed practices, and better communication, but this was not integrated into the policy. Ms Francis-Sinclair urged the local authority to involve families in developing the guidance to meet their needs. OxPCF remained dedicated to advocating for parent carers and sought collaboration for an inclusive EOTAS policy.

47/24 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

(Agenda No. 5)

Members **AGREED** to include the following items and areas of discussion on future work programmes and forward plans and tasked the Scrutiny Officer to work with the Director and relevant officers to timetable them appropriately:

- Educational data, including inclusion and exclusion data anonymised but broken down by school and, where applicable, by academy trust;
- Co-production;
- The SEND Youth Forum;
- Home to School Transport, including the SEND transport provision;
- The Oxfordshire Residential Care Home strategy;

Members sought to emphasise the expectation that Cabinet Members should attend meetings in person for items for which they are responsible.

Members also requested that external SEND and educational experts be invited to future meetings to provide advice to the Committee.

It was also suggested that the Committee could meet for longer than three hours in order to receive a higher number of reports and that the Scrutiny Officer to explore the potential of extending future meetings to incorporate more items.

48/24 CO-OPTEE RECRUITMENT (Agenda No. 6)

The Director of Law and Governance had provided the Committee with an update on co-optee recruitment which recommended that the Committee appoint Hana G and Katie N as new co-opted members from February 2025. Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager, attended to present the report and explained that interest had been expressed by one parent governor in filling one of the vacant posts. If the expression of interest was taken forward, that parent governor would also join the Committee in February 2025. If more than two applications were received by the deadline (which was the day of the meeting), an election would be arranged.

There was a discussion about including additional co-opted members not legislated by central government. Members were reminded that current roles for Catholic and Church of England representatives and parent governors were enshrined in legislation.

Suggestions included involving educational professionals or university representatives as advisors. Emphasising expertise from universities, especially in SEND and looked-after children, was highlighted as valuable for enhancing the Committee's effectiveness.

The Committee resolved to **AGREE** to the recommendation to note the progress and to **APPOINT** Katie N and Hana G as co-opted young people members, subject to completion of the necessary formalities for two years from the Committee's February 2025 meeting.

49/24 ANNUAL REPORT ON HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME (Agenda No. 7)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education, and Jessie Dobson, Partnership Youth Development Manager, who joined online, were invited to present the Annual Report on Holiday Activities and Food Programme. Stephen Chandler, Executive Director (People), also attended to support officers and answer Member questions.

The Cabinet Member reported on the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF), a national grant-funded initiative since 2022, which aided children eligible for free school meals during holidays. Challenges included improving booking systems,

ensuring attendance, addressing special needs, and better school-to-parent communication. The Deputy Director of Education highlighted the programme's support during the cost-of-living crisis and urged registration for means-tested free school meals.

Members enquired about the promotion of the HAF programme outside of schools to increase awareness. They questioned whether social media was being utilised effectively to reach adolescents.

Efforts to raise awareness included collaborating with district colleagues to inform local teams and workers who have relationships with young people. Information was shared in food banks, GP surgeries, and youth clubs. The targeted youth support service connected with young people in their communities. Detached youth work directly engaged with young people on the streets. The programme involved young people by partnering with schools to create a HAF ambassador programme, offering leadership opportunities and improving participation. The youth service conducted local outreach to understand desired activities from young people.

Additionally, digital channels such as the OxMe website and various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, were used to engage with young people directly.

Members discussed the 114 young people who attended HAF activities over Easter, each participating in four sessions. A detailed demographic breakdown was to be provided later following the meeting. Councillors were encouraged to promote the programme in their communities to boost awareness and participation.

To ensure access, especially in rural areas, minibus shuttles, workers picking up children individually, and potential use of school sites were all being considered. Other settings like village halls were also seen as a potential setting to offer a welcoming environment for children, including those with SEND. Fuel vouchers were also being explored to assist families with transportation costs. It was hoped that these measures would reduce the number of cancellations as well as boosting uptake of the HAF.

A targeted programme was starting the following week to improve uptake among vulnerable groups, including SEND children and those on child protection plans. This involved working with internal teams and social workers to identify and support eligible children. Social workers were notified of specific children to engage families and increase programme participation.

Feedback from parents of SEND children highlighted unpredictability in provision days as a barrier. Efforts were underway to enhance specialist provision and make all offers more inclusive. The programme aimed to offer various options for SEND children to choose activities that suited their needs and preferences.

The Committee **AGREED** on the following action:

- The Partnership Youth Development Officer would share with Members a breakdown of the data showing the users and providers of the service, and the

schools which took part in the scheme. The officer would also provide the data for the sessions being missed.

The Committee made no formal recommendation to the Cabinet and **NOTED** the report.

50/24 DRAFT EDUCATION OTHERWISE THAN AT SCHOOL POLICY
(Agenda No. 8)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, and Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement, were invited to present a report on the on the Draft Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Policy. Stephen Chandler, Executive Director (People), Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education, Alex Potts, Lead Officer: Tribunals, Resolutions and Compliance, and Joanna Goodey, Education Inclusion Manager, also attended and answered the Committee's questions.

The Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement began by acknowledging the need to engage more with parents and carers before the policy was subsequently submitted to Cabinet. Cllr Gregory explained that it had been hoped to defer the report once the level of dissatisfaction had been registered.

The Deputy Director of Education apologised for the length of time it had taken to develop the policy and the distress it had caused. The Deputy Director confirmed that the intention was to work with the co-production team to look again at the draft policy as well as the accompanying guidance before it moved on.

The Education Inclusion Manager thanked parents and carers for their very valuable feedback and would review the content of the letter submitted by them to members of the Committee. A meeting with the SEND Youth Forum was also announced, with the intention of working with them and other stakeholders to co-produce the information and guidance accompanying the future EOTAS policy.

The number of children and families receiving EOTAS had increased from 42 to 52, highlighting the need for a clear policy detailing responsibilities and processes. A workday was scheduled on 13 January 2025 to address personal budgets, safeguarding, coordination, monitoring, and training.

The Committee was assured that there was a strong commitment on the Council's part to develop a policy that families currently receiving EOTAS were content with but one that was sustainable and appropriate for the future too.

Members of the Committee emphasised the importance of coproduction but also clarity and communication so that all stakeholders understood the constraints, legal and financial, under which the Council was operating. .

Members began by asking the representative of OxPCF a number of questions about their engagement with the policy drafting process. In relation to co-production at the beginning of the process OxPCF suggested they had participated in the process but there remained a lack of understanding about what co-production was. Oxfordshire

was rightly regarded as very good at participation and engagement, which was very positive, but this was not co-production. OxPCF suggested that a decision had been made by the Council to not co-produce the policy which had left families frustrated. It was felt that the draft EOTAS policy featured lots of guidance, rather than legal policy, and that could have been easily co-produced.

Members inquired about the frequency of consultations with service providers and professionals supporting the 52 EOTAS families during the policy drafting process. Officers indicated that these providers and professionals were not specifically consulted initially. The primary aim was to draft a policy for the Council, with plans to involve the providers later when commissioning services. It was noted that if Scrutiny recommended involving providers in shaping the policy, the Council would consider this approach.

Officers updated members on Alternative Provision (AP) and EOTAS from the Department of Education's (DfE) national consultation. The update mentioned a national database and inspection regime for EOTAS providers. All alternative providers were expected to undergo local quality assurance and due diligence checks. The DfE considered the AP market complex and emphasised that local bodies should ensure thorough quality and insurance checks. Public bodies were already managing essential safeguards like due diligence and public liability insurance effectively.

Committee Members once again emphasised the desire for greater co-production and collaboration, and to learn rapidly from previous mistakes made in relation to the EOTAS policy. Officers and Cabinet Members were encouraged to read, and engage with the signatories of, the letter submitted by parents and young people in receipt of EOTAS packages. Cabinet was urged to ensure this item was a priority and that the Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement and officers had Cabinet's support.

The Oxfordshire Way and adult social services were highlighted as examples of positive co-production work. Members emphasised that the adult social care sector in Oxfordshire had some of the most effective and highly-regarded co-production in the country and suggested that similar approaches should be used for children's services.

Officers and the Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement welcomed the constructive criticism of the Committee and expressed their desire to co-produce the guidance associated with the EOTAS policy with parents and young people. The Executive Director (People) mentioned that a member of the SEND Parent Action Group was now the co-chair of the council's co-production board. This was highlighted as a starting point for ensuring meaningful engagement with families in the co-production process.

The Committee **AGREED** recommendations under the following headings:

- That the Council should develop a new Alternative Provision policy and EOTAS policy written in conjunction with each other in a co-produced way.

- That the draft EOTAS policy should be re-developed using co-production and external experts and that this should be done swiftly and should be considered by the Committee before it is submitted to Cabinet.

51/24 REVISED HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY FOR CONSULTATION

(Agenda No. 9)

As the report had not been received, the Committee **AGREED** to defer this item and that an additional meeting in January 2025 should be arranged.

52/24 ANNUAL REPORT FROM ADOPT THAMES VALLEY

(Agenda No. 10)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education, Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director of Provider Services, and Teresa Rogers, Head of Service: Adopt Thames Valley, were invited to present the Annual Report from Adopt Thames Valley.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that there was no need to go into private session as long as the Committee's questions remained general. No cover report to the Committee had been provided and the annual report had been published as exempt. A supplement had been published which contained information that was not exempt from disclosure.

The Head of Service: Adopt Thames Valley outlined the agency's work across multiple authorities in the region. It managed recruitment, assessment, approval of adopters, non-agency adoptions, family finding, and post-adoption support. The agency also aided special guardianship families, indirect letterbox contact, birth relatives, and adopted adults seeking records. The service contracted with Coram IAC for intercounty adoption services due to its complexity.

Members started by seeking clarification about the difference between adoption and non-agency adoption. The Head of Service explained that the number of children adopted in a year refers to children who were previously looked after and were now adopted. Non-agency adoption orders mainly involved step-parent adoptions or cases where a foster carer who had a child living with them long-term decided to adopt that child.

Members noted the high number of adopter withdrawals in 2023/24 and questioned the causes. Officers explained that delays in care proceedings due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased strain and unpredictability, causing some adopters to withdraw.

The most significant reason behind the withdrawals was a surplus in adopters. It was suggested that, a few years ago, there was a surplus of adopters, with around three adoptive families for every child needing adoption. This led to long waiting periods and disheartening experiences for adopters who were not selected, contributing to withdrawals.

Members inquired about the target audience of the adoption service and their efforts to attract potential adopters.

The service welcomed applicants from all backgrounds, including single individuals. They focused on inclusivity and encouraged those with challenging pasts to apply, provided they have the qualities needed to parent a child and commit long-term. Efforts to debunk myths about who could adopt, supported by a national campaign, had increased the number of applicants, especially among single people.

The length of the adoption process was explained, with a statutory timescale for adoption as six months, with the first two months dedicated to statutory checks (employer checks, family and friends' references, school references, medicals, local authority references). This could sometimes take longer due to delays in medical checks. The following four months involved a detailed assessment process where a worker meets with the family to get to know them. Additionally, the complexity of the families and the concurrent court proceedings for the child could also extend the overall process.

The Committee made no formal recommendation to the Cabinet and **NOTED** the report.

ACTION: In discussion before item 10 formally opened, members of the Committee **AGREED** that members would receive information explaining the confusion that had arisen around papers for items 10 and 11.

53/24 ANNUAL CORPORATE PARENTING REPORT
(Agenda No. 11)

The Committee **AGREED** to defer this item, owing to the lateness of the correct report.

54/24 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER
(Agenda No. 12)

The Action and Recommendation tracker was **NOTED** by the committee with a request for an update on the outworking of the Education Commission report

The Scrutiny Officer and Executive Director (People) also reminded the Committee of the formal response to the recommendation of embedding committee members into the SEND Improvement Board's task and finish groups.

55/24 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS
(Agenda No. 13)

There were none.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

**Work Programme 2024/2025
Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Cllr Nigel Simpson, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Report Leads
28 February 2025				
Home to School Transport Policy and Post 16 Transport Policy Statement	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure fair, efficient, and accessible transport arrangements for all eligible students	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Kate Reynolds, Stephen Good
Local Area SEND Partnership	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	To receive an update on progress made across the partnership	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons; Mathew Tait
28 March 2025				
Annual report of the virtual school	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To receive the annual report	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Clare Pike
Progress of capital projects (schools and children's homes)	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To review the progress made on capital projects	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Jean Kelly
11 July 2025				

Oxfordshire Education Inclusion Partnership Update	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure effective collaboration and strategic planning for inclusive education across Oxfordshire	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, TBC
Local Government Ombudsmen Action Plan	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure accountability and improvement in addressing special educational needs and related complaints	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, TBC

SUB GROUP / WORKING GROUP

SUB GROUPS / WORKING GROUPS				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members

BRIEFINGS FOR MEMBER INFORMATION

BRIEFINGS				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members
Personal Budgets	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	To be briefed on funding pressures	To identify any areas that need to be referred to the Committee	Members of the Committee

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**Action and Recommendation Tracker
Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Cllr Nigel Simpson, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The action and recommendation tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress against agreed actions and recommendations. The tracker is updated with the actions and recommendations agreed at each meeting. Once an action or recommendation has been completed or fully implemented, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker.

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Recommendations:

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
22-Nov-24	Draft EOTAS	1. That the Council should re-write the draft EOTAS policy by no later than the end of February 2025 and that it, as well as the accompanying guidance, should be coproduced and that external experts should be invited to participate in that process.	Lisa Lyons; Kate Reynolds; Joanna Goodey	Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25
		2. That the Council, in tandem with rewriting its draft EOTAS policy, should also write a co-produced Alternative Provision policy.		Went to Cabinet: 21-Jan-25

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Actions:

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response



Recommendation Update Tracker Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Nigel Simpson, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The recommendation update tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress accepted recommendations. The tracker is updated with recommendations accepted by Cabinet. Once a recommendation has been updated, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker. If the recommendation will be update in the form of a separate item, it will be shaded yellow.

KEY	Update Pending	Update in Item	Updated
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Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
16-Jul-24	Priority Action Plan	That the Council should ensure that the voice of children and young people is sought and heard more clearly within the Priority Action Plan and within the work arising from it.	Lisa Lyons	Updated 20/09/24 – SEND Priority Action Plan Update

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Divisions Affected -

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28 February 2025

Local Area Partnership SEND Update Report by Lisa Lyons, Director Children Education and Families

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Education and Young People Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
 - Note the progress made by the local area partnership in addressing the issues raised by the 2023 SEND inspection.
 - Thank all partners particularly Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum and the SEND youth forum for their participation and hard work.
 - Recognise the continuing challenges faced by the local area partnership acknowledging that some of those challenges are national and some are specific to Oxfordshire.

Executive Summary

2. This report outlines progress made by the local area partnership since the previous report to Scrutiny.

Progress

3. The SEND inspection of 2023 highlighted 'systemic failures' in the local area partnership. As a response a Priority Action Plan was developed to address the significant weaknesses. The plan formed part of a wider SEND transformation programme which was designed to bring together the key stakeholders in the partnership to ensure a step change in our approach to SEND.
4. At the centre of this was a commitment to the voice of children and young people and parent carers. Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum (OxPCF) is an integral part of the local area partnership and is represented on all working groups, themes and boards including the strategic improvement board (SIAB). Feedback from OxPCF is a standing item on all SIAB agendas.

5. As part of our work on the voice of children and young people, the SEND Youth Forum was established in July 2024 and has now held 4 meetings. Their purpose in their own words is:
- (a) To change the system, give people better support, and see what young people can achieve if we help them
 - (b) To give people opportunities to tell us their stories, feedback and what they want – online, through schools and at social events
 - (c) To hear about their lived experience – the good and the bad
 - (d) To represent that feedback and make sure we get a response and share the positive work people are doing
 - (e) To make friends and make a difference
6. The key achievements of the Forum to date include:
- (a) An animated video outlining the role of the Forum and how young people can get involved
 - (b) The creation of a SEND Youth Forum ‘quality mark’ – the seal of approval. This will be used to kite mark services across the county.



7. The SEND Youth Forum are an integral part of our improvement arrangements and their feedback at SIAB is a regular agenda item. Areas of change have included parenting support to young parents who have children with disabilities, secured employment opportunities for older young people and the development of the Local Offer pages so that they communicate directly to young people. The SEND Youth Forum has its own work programme and is not just a mechanism for speaking to system leaders and agencies, but is developing as a way of Young People communicating to other Young People about what matters to them.
8. Our transformation programme is currently grouped into three ‘themes’:
- (a) Theme 1: Right Support, Right Time
 - (b) Theme 2: Right Plan, Right First Time, Every Time
 - (c) Theme 3: Right Provision, Right Time, Looking to independence
9. Our programme is regularly reviewed and as a result of feedback from stakeholders, a further theme: Theme 4: Preparation for Adulthood has been introduced to enable a greater focus on post -16 and the employment and skills agenda.

10. **Theme 1: Right Support, Right Time**

This theme is co-chaired by the Deputy Director Education and Inclusion and the CEO of ACER academy trust. It includes representation from Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum.

11. Substantial progress has been made in all the following areas:

- a. *Targeted setting support:* this work encompasses enhanced pathways, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinators (SENDCO) helpdesk, special schools outreach and relational schools. Additional funding for 25/26 has been secured to continue to run these programmes without calling on schools delegated budgets.
- b. *Professional development:* this work includes aspects of supporting professionals and includes the SEND Framework, our Evaluate My School initiative (whereby schools self-evaluate against a leadership framework), and our continuing CPD programme.
- c. *Early Years:* the Early Years Board has a draft strategy which is currently going through the corporate approval process.
- d. *Early Help and Prevention:* the Board has approved the strategy which was co-designed with parents and other stakeholders.
- e. *Banding Framework:* A consultant has been commissioned to lead the Banding Review, ensuring alignment with legislative and consultation requirements. Implementation is scheduled for 1st April 2026.
- f. *Alternative Education Provision (AEP):* A Collaborative AEP Board has been established with membership from the parent carer forum. An internal review of AEP has been conducted. Key findings will shape a targeted action plan for enhancing provision. An expert-led AEP Review has been commissioned. Schools are being supported to develop 'schools lead' AEP: Guidance has been provided to help schools establish and sustain their own alternative education pathways. We have enhanced parent and stakeholder engagement including partnering with Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum to improve AEP awareness and develop a dedicated Parent/Carer guide. Improved AEP Data Collection: Developing a more efficient method for collecting data on school commissioned AEP. And finally, we are expanding therapeutic support in education by collaborating with the Head of Oxford Music Service, writing a business case for a Music Therapist role.

Key risks and challenges:

12.

- a. *Ensuring Impact and Effective Monitoring:* Maintaining rigorous impact assessment and monitoring mechanisms to track programme success.

- b. *Establishing a Financially Sustainable Model:* Achieving consensus on and implementing a financially sustainable model. Embedded our approach to funding through greater involvement of the Oxfordshire Schools Forum including presenting the deficit management plan.
- c. *Demonstrating Impact Against KPIs:* Effectively demonstrating programme outcomes through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- d. *Building on Current Progress and communication:* Continuing to advance and expand upon the positive progress achieved to date and ensuring that parent/carers are aware of our work. Share best practice and making it the way schools operate in Oxfordshire.

13. **Theme 2: Right Plan, Right First Time, Every Time**

This theme is co-chaired by the Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion and the Designated Clinical Officer from NHS Oxfordshire. It includes representation from Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum.

Progress has been made in all the following areas:

- a. *Education Health Care and Needs Assessment/Education Health Care Plan (EHCNA/EHCP) Improvements Timeliness:* Significant improvements were achieved in timeliness previously (in September 2024 our % of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks was running at 40%); however, recent challenges have led to a decline in the number of plans issued within 20 weeks (the December equivalent figure is 20%). To improve this, we are:
 - Expanding capacity: The Assessment Team capacity has been increased. Strengthening Support: Targeted initiatives are underway to increase the number of Educational Psychologists and reduce delays.
 - Ongoing Monitoring: A structured approach is in place to track and assess the impact of corrective actions, ensuring continuous improvement.
- b. *Feedback driving Continuous Improvement EHCNA & Annual Review Surveys in Development:* EHCNA survey is being reviewed and updated. Post-Annual Review survey is in co-design, ensuring it reflects stakeholder needs. OxPCF, health, social care, and education representatives are actively involved in survey design. Parent carers and key stakeholders are testing and providing feedback on survey effectiveness. Surveys will measure experiences of children, young people, parents, and carers to inform service improvements.
- c. *Quality Improvement:* A Quality Improvement Framework is in place and Multi Agency Quality Assurance (MAQA) Forum - terms of reference were refreshed in summer 2024. Through the Quality Improvement Framework, the MAQA Forum is routinely monitoring timeliness of all responses across Education / Health and Social care alongside quality of advice and recommended improvements. Advice checklists: Have been rolled out across Education, Health and Social Care. Advice Audit Tool: New audit

tools across Education, Health and Social Care and checklist have been rolled out for Q3 and Q4 (Jan – March 25), supported by training to ensure effective implementation. Our Invision 360 Tool identifies key areas for quality improvement, fostering a culture of continuous enhancement.

Findings are reported at the MAQA Forum and reviewed quarterly by the Partnership Delivery Group (PDG) and SIAB to inform decision-making. A structured audit timetable ensures regular review, with results shared across services. QI action plans are developed based on findings, and PDG and SIAB oversight ensures measurable impact from the Transformation Programme.

14. **Key risks and challenges:**

- a. *Increasing Volume of EHCNAs:* The volume of Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) requests continues to rise (from 111 in September 2024 to 153 in December 2024 and there has been a 27% increase since 2023). This puts additional pressure on resources and timelines.
- b. *Data Quality Issues:* Annual review data quality is hindering the ability to accurately understand baseline Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- c. *Educational Psychologist Capacity:* The increase in needs assessments have led to EPs leaving LAs to undertake private employment. There is now a national shortage of educational psychologists.

15. **Theme 3: Right Provision, Right Time, Looking to Independence**

This theme is co-chaired by Associate Director of Place – Oxfordshire Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and Service Director Community Health Services, Dentistry & Primary Care. It includes representation from Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum.

16. Progress has been made in the following areas:

- a. *Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing Support:* The recommissioning of CAMHS contract underway, strong engagement key stakeholders including young people and parents and carers whilst the Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing Board terms of reference have been updated. The TellMe app is for young people's mental health and has been commissioned in partnership between Health and LA services working collaboratively with partners across the system. There is now a Parent Support training offer. The breadth of engagement with parents and carers has been broadened to ensure that a full understanding of parental experience has been captured and will shape future commissioning.
- b. *Special School Nursing (SSN):* Special school nursing report jointly reviewed Integrated Care Board (ICB), Education, Oxford Health Foundation Trust (OHFT) and special schools. Two initial recommendations made by provider that have been accepted. Wider stakeholder group being established to form further recommendations from

the review. Work continues on dependencies with planning around improvements and availability of resource. This includes implementation of delegated health care tasks.

- c. *Community Wisdom Project*: This project was Launched in February 2025. It is a new project between Community Paediatrics, Children's Community Services and Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum. 10 families of young children waiting for support from the Community Pediatricians have been invited to meet professionals and other families for early universal support – e.g. language and communication, play, interaction, sensory, feeding. Often these families are waiting for the 'specialist support package or diagnosis' and the 'universal' enriched activities are helpful for all children.
- d. *Children's Integrated Therapies*: The WellComm Pilot has been launched in primary schools – 46 schools have signed up and have started to screen children in January 2025. It is expected that children's needs will be identified and supported earlier as a result. Children in these settings waiting for SLT support will benefit from access to the programme. The programme improves the skills of all teaching staff, benefitting all children in these settings.

Children's Integrated Therapies (Physio and Occupational Therapies) facilitated focus groups with parents on the Acquired Brain Injury Pathway in October November and December 2024 to collect their views to update the pathway and ensure it is reflective of the journey children are now living once discharged from hospital. Funding for Children's Integrated Therapies for Bloxham Grove Specialist setting agreed by OCC and BOB ICB. Support from SLT and OT commenced in January 25. £590k requested as part of NHS planning for 2025/26, this would increase capacity in SLT and fund 50% of the Sensory OT service in partnership with OCC

- e. *Neurodevelopmental Conditions Pathways*: Within the Neurodevelopmental pathway, although demand (referrals in) continues to outstrip capacity (number of assessments available), the median time that people are waiting has reduced since April 2023. The number of people attending workshops / webinars for Living Well with Neurodivergence Offer is included in the quarterly reporting to PDG/SIAB, in quarter 2 2024/25, 352 CYP / families attended workshop/webinars, to date, over 2,000 individual IP addresses have accessed online resources. Content is Co-produced with OxPCF and delivered by Autism Oxford in collaboration with CAMHS. CAMHS continue to develop AI tool to support triage of the NDC assessments which in the long term could be used to support diagnosis, but this depends on NICE guidance being updated.
- f. *Transitions*: Regular meetings at senior management level between Adults Social Care and Children's Social Care to discuss general themes in relation to young people coming through the system and how we can improve our transition processes for those young people that have SEND and Care Act needs. Preparations for transitions are completed in a timely

manner and by statutory deadlines. A Twilight webinar in Jan 2025 designed specifically for Secondary SENDCOs to inform how the Oxfordshire Careers Hub can support the education and transition of SEND learners in secondary school. Transitional arrangements for young people turning 18 transferring from CAMHS is currently in development. Ongoing commitment to further improve transition arrangements from CAMHS into Adult Mental Health services. The Head of Commissioning has a working group to address the commissioning of placements for young adults who are Care Act eligible.

17. **Key risks and challenges:**

- a. *Availability of resource to increase capacity in line with demand:* Against a backdrop of BOB Integrated Care System's deficit and national planning guidance, expectations going into 2025/26 relate to maintaining current levels of provision, rather than growth. Priority investment requests relate to:
 - Children's Integrated Therapies
 - Special School Nursing
- b. *Embedding needs led approach to neurodivergence amidst current policies and societal expectations:* Despite recognition and acceptance of needs led support, there remains continued focus on diagnosis from CYP, parents and carers.
- c. As stated above, a new theme 'Preparation for Adulthood' is being introduced from February 2025 to ensure a greater focus on post 16, employment, training and education. This will be co-chaired by Deputy Director Education and Inclusion and a lead from Adult Social Care and will include representation from Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum.

18. **Data and Dashboards:**

Data and feedback is being used to inform the SEND Transformation Programme and business as usual continuous improvement. Work to date includes:

- a. Strategic and operational KPIs have been established and integrated PowerBi data dashboard.
- b. Power BI Data Dashboard is currently being rolled out to strategic and operational leads within Education.
- c. Audit findings will be reported into PDG and SIAB as well as other boards/forums to ensure continuous improvement.
- d. BOB ICB SEND data dashboard is underway & will align to guidance from NHSE regarding data sets.

- e. Bi-monthly performance and quality assurance meetings is attended by social care and education professionals to share performance and local area priorities across the service areas.
 - f. OxPCF tracker will allow quantifiable data to be shared regarding the number of escalated issues, areas of impact, actions in progress, and their current status.
19. Key performance indicator information is presented to SIAB on a monthly basis where it is challenged and monitored. KPIs are further embedded in the work of each theme where they are also challenged regularly.
20. **Evaluation of progress:**
 The framework of the DfE improvement cycle requires the Local Area Partnership to demonstrate progress against the priority action plan. This takes the form of 4 stocktake meetings and 4 Deep Dives prior to a monitoring visit. The stocktakes and deep dives are overseen jointly between DfE and NHSE advisors. A monitoring visit is usually undertaken 18 months after the full inspection. For Oxfordshire this would mean a timescale from July 2023. It is the Local Area Partnership understanding from Ofsted and CQC, that monitoring visits may be delayed beyond the 18-month cycle. A full inspection should take place approximately 3 years after the previous full inspection. To date the deep dives and stocktakes have demonstrated incremental progress.
21. **Overall progress:**
 At a system level there has been significant progress in a number of key areas:
- a. The rate of permanent exclusions is low compared to other authorities.
 - b. The quality of our EHCPs is increasing with 44% rated 'good or outstanding' in November 2024 compared with 21% in July 2023.
 - c. The average time to respond to correspondence has declined to 9 working days (compared to over 30 in the previous year).
 - d. Our backlog on the completion of annual reviews has reduced from over 200 in September 2024 to less than 50 in January 2025.
 - e. Our Youth Offending Service have been awarded the SEND quality award.
 - f. The proportion of children and young people in mainstream schools has increased by 5% compared with 2023.
 - g. For pupils moving into statutory school age or Year 6/7 transfer, 100% of students had final Education, Health and Care plans issued by the deadline of 15 February 2024.

- h. For students moving into a post 16 setting 94% of all students had final Education, Health and Care plans finalised by the deadline of 31 March 2024.
- i. For our Evaluate My School initiative, 177 (62%) of schools have registered of which 109 (62%) have partly or fully completed the evaluation. A further 204 of our 423 early years settings have also registered.
- j. Educational Psychologist Capacity: The increase in needs assessments have led to EPs leaving LAs to undertake private employment. There is now a national shortage of educational psychologists. We have had some success in permanent recruitment and a system of developing a pipeline of qualified EP's through our Associate programme which has led to an additional 5 EPS. The service is working with Bath Spa University to develop a pipeline of qualified EPs. We have also reviewed commissioning activity to ensure access to a greater pool of EPs to meet volume. This has meant that our backlog in EHCNA requests waiting for an Educational Psychology assessment has reduced by 82% (from 250 in September 2024 to 44 in December 2024).
- k. At early years foundation stage, 5% of pupils with an EHCP in Oxfordshire achieved a good level of development, 1%pt above the national average, and the same as both the region and statistical neighbours.
- l. In Year 1 Phonics, 24% of pupils with an EHCP in Oxfordshire are working at the expected level, 4%pts above the national average.
- m. At key stage 5 in 2024, the average APS per A Level entry for pupils with an EHCP has seen a notable increase from 25.18 in 2023 to 34.57 in 2024. This is above the national average and places Oxfordshire in the second quartile nationally (previously in bottom quartile).

Key Challenges

- 22. Despite the success of much of our work, it is still the case that a small number of parent/carers are not 'seeing' these changes 'on the ground'. To address this, we intend to continue to:
 - a. Develop our communication approach so that parent/carers are kept informed.
 - b. Develop the understanding and approach to co-production so that parents/carers are involved in services in an appropriate way.
 - c. Support our schools to continue to work in an inclusive way, reflecting the changed emphasis from national Government, the DfE and Ofsted.
- 23. **Next steps:**
The priority action plan (PAP) which was produced in response to the July 2023 inspection is to be updated so that we can continue to focus effectively on our areas of further improvement and embed those areas of strength. The priority action plan is required to focus on those areas highlighted as in need of improvement within the Ofsted/ CQC judgement. There are of course wider systems improvements which need to be incorporated. A revised PAP will be

produced and will incorporate the work of the new theme: Preparation for Adulthood. In addition, we will continue to focus on improving our communication, measuring our impact and rolling out our work to support schools becoming more inclusive as indicated by the new Ofsted framework which will be introduced from September 2025.

Financial Implications

24. The majority of funding for SEND comes from the High Needs Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The 'block' is projected as at period 8 to overspend by £28.4m for the financial year 24/25. This will add to the High Needs deficit opening balance of £55.8m at the start of the year. This means the High Needs deficit is forecast to be £84.2m at year end. Currently the deficit is 'held' by the Council as 'unusable reserves' in line with the existing government arrangements via statutory override which is in place until 31st March 2026. We are awaiting further information from central government on future funding regimes, as full removal will significantly affect the financial position of the Council and many others nationally.

Comments checked by:

Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner – Children's,
Jane.Billington@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

25. The local authority's approach to SEND is governed by a variety of legislation, including the Children and Families Act 2014, supporting regulations and codes of practice in particular the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (the 'SEND' Code of Practice).
26. As stated above, the outcome of the most recent Area SEND inspection (2023) required the production of a plan to address the areas for priority action to urgently address concerns identified. The next scheduled monitoring inspection was set for 18 months after the original inspection (although this report outlines that this may be delayed), and the Inspectorate will expect to see improvements against the areas for priority action.

Comments checked by:

Janice White, Head of Law and Legal Business Partner (ASC and Litigation),
Janice.White@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

27. Any staffing implications are part of the regular governance processes of stakeholders within the local area partnership.

Comments checked by:

Michelle Higgs, HR Business Partner, Michelle.Higgs@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

28. The improvement work that the local area partnership is engaged with, will make a difference to the life chances and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Sustainability Implications

29. There are no sustainability implications.

Risk Management

30. For each theme, risks and their mitigations are recorded on a monthly basis. In addition, risks are escalated to SIAB if appropriate. The overall programme risk is also recorded monthly on the Council's risk register.

LISA LYONS
Director of Children's Services

Annex: Nil.

Background papers: Nil.

[Other Documents:] Nil.

Contact Officer: Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion

February 2025

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Divisions Affected - All

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28 February 2025

Revised Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policies for Consultation

Report by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children, Education and Families (DCS)

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to acknowledge and support the public consultation of the Home to School Transport (compulsory school age) policy and the Post 16 Travel Policy Statement.
2. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to acknowledge and support the inclusion within the public consultation of proposed changes to existing discretionary elements and the possible introduction of contribution payments for Post 16 travel provision for young people with SEND.
3. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to acknowledge and support the inclusion of early engagement through the consultation of discretionary aspects of the existing policies, to explore if they remain a necessary, sustainable, likely impact if support is changed, which will inform future policy development and thinking.
4. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to acknowledge and accept the findings of the Spare Seats Sprint Group.

Executive Summary

5. At a meeting on the 20 July 2024, the Education & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on Home to School Transport. This included an update on the actions arising from recommendations the Committee had submitted to Cabinet in April 2023 and provided further information around the spare seats scheme.
6. Spare Seats Sprint Group
A Spare Seats Sprint Group was established with Cllr Simpson identified as the chair; all members of the Committee were able to attend. The purpose of the

group was to gain detailed understanding of the Spare Seats scheme (funded/operated) and identify recommendations in relation to how it should be set up and implemented going forward.

7. The Spare Seats Sprint Group identified that the purpose of the Spare Seat scheme was to enable children/young people and their families to utilise existing spare capacity within the Home to School Transport network where the Council has sourced capacity (seats) that exceed the demand and requirements of those children and young people who meet those statutory/eligibility criteria within the Council's Home to School Transport policies for free travel. Spare seat provision is identified in the DfE's statutory Home to School Transport Guidance as a provision under discretionary powers provided to all Local Authorities.
 8. The Sprint Group confirmed that the Spare Seat scheme's purpose was not to extend the transport network or create additional seats for the specific use of children/young people who fail to satisfy the agreed statutory/eligibility criteria for free travel to school.
 9. The Sprint Group agreed that the existing description within the Home to School Transport Policy and application of scheme is appropriate and reasonable.
 10. Improving access to travel to School and other educational settings for those who do not meet the eligibility criteria detailed in the Home to School Transport policies and unable to benefit from accessing any spare seats is an issue that sits outside the remit of the Home to School Transport service and remains a community and access issue which would require significant council investment in the wider transport network in Oxfordshire.
 11. There are no planned operational changes to the Spare Seat Scheme within the proposed updated Home to School Transport Policies, which is being consulted upon between 23 February 2025 and 9 March 2025. There will continue to be a review of routes and available spare seats annually.
- Home to School Transport Policy & Post 16 Policy Statement Review
12. The existing Home to School Transport Policies were last consulted upon in 2014 (Compulsory School Age) and 2018 (Post 16). DfE Guidance was last updated in 2019 for Post 16 Travel and in 2023 and 2024 for Compulsory School Age, and therefore a review and update are necessary to reflect and align with latest guidance.
 13. The service has continued to receive feedback and engagement from the OxPCF SEND Listening Event in October 2024, parents/families, officer feedback, and feedback from committees/sprint groups. This has identified that the current policies are hard to understand, with the locating of specific information hard to identify/locate. This causes frustration and contributes to difficulty understanding the detail of the policy amongst all interested parties.
 14. A key focus of the review and update of the policies has been to improve accessibility of the Policy document by improving its structure, flow, and

language. The aim of which is to improve effectiveness and usefulness of the documents for both officers, families, schools, and other key stakeholders.

15. Included in the review was the identification of any discretionary provision within the policy to determine to explore if continued discretionary provision remains necessary, financially viable and possible impact. Feedback will support any development of proposals post consultation.
16. The review identified that the majority of both policies aligned with the Council's statutory obligations.
17. The review has identified discretionary aspects in existing policy provision as:
 - (a) Split Village Support – applies in villages where at least 20% of addresses are nearest to the designated school and the remainder are nearest to another school
 - (b) Spare Seat Scheme

Public Consultation

18. The public consultation will run between 23 February 2025 and 9 March 2025 (11:59pm) It includes the proposed refreshed policies, a proposal to introduce contribution charges to Post 16 travel, and early engagement seeking feedback about existing discretionary provision that will contribute to future thinking around school travel.
19. The consultation focuses seeking views on the following areas:

Review area 1: Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.

Review area 2: Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.

Review area 3: Specific updates to our home to school transport policy for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current alternative provision arrangements.

Review area 4: Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on the proposed changes as mentioned above, we are also exploring views on the following discretionary elements of both policies where proposals for change have not been developed:

Review area 5: Discretionary travel at split village locations

Review area 6: Spare seat scheme

20. Feedback from the public will be through an online survey. Members of the public can see clarification and further understanding of the proposals and

consultation information through planned engagement events supporting them to submit their consultation survey response.

21. Children and young people will be provided opportunity to engage with officers and provide feedback in relation to the consultation and transport, whilst targeted events are scheduled to support focussed interest and discussion, such as with OxPCF and youth parliaments.
22. To support those who may find the level of information overwhelming, easy read versions of the consultation will be available. Whilst engagement sessions will be held both during the day and in the evening in an attempt to support individuals existing commitments and family responsibilities.
23. Feedback from the consultation will be reviewed during March, with the aim to seek cabinet approval on 29 April 2025 after navigating the required governance and approval processes.

Background

24. Oxfordshire County Council as a local authority, has a statutory duty to provide free travel for children and young people of compulsory school age (5-16 years of age) who meet those thresholds detailed in legislation. These thresholds are set out in sections 508A, 508B, 508C and 509D and Schedule 25B of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).
25. Compulsory School age is set out in section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Start of Compulsory School Age) Order 1998 as follows: a child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday, or on the fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they reach age 16.
26. The Education Act 1996 duty applies to all local authorities in England in respect of arrangements for young people (over compulsory school age) aged 16-18 and those continuing learners up to age 25 with EHC plans who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday. There are also duties that apply to local authorities in England in respect of arrangements for adults aged 19 and over, who started their programme of learning after their 19th birthday. The legislation therefore gives local authorities the discretion to determine what transport and financial support are necessary to facilitate young people's attendance at their setting.
27. Where the Council is proposing changes to the Compulsory School Age Travel Policy and the Annual Post Transport Policy Statement, and those changes may affect eligibility for travel/transport then the Council should consult locally and should include:

- Consulting with Schools whose pupils will be affected by the proposed changes, including those located in other local authority areas
- Consult with parents/carers whose children will (or may) be affected by the proposed changes, including those who may be affected in the futures
- The local Parent Carer Forum
- The consultation should last for a least 28 working days during term time

Service Delivery & Spend

28. In Oxfordshire the total number of statutory school aged pupils is circa 100,000. The number of pupils conveyed to school every day are set out in the tables below:

Table 1. Numbers of pupils using Home to School Transport

Category of Passenger	2022/23	2023/24
Mainstream	6605	6871 (+4%)
SEND	1,162	1,428 (+19%)
Spare Seat	1105	1314
Total	8,872	9,613

(Figures for 24/25 are not yet available)

29. As demand for travel support and provision has grown spend in this area continues to grow annually.

Table 2. Annual Spend of Home to School Transport as per Supported Transport IBC

Category of Spend	2022/23 Actual £'000	2023/24 Actual £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000
Mainstream	£8,362	£8,932	10,188*
SEND	£20,793	£25,988	28,784*
Total Spend	£29,155	£34,910	Not Available
Total Budget	£26,869	£31,797	38,971

*Budget figures as outturn figures for 24/25 are not yet available

30. SEND and Mainstream transport spend reflects the growth in passenger numbers for each category of spend.

Policy Review

31. The Council last consulted on its Home to School Transport Policy for Compulsory Aged Children in 2014, whilst it last consulted on its policy for Post 16 Travel in 2018.

32. A legal review of both existing policies relating to Home to School and Post 16 Travel was undertaken between April and July 2024 to identify improvements and to ensure alignment with the current statutory guidance and legislation.
33. Due to the significant time since the policies were last consulted upon it was agreed by the service that the refreshed policies should be consulted upon in order to seek views from the public and key stakeholders/users of the service. This should include feedback in relation to existing discretionary travel arrangements to explore whether they continue to be necessary and a sustainable use of Council resources.
34. The service review of the policy identified that the majority of the policy details the statutory obligations of the Council, the remainder contains a few discretionary elements, these include:
 - (a) Spare Seat Scheme
 - (b) Split Villages
 - (c) Travel operations arrangements such as Personal Transport Budgets, Independent Travel Training
35. The policy review also identified a requirement to update the description and detail in relation to travel support for those children and young people attending Alternative Education Provision (AEP).

Spare Seat Sprint Group

36. At a meeting on the 20 July 2024, the Education & young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on Home to School Transport. This included an update on the actions arising from recommendations the Committee had submitted to Cabinet in April 2023 and provided further information around the spare seats scheme.
37. The scope of the Sprint Group was to undertake a 'deep dive' into the Spare Seats Scheme. Seeking to gain a detailed understanding of how the Spare Seats scheme is funded and operates to be able to recommend how and whether it should continue to be implemented going forward. Considering other aspects of the policy was not in scope.
38. The Spare Seat Sprint Group discussed the statutory obligations of the Council in relation to Home to School Transport and Post 16 Travel. Confirming that the offer of supporting non-eligible children is an example of discretionary travel where a charge is permitted and is an enhancement on the Council's statutory offering of support with travel.
39. Details of the Spare Seat Scheme captured within the existing Home to School and Post 16 Travel policies was shared and reviewed.
40. It was acknowledged that spare seats are part of the Council's Home to School Transport policies and that spare seats are not planned for, they arise opportunistically whenever vehicles contracted for eligible children and a

surplus of capacity exists, e.g a 53-seat coach is used to convey 42 eligible children.

41. Due to the opportunistic nature of spare seats it was noted that spare seats can arise on any vehicle, but they mostly arise on buses being used to take children to and from secondary schools.
42. Operationally buses may be contracted for up to 4 years, as a result the number of eligible children and spare seats available on those services will vary over that period.
43. When the contracting of buses for Home to School Transport was undertaken 3 or 4 years ago the cost per seat on buses closely matched the spare seat charge.
44. The number of eligible children has been decreasing over this period. Fewer eligible children have led to fewer contracted vehicles which in turn has reduced the number of available spare seats, in line with the scheme, as detail in the Council's policies. When contracting vehicles the service uses the requirements for eligible children to design routes and contracts.
45. The group agreed that the existing Spare Seat Scheme enables the Council to sell spare seats/capacity where it exists on organised home to school transport routes that are supporting those children and young people entitled to free home to school transport.

Consultation of Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policies

46. Due to the time that has elapsed since the existing Home to School and Post 16 Transport policies were last consulted upon, it is necessary to consult to ensure they remain appropriate and effective.
47. Feedback from key stakeholders during this timeframe has indicated that the format, language and detail impacted individuals' ability to understand what support was available and the responsibility of the Council, families, Schools and transport providers.
48. Whilst consulting on the refreshed policy and in recognition of the Council's financial situation it was identified that discretionary elements of both policies should also be consulted upon to establish if they remain a necessity, whether alterations were required, and whether they continue to be appropriate for the Council to support.

Consultation Detail

49. As per the DfE Guidelines, there is a requirement to consult for a minimum of 28 working days, which should be held during term time. In accordance with these guidelines the proposed dates for consultation are 23 January 2025 to 9 March 2025.

50. The consultation seeks to obtain the views of the following aspects of Home to School & Post 16 Transport:

- **Review area 1:** Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.
- **Review area 2:** Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.
- **Review area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements.
- **Review area 4:** Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on the proposed changes as mentioned above, we are also exploring views on the following discretionary elements of both policies where, to date proposals for change have not been developed:

- **Review area 5:** Discretionary travel at split village locations
- **Review area 6:** Spare seat scheme

51. Engagement activity is planned throughout the consultation period includes:

- Consultation documentation, information & survey - Online
- Easy Read version of consultation documentation/information - Online
- Social Media
- Local Offer
- Letters/emails to those currently directly accessing the service
- Direct communication with education establishments and/or Head Teachers
- Focussed direct communication with local support groups (OxPCF) – Online Meeting x 2
- Online consultation sessions – Lunchtime x 2 and Evening x 2
- Young person engagement sessions

52. Once the consultation closes, feedback will be analysed and reviewed. Analysis will be used to inform if any changes will be made to the current offer of Home to School and Post 16 Transport, seeking Cabinet Approval in April 2025.

53. The consultation can be accessed via Lets Talk using the following link <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hometoschool>. It provides the public with details of the consultation, the draft policies, details of the proposals, access to the consultation survey, and access links to book attendance at scheduled engagement events.

54. The consultation pack, survey, and draft policies can be found in the annex of this paper. This provides the necessary information in relation to each review area to enable individuals to respond to the consultation survey.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

55. The consultation of the refreshed Home to School Transport and Post 16 Travel policies and the review of the Council's discretionary provision enables the service to continue to support the Council's existing priorities.
56. Undertaking the proposed activity will enable the service to ensure both policies create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential by supporting travel and access in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations and discretionary powers.

Financial Implications

57. There are no financial implications relating to the recommendations contained within this report. Any financial implication relating to the options included in the consultation will be developed during the analysis of the consultation feedback, reflecting any necessary adjustments and considerations resulting from feedback that is received.
58. Any financial implications relating to any final proposed changes to the policies will be reported post consultation period in relation to final recommended changes seeking approval at cabinet in April 2025.

Comments checked by:

Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner,
jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

59. The consultation on the refreshed policies and the identified discretionary elements of the existing policies does not carry any legal implications.
60. The review and update of the existing policies and identification of aspects of those policies being consulted upon reflect the statutory guidance and legal framework underpinning these policies and the service.

Comments checked by:

Leanne Schrouder
Locum SEN and Education Solicitor
leanne.schrouder@oxfordshire.gov.uk
(Legal)

Staff Implications

61. No staffing implications have been identified at this stage. A review of implications will be undertaken following analysis of consultation feedback and the development of final policy proposals, in advance of the April 2025 cabinet meeting.

Michelle Higgs
HR Business Partner
Michelle.higgs@oxfordshire.gov.uk
(HR & Culture Change)

Equality & Inclusion Implications

62. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the consultation and decision-making processes, to be included in the cabinet approval process.

Sustainability Implications

63. No sustainability implications have been identified relating to the proposed review areas included in the consultation. This will be reviewed once the consultation period has ended as part of the cabinet approval process.

Risk Management

64. The planned engagement supporting the consultation process identifies that key groups will be provided sufficient support and focus to enable key issues and concerns to be addressed and listened to. Activity will be inclusive with representatives from the Council breaking down the detail of the consultation to support improved understanding.
65. Feedback provided through the Consultation survey will be reviewed and taken into consideration when deciding whether to implement any of the proposals detailed in the consultation.
66. Risks identified through the consultation process will be reviewed, and suitable mitigation identified. This will be included in the consultation and decision-making processes when seeking approval of the updated policies, once the consultation has concluded and feedback has been analysed.

Consultations

67. The consultation of proposals relating to Home to School Transport and Post 16 Travel is live between 23 January 2025 to 9 March 2025. A range of engagements are scheduled to encourage sufficient responses and ensure understanding is established amongst interested stakeholders. This will include easy ready versions of the consultation, engagement events, direct dialogue with young person groups and the OxPCF.

68. Responses and feedback will be analysed and considered when finalising recommendations for approval by Cabinet in April 2025.
69. Findings from the consultation and feedback will be shared with key stakeholders post Cabinet approval and will include OxPCF, Schools, and young people (users of the service).

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children, Education and Families (DCS)

Annex:

1. [Consultation Pack](#)
2. [Consultation Survey](#)
3. [Compulsory School Age Home to School Transport Policy - Consultation Draft](#)
4. [Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Consultation Draft](#)

Background papers: Nil

Other Documents:

1. [Existing Compulsory School Age Home to School Transport Policy 2024/25](#)
2. [Existing Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2024/25](#)
3. [Public Information relating to Split Villages \(inc. current list\)](#)

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Stephen Good
Home to School Transport Transformation Programme
Manager
Stephen.good@oxfordshire.gov.uk

February 2025

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Home to school transport policy and post 16 transport policy statement (2025) consultation



We would like to hear your views on proposed changes to our home to school transport policy and post 16 transport policy statement (2025).

We are consulting on proposed changes to our **home to school transport policy** (for compulsory age pupils), and our **post 16 transport policy statement** (for pupils in post 16 education). These documents set out the statutory (legal) responsibilities that we have to help with transport to school or another education setting for children and young people living in Oxfordshire.

Consultation focus

This consultation is seeking views on:

- **Review area 1:** Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.
- **Review area 2:** Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.
- **Review area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements.
- **Review area 4:** Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on the proposed changes as mentioned above, we are also exploring views on the following discretionary elements of both policies **where proposals for change have not been developed:**

- **Review area 5:** Discretionary travel at split village locations
- **Review area 6:** Spare seat scheme

Please read the [supporting documentation](#) before answering the questions.

We understand that some children and young people's needs will mean they will always require travel assistance. Regardless of any future decisions made, we will continue to meet our statutory requirements in relation to school transport.

Join an online information sharing event

We are also holding some online information sharing events where you can find out more about our home to school transport policy and post 16 transport policy statement and the changes we are proposing. You can also ask questions to help you better understand the information we are sharing. You can click to [sign up here](#) to attend an event.

Why your views are important

We have a legal requirement to seek the views of parents, children and young people and others who may be affected by any proposed changes to these policies.

The views you share will be reviewed and analysed to inform changes to the policies and how travel support is delivered. They will also help the us to understand different perspectives on existing discretionary arrangements that we have yet to develop proposals for.

Next steps

On 29 April 2025, the council's Cabinet will meet to consider and decide about changes to the home to school transport policy (for compulsory age pupils), and the post 16 transport policy statement (for pupils in post 16 education).

Survey

Survey

TAKE SURVEY







Page last updated: 23 Jan 2025, 04:40 PM

Key Dates

 Closing date
09 March 2025

Documents

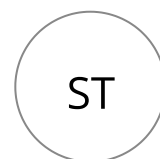
-  [Consultation document.docx \(45.2 KB\) \(docx\)](#)
-  [Home To School Travel Policy - DRAFT.pdf \(656 KB\) \(pdf\)](#)
-  [Post 16 Policy Statement DRAFT.pdf \(293 KB\) \(pdf\)](#)
-  [H2ST consultation survey - version for printing.docx \(74.7 KB\) \(docx\)](#)

Who's Listening

School Transport Eligibility Team

School Transport

Email schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Alternative formats

If you (or anyone you know) needs this consultation in an alternative format in order to have your say, ie Easy Read, large text, audio, Braille or a community language, please email schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk or call the council's customer services team on 01865 792422 and we will work with you to meet your needs.

Printed copies

You can request paper copies of the consultation documents by emailing: schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk or call the county council's Customer Services Team on 01865 792422 or download them from this page. We have provided a Freepost address on the paper survey form for you to return your completed survey.

Data protection and privacy

Under the [Data Protection Act 2018](#), we (Oxfordshire County Council) have a legal duty to protect any personal information we collect from you. View Oxfordshire County Council's privacy notice online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk - search for '[privacy notice](#)'.

Accessibility statement

[Accessibility Statement | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

[Oxfordshire County Council Accessibility statement](#)

Consultation on Oxfordshire County Council's home to school transport policy and post 16 transport policy statement (2025)

Introduction

We are consulting on proposed changes to our **home to school transport policy** (for compulsory school age pupils), and our **post 16 transport policy statement** (for pupils in post 16 education). These documents set out the statutory (legal) responsibilities that we have, to help with transport to school or another education setting for children and young people living in Oxfordshire.

It is some time since we last thoroughly reviewed and consulted on these policies. Since then, various wording and phrasing has been added or tweaked within the documents to clarify specific aspects or to provide information where this was previously missing. Amendments have also been made to reflect changes in the statutory guidance from the government's department for education (DfE).

Consultation focus

This consultation is seeking views on:

- **Review area 1:** Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.
- **Review area 2:** Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.
- **Review area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current alternative provision arrangements.
- **Review area 4:** Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on the proposed changes as mentioned above, we are also exploring views on the following discretionary elements of both policies **where proposals for change have not been developed**:

- **Review area 5:** Discretionary travel at split village locations
- **Review area 6:** Spare seat scheme

Discretionary elements are services that **we are not** required to provide by law. Exploring views and potential impacts of possible future changes to these discretionary elements now, helps us to understand different perspectives.

We understand that some children and young people's needs will mean they will always require travel assistance. Regardless of any future decisions made, we will continue to meet our statutory requirements in relation to school transport.

How to have your say

This consultation is open from Thursday 23 January 2025 and closes at 11:59pm on Sunday 9 March 2025.

You can have your say by:

Please complete our online survey: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hometoschool>

To request a paper copy of the consultation documents and survey, please email: school.transport@oxfordshire.gov.uk or you can call our customer service team on 01865 792422.

Why your views are important

We have a legal requirement to seek the views of parents, children and young people and others who may be affected by any proposed changes to these policies.

The views you share will be reviewed and analysed to inform changes to the policies and how travel support is delivered. They will also help the us to understand different perspectives on existing discretionary arrangements that we have yet to develop proposals for.

On 29 April 2025, the council's Cabinet will meet to consider and decide about changes to the home to school transport policy (for compulsory age pupils), and the post 16 transport policy statement (for pupils in post 16 education).

About the home to school transport and post-16 transport service

We currently arrange daily transport to school for approximately 9,500 children and young people, including those using the Spare Seat Scheme. Of these, approximately 8,000 attend mainstream school places and approximately 1,500 attend places that provide for their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or other needs.

We are required by law to provide school transport, free of charge, to all children and young people of compulsory school age that meet the nationally set distance criteria, where any of the following apply:

- The child is of compulsory school age but under eight years old, and they attend the nearest qualifying schools, and the shortest available walking route is more than two miles.
- The child or young person is eight years old or over, but not above compulsory school age, and they attend their nearest qualifying school, where the shortest available walking route is more than three miles (this is reduced to more than two miles if the child or young person meets low-income criteria).
- Parents apply for a place at their nearest qualifying school and a place is not available. In this situation, assistance would be offered to the next closest school with an available place if the walking distance criteria above are met.
- The walking route to school is classified as an 'unsafe walking route'.
- The child or young person has extra health and education support needs and meets the distance criteria described above for school transport. This also applies where, for reasons of their special educational needs, disabilities or mobility problems, such children and young people cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school.

Children and young people are of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday (or from their fifth birthday if it falls on 31 August, 31 December, or 31 March) until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they reach 16 years of age.

For post 16 travel, support is available for those in post 16 education who attend their nearest suitable educational placement to their home address and have SEND and the following applies:

- The distance from their home to the educational placement is over 3 miles.
- The distance from their home to the educational placement is less than 3 miles and there is no available walking route.
- It would not be reasonable to expect the young person to walk to the educational placement because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their learning difficulty and/or disability, or because of a temporary or long-term medical condition.

Part 1: Proposed changes to Oxfordshire County Council's home to school transport policy (for compulsory school age pupils), and the post 16 transport policy statement (for pupils in post 16 education)

Review area 1: Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.

What is the current situation?

As part of the review of both policies, we have listened to feedback from families, schools, council officers and other stakeholders who have told us that our current published documents are difficult to navigate and understand.

What changes are proposed?

We propose to update both documents to:

- Improve understanding of our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement amongst families/stakeholders.
- More clearly define requirements and explanations to minimise instances of misunderstanding/misinterpretation.
- Improve the overall customer experience of these policies.

Changes include:

- A new contents page to support easier navigation to key areas of interest for families/stakeholders.
- Clearly labelled sections and sub sections containing all key information in one location.
- Re-ordering content to follow the different stages of the Home to School and Post 16 Travel process that families/stakeholders follow.

All detail continues to reflect the previous agreed policies and existing practice, aligning with the Department for Education guidelines.

Review area 2: Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.

What is the current situation?

We currently provide payment in the form of a direct travel payment for some children/young people who meet the agreed eligibility criteria. It enables families to make their own travel arrangements to best fit the family circumstances and the needs of the child/young person. If this travel option is offered to a family and they meet the statutory eligibility, then the family can choose to accept or decline this offer and if they decline, we will make alternative travel arrangements.

The current wording within the existing home to school transport policy and the post 16 transport policy statement is as follows:

“OCC may agree to the payment of a mileage allowance. The mileage allowance is provided for the child’s journey to school and the return to the child’s home. The mileage allowance is the HMRC “All Car Rate”. If, through a change in circumstances, the payment of the mileage allowance proves no longer to be the cheapest means of transporting the child to school, the alternative means of travel will be offered.”

What changes are proposed?

We proposed to refresh the wording in the home to school transport policy to align with current provision and updated guidelines from the DfE. We also propose to update the wording to:

- Improve understanding of direct travel payments related to mileage rates amongst families/stakeholders.
- More clearly define requirements and explanations of how decisions about how direct travel payments are made to minimise instances of misunderstanding/misinterpretation.

There will be no impact to anyone currently receiving direct transport payments as a result of the proposed changes to the policy.

Below is an extract from the updated policy outlining the considerations and structure of a direct travel payment to support access to and from education settings for pupils.

“To determine the appropriate Direct Travel Payments amount, the following factors, alongside discussion with the family, will be considered:

- the special educational needs and disabilities of the pupil/student
- the travel distance as measured by the council
- how the pupil/student might travel to their educational setting
- the time the journey takes
- whether the pupil/student is able to travel alone or if they need to

be accompanied

- the age of the pupil/student
- whether any specialist equipment might be required”

“The standard amount that would be awarded with a Direct Travel Payment (DTP) based on the straight-line distance (using the council’s transport software system) between the pupils home and their main school and calculated based on the mileage band. It is expected the value of the DTP will support the cost of two return journeys per day of attendance at their educational setting (i.e. all four legs of the journeys). Any variation to the standard amount will be considered as part of the pupil/student’s travel assessment. As a Direct Travel Payment can be used in many ways there is no expectation that the parent/carer will use the same route as measured by the council.”

“More detailed information on mileage banding and Direct Travel Payment values can be found on our [Direct Travel Payment webpage](#). Banding and values are reviewed annually and updated accordingly to ensure ongoing sustainability and value for money.”

Review area 3: Specific updates to our home to school transport policy for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect the Oxfordshire’s current Alternative Education Provision arrangements.

What is the current situation?

Alternative Education Provision arrangements have evolved significantly since the home to school transport policy was last consulted upon. With more Alternative Education Provision available within Oxfordshire the existing phrasing within the policies requires updating to reflect the current and future educational arrangements. This will help ensure clarity and consistency of approach when identifying what travel support is available for pupils attending Alternative Education Provision.

There will be no impact to anyone currently receiving transport to Alternative Education Provision as a result of the proposed changes to the policies.

The existing phrasing within the policies is as follows:

“Currently the main provider of alternative education for OCC is Meadowbrook College which is an academy and independent of OCC control. This determination will be made on the same basis as attendance at a mainstream school and the relevant criteria are shown in 20.1 of this policy. No free travel will be provided to school funded days at an alternative education provider.”

“Therefore, after permanent exclusion from school, a child allocated an OCC-funded, short-term place at Meadowbrook College (or a similar establishment) will receive free travel if that child:

- Lives over the statutory walking distance from the setting attended
- Lives under the statutory walking distance from the institution but the route is unsafe to walk, even if accompanied by an adult
- Meets the eligibility criteria related to family income”

What changes are proposed?

To reflect that Alternative Education Provision is now not solely based at Meadowbrook College, we proposed to update the wording in the policies as follows:

“Where a pupil’s placement has broken down and the pupil continues to be maintained on the school roll (of the pupil’s original school) pending next placement but attends an Alternative Education Provision to ensure continued access to education (similar to S61/S19) then assistance with travel may be agreed to the nearest suitable provision.”

“Both the school and the council must agree and confirm that the original placement has broken down, and this is confirmed by both the school and the council. Any support with travel in these circumstances will be reviewed and agreed on a case-by-case basis in consideration of the established eligibility criteria for Home to School Transport assessments.”

Review Area 4: Proposals to ask for financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to post 16 settings.

What is the current situation?

At present there are approximately 300 young people who have an education and healthcare plan (EHCP), in post 16 education who use free travel arrangements organised by us to access their nearest education setting. Currently we provide this free of charge, but by law, we have the discretion to request a contribution from families towards the cost of travel. This is whilst supporting continued access to education.

Many councils around the country now request a contribution from families for providing travel assistance for this age group. It helps them to offset travel costs which continue to be heavily subsidised.

Local authority areas with these arrangements include:

Council	Maximum contribution (per annum)
Central Bedfordshire	£801
Birmingham City	£1,028
Essex	£900
Hertfordshire	£1,632
Surrey	£908
Buckinghamshire	£1,021

Wiltshire	£950
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What changes are proposed?

We are proposing to introduce a contribution charge for young people in post 16 education that require provision of travel arrangements from the council and are keen to understand what the impact might be on families, schools, and wider community.

The proposed charge for Post 16 travel is as follows:

- Less than 3 miles from home to school/college £546.00 per annum (£182.00 per term)
- 3 miles and over from home to school/college £1,015.92 per annum (£338.64 per term)

The proposed rates would mirror the cost of the council's spare seat scheme, including the existing waiver of a contribution due to low-family income.

It is expected that the impact of the proposed introduction of a request for contribution towards costs could be offset partly by young people and families accessing available financial support, such as the 16-19 bursary fund for students in vulnerable groups. The value of the bursary is up to £1,200 and is available to young people who meet the following criteria:

- Young person is in or recently left local authority care
- Young person gets income support or universal credit because they financially supporting themselves
- Young Person gets Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in their name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- Young Person gets a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their name and either ESA or Universal Credit

Other bursaries and financial support are also available, and these continue to be identified within the existing transport policies and online.

The proposed change would align the financial contribution young people and families make in relation to travel costs for both young people with and without an EHCP, despite the vast differences in actual travel costs. The current average cost to the council for travel for a young person without an EHCP is approximately £1,015 per annum, for a young person with an EHCP it is approximately £18,000 per annum.

It is anticipated that this proposal, if accepted, would generate a contribution of approximately £207,000 per annum, offsetting our current transport spend of approximately £2m per annum

Part 2: Exploring potential future changes to discretionary elements of Oxfordshire County Council's home to school transport policy (for compulsory school age pupils), and the post 16 transport policy statement (for pupils in post 16 education)

Review area 5: Discretionary travel at split village locations

Exploring whether discretionary support should continue to be available for pupils living in 'split villages', where pupils are able to access travel support to either the nearest suitable school or the designated/catchment school for the village/area.

What is the current situation?

At present we provide travel support for children/young people where 20 percent or more of the addresses within that village fall within the designated/catchment school area to either their nearest suitable school or the designated/catchment school. All other locations in the county are assessed considering the nearest suitable school only.

This provision for split villages is discretionary and exceeds our legal duty. The current statutory position is that a child/young person is entitled to access travel support if they meet all the statutory eligibility criteria, this includes attending their nearest suitable school.

Only 14 villages within Oxfordshire are identified as a split village, with approximately 266 children/young people currently benefiting from this discretionary support. The current average cost to the council, of a child/young person using free home to school transport, is £1,015 per annum. The approximate proportion of cost for this split villages discretionary provision is estimated at £270k per annum.

What is the council seeking views on?

With limited funds available it is essential that we provide support only where it is necessary. This discretionary provision for split villages has been in place since the last consultation in 2014. In this consultation we now want to explore if this support continues to be necessary, and if it were to be changed or withdrawn, what the impact might be on families, schools, the council, and wider community.

As part of this early exploration, we are also asking for views on if the council should continue to provide discretionary transport support to two destinations or split villages (catchment school and nearest suitable school), whilst other locations in the county can only access this support from a single destination (their nearest suitable school).

No proposals for split villages have been developed. Should these come forward in the future, we will formally consult on them before any decisions are made.

Understanding potential impacts now will help us to see if any mitigation is required and what this might look like should any proposals be developed.

Area 6: Spare seats scheme

Exploring at an early stage whether the discretionary selling of spare capacity seats on existing home to school transport services (which we organise) should continue into the future.

What is the current situation?

At present we provide a spare seats scheme for some children and young people who do not meet the stated eligibility criteria for assistance with transport, where travel arrangements (contracted by the council) are already in place and spare capacity exists.

Demand for statutory travel support fluctuates and therefore the availability of spare capacity/seats also fluctuates throughout the year. Any spare seat that is provided to a child/young person is not guaranteed and may be withdrawn if the spare capacity no longer exists. This includes spare seats being withdrawn either mid-school year or during the summer holidays.

We have a statutory responsibility to provide free travel arrangements for compulsory age children who met the statutory eligibility criteria. We also make arrangements for some young people who are not compulsory school age (post 16) as per our current post 16 policy statement. This provision of the spare seats scheme is discretionary and exceeds our legal duty.

Where a spare seat is offered/provided we charge families between £546 and £1,015 per annum (dependent on distance from home to school) for the seat. The charge may be waived if low-income evidence can be provided.

The demand for spare seats often exceeds the availability of spare seats. The number of spare seats allocated over the last few years has been reducing as a result of transport routes being updated to reflect the demand and provision for entitled children/young people. This is shown in the following table:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Approximate number of spare seat passengers	1,200	1,100	1,300	900	600

What is the council seeking views on?

With limited funds available it is essential that we provide support only where it is necessary.

The discretionary provision for spare seats has been in place for many years. We are exploring, at an early stage, if this support should continue to be made available in its current format and approach. This includes whether the financial support

underpinning the scheme should be either adjusted to make the scheme sustainable moving forward, or whether financial support should be withdrawn.

As part of this early exploration, we also want to understand the impact if the spare seats scheme were to be changed or withdrawn, and what the council could do to lessen any impact.

No proposals for spare seats have been developed.

Should these proposals come forward in the future, we will formally consult on them before any decisions are made.

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Consultation on home to school transport policy and post 16 transport policy statement (2025)

We would like to hear your views on proposed changes to our **home to school transport policy and post 16 transport policy statement (2025)**.

We are consulting on proposed changes to our **home to school transport policy** (for compulsory school age pupils), and our **post 16 transport policy statement** (for pupils in post 16 education). These documents set out the statutory (legal) responsibilities that we have, to help with transport to school or another education setting for children and young people living in Oxfordshire.

It is some time since we last thoroughly reviewed and consulted on these policies. Since then, various wording and phrasing has been added or tweaked within the documents to clarify specific aspects or to provide information where this was previously missing. Amendments have also been made to reflect changes in the statutory guidance from the government's department for education (DfE).

Consultation focus

This consultation is seeking views on:

- **Review area 1:** Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.
- **Review area 2:** Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.
- **Review area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements.
- **Review area 4:** Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on the proposed changes as mentioned above, we are also exploring views on the following discretionary elements of both policies **where proposals for change have not been developed**:

- **Review area 5:** Discretionary travel at split village locations
- **Review area 6:** Spare seat scheme

Please read the supporting documentation which can be found at:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hometoschool> before answering the questions.

Survey

Q1 I am responding to this survey as: (Choose one option) *

- as a child/young person using home to school transport
- as a parent/carer of a child/young person using home to school transport
- an Oxfordshire resident
- a member of the public living outside of Oxfordshire
- a representative of a transport provider serving Oxfordshire schools
- a representative of an Oxfordshire school
- a parish, town, district, or county councillor in Oxfordshire – please give your name and the parish or town/ward or division you represent below
- other (please specify)

Q2 Do you/your child or young person have SEND and an EHCP?

- Yes
- No

Q3 Do you live in any of the following villages which are identified as split villages within the existing home to school transport policy?

- No
- Adderbury/Twyford
- Ascott-under-Wychwood
- Charlbury
- Dry Sandford
- Duns Tew
- Freeland
- Great Haseley
- Kirtlington
- Long Hanborough
- Old Boars Hill
- South Hinksey
- Tadmarton
- Twyford/Adderbury
- Yatscombe Copse

Q4 Do you use the home to school transport spare seat scheme?

- Yes
 No

Part 1: Proposed changes to Oxfordshire County Council's home to school transport policy (for compulsory school age pupils), and the post 16 transport policy statement (for pupils in post 16 education)

Q5 Review area 1: Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.

We propose to update both documents to:

- Improve understanding of our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement amongst families/stakeholders.
- More clearly define requirements and explanations to minimise instances of misunderstanding/misinterpretation.
- Improve the overall customer experience of these policies.

Please indicate to what extent you **agree** or **disagree** with the proposed changes for review area 1:

- Strongly agree
 Agree somewhat
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree somewhat
 Strongly disagree
 Not sure

Q6 If you **strongly disagreed** or **disagreed somewhat**, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q7 Review area 2: Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.

What changes are proposed?

We proposed to refresh the wording in the home to school transport policy to align with current provision and updated guidelines from the DfE. We also propose to update the wording to:

- Improve understanding of direct travel payments related to mileage rates amongst families/stakeholders.
- More clearly define requirements and explanations of how decisions about how direct travel payments are made to minimise instances of misunderstanding/misinterpretation.

There will be no impact to anyone currently receiving direct transport payments as a result of the proposed changes to the policy.

Please indicate to what extent you **agree** or **disagree** with the proposed changes for review area 2:

- Strongly agree
- Agree somewhat
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree somewhat
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

Q8 If you strongly disagreed or disagreed somewhat, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q9 Review area 3: Specific updates to our home to school transport policy for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect the Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements.

What changes are proposed?

To reflect that Alternative Education Provision is now not solely based a Meadowbrook College, we proposed to update the wording in the policies.

Please indicate to what extent you **agree** or **disagree** with the proposed changes for review area 3:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

Q10 If you strongly disagreed or disagreed somewhat, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q11 Review area 4: Proposals to ask for financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to post 16 settings.

What changes are proposed?

We are proposing to introduce a contribution charge for young people in post 16 education that require provision of travel arrangements from the council and are keen to understand what the impact might be on families, schools, and wider community.

The proposed charge for Post 16 travel is as follows:

- Less than 3 miles from home to school/college £546.00 per annum (£182.00 per term)
- 3 miles and over from home to school/college £1,015.92 per annum (£338.64 per term)

The proposed rates would mirror the cost of the council's spare seat scheme, including the existing waiver of a contribution due to low-family income.

Please indicate to what extent you **agree** or **disagree** with the proposed changes for review area 4:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

Q12 If you strongly disagreed or disagreed somewhat, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Part 2: Exploring potential future changes to discretionary elements of Oxfordshire County Council’s home to school transport policy (for compulsory school age pupils), and the post 16 transport policy statement (for pupils in post 16 education)

Q13 Review area 5: Discretionary travel at split village locations

What changes are proposed?

Exploring whether discretionary support should continue to be available for pupils living in ‘split villages’, where pupils are able to access travel support to either the nearest suitable school or the designated/catchment school for the village/area.

What is the council seeking views on?

With limited funds available it is essential that we provide support only where it is necessary. This discretionary provision for split villages has been in place since the last consultation in 2014. In this consultation we now want to explore if this support continues to be necessary, and if it were to be changed or withdrawn, what the impact might be on families, schools, the council, and wider community.

As part of this early exploration, we are also asking for views on if the council should continue to provide discretionary transport support to two destinations or split villages (catchment school and nearest suitable school), whilst other locations in the county can only access this support from a single destination (their nearest suitable school).

No proposals for split villages have been developed. Should these come forward in the future, we will formally consult on them before any decisions are made.

Understanding potential impacts now will help us to see if any mitigation is required and what this might look like should any proposals be developed.

If proposals were developed to **reduce** this service (limit/reduce number of split villages), what would the **potential impact** be on families, schools, and wider community?

- Significant positive impact
- Somewhat positive impact
- Neither positive nor negative impact
- Somewhat negative impact
- Significant negative impact
- Not sure

Q14 If you answered somewhat negative or significant negative impact, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q15 If proposals were developed to **withdraw** this service, what would the **potential impact** be on families, schools, and wider community?

- Significant positive impact
- Somewhat positive impact
- Neither positive nor negative impact
- Somewhat negative impact
- Significant negative impact
- Not sure

Q16 If you answered somewhat negative or significant negative impact, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q17 What are your views on split villages being able to access transport support to two destinations (nearest suitable school and catchment school) where all other parts of the county can only access transport support to a single destination (nearest available school)?

Q18 Area 6: Spare seats scheme

Exploring whether the discretionary selling of spare capacity seats on existing home to school transport services (which we organise) should continue into the future.

What is the council seeking views on?

With limited funds available it is essential that we provide support only where it is necessary.

The discretionary provision for spare seats has been in place for many years. We are exploring, at an early stage, if this support should continue to be made available in its current format and approach. This includes whether the financial support underpinning the scheme should be either adjusted to make the scheme sustainable moving forward, or whether financial support should be withdrawn.

As part of this early exploration, we also want to understand the impact might be on families, schools, and wider community if the spare seats scheme were to be changed or withdrawn.

No proposals for spare seats have been developed.

If proposals were developed to change the level of contribution (increase), what would the **potential impact** be on families, schools, and wider community?

- Significant positive impact
- Somewhat positive impact
- Neither positive nor negative impact
- Somewhat negative impact
- Significant negative impact
- Not sure

Q19 If you answered negative or significant negative impact, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q20 If proposals were developed to **reduce** this service, what would the **potential impact** be on families, schools, and wider community?

- Significant positive impact
- Somewhat positive impact
- Neither positive nor negative impact
- Somewhat negative impact
- Significant negative impact
- Not sure

Q21 If you answered negative or significant negative impact, please tell us why you gave that answer:

Q22 If proposals were developed to **withdraw** this service, what would you like to see the council do to the **lessen impact** on families, schools, and wider community?

Q23 At present we provide a spare seats scheme for some children and young people who do not meet the stated eligibility criteria for assistance with transport, where travel arrangements (contracted by the council) are already in place and spare capacity exists. This scheme allows non-entitled children/young people to purchase access (a seat) on a specific vehicle/route.

What are your views on the council continuing financially subsidising some of the costs for children and young people who are not entitled to free transport support to purchase spare seats where they are available?

Should these come forward in the future, we will formally consult on them before any decisions are made. Understanding potential impacts now will help us to look at if any mitigation is required and what this might look like should any proposals be developed.

About You

We would like to know more about you so that we can understand more about our customers and residents, as it helps us to know if we are hearing the views of a wide range of people and communities.

If you do not wish to provide any of this information, please select prefer not to say.

Information in this section is anonymous and is governed by the [General Data Protection Regulations 2018](#).

Q24 What is your age?

- Under 16
- 16 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 – 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or over
- Prefer not to say

Q25 What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- I use another term (please state here)

Q26 What is your ethnic group or background?

- Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or any other Asian background)
- Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, or any other Black background)
- Chinese
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, and any other mixed background)
- White (British, Irish, or any other white background)
- Prefer not to say
- Other ethnic group or background (please specify)

Q27 Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a long-term illness, health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

- Yes - a lot
- Yes – a little
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q28 Are you a carer?

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. Both children and adults can be carers

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q29 What is your postcode?
Please provide the first four or five digits of your postcode (but not the letters at the end). e.g. OX1 1 or OX14 5.

Q30 **Would you like to find out more about what's happening in Oxfordshire?**

We'd like to invite you to receive **email updates** on news, events and developments across Oxfordshire and opportunities to have your say.

The email contact details you provide will be separated from the feedback you have shared in this survey.

Would you like to sign up to any of the following?
(Please tick all that apply)

- Your Oxfordshire – our residents e-newsletter
- Consultations e-newsletter - with opportunities to have your say and updates on our response to residents' feedback
- No thanks

Q31 If you'd like to sign up, please provide your email address below:

You can post completed paper surveys to us for free (no stamp required) by writing this address as one line in the middle of an envelope:

Freepost OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Please also write 'School transport' on the top left corner of the envelope, so we can easily identify what is inside the envelope.

Please ensure that you submit your consultation response to the County Council by midnight on **Sunday 9 March 2025**. Any responses received after this time may not be taken into consideration.



**Home to School Travel and Transport Policy
2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11**

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

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DRAFT

Introduction

- 1.1 This document describes the policy for home to school travel assistance and the criteria applied to determine eligibility.
- 1.2 The Policy has been developed in accordance with the legislative framework set out in sections 508A, 508B, 508C, 508D and 509AD and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006), the current Government Home-to-school travel guidance. and, where appropriate, the Equality Act.
- 1.3 Parents have a legal duty to make necessary arrangements to ensure that their statutory aged children attend school regularly. The council is only required to provide free school travel assistance to children resident within the administrative area of Oxfordshire County Council. if the school transport eligibility criteria are met.
- 1.4 Home to School travel assistance aims to:
 - support those most in need
 - promote principles of independence
 - provide the most cost-effective travel assistance
 - promote and encourage the use of sustainable travel
- 1.5 As a Council, we expect the service delivered to be of a high standard. All children and young people who travel under this Policy can expect that those standards will be monitored and maintained. In this policy we have referred to children of statutory school age (5-16 years) as “pupils”, and those over statutory school age as “students”.
- 1.6 The Education Act 1996 provides the following duties and powers on local authorities:
 - duty to promote sustainable modes of travel to meet school travel needs - s.508A
 - duty to make necessary travel arrangements free of charge to secure suitable home to school travel arrangements for eligible children. Eligibility includes age, distance to school, special educational needs, a disability (SEND) or mobility problems and safe walking routes - S.508B
 - power to make necessary school travel arrangements for other children on payment of a charge as appropriate - s.508C
 - power to provide travel assistance or travel expenses for children attending early years education, subject to eligibility criteria - s.509A
 - duty to prepare a Post-16 transport policy statement setting out transport provision and financial assistance (where applicable) to facilitate attendance of sixth form students at educational institutions - s.509AA and s.509AB
- 1.7 Those who are not resident in Oxfordshire are advised to contact their own home local authority for details of any policy that their local authority may have regarding home to school/college transport.

Under Statutory school age (0 to 4 years) Eligibility for Travel Assistance

- 2.1 Free and subsidised transport **is not automatically provided to children of pre-school age** who attend an Early Years settings or school, Travel arrangements for a child attending a nursery provision the responsibility of a child's parent.
- 2.2 In exceptional circumstances the Council will consider providing travel assistance for any child who will turn 5 within the term that the application is made, subject to them meeting the transport eligibility criteria and the Council completing a travel needs assessment. Each case is considered individually therefore parents should not assume automatic entitlement.
- 2.3 A child with an EHCP attending a mainstream or specialist nursery can bring their case to the Transport Exceptions Panel to be considered for travel assistance, as long as the placement is the nearest suitable setting. If travel assistance is offered, this is likely to be in the form of a Direct Travel Payment, subject to a consideration of a family's ability to make suitable transport arrangements for their child's journey to nursery.
- 2.4 If it is determined by the School Transport Eligibility Team that once the child is 5 they will meet the eligibility criteria for home to school transport, A child with an EHCP attending a reception class before they turn 5 may be transported during the term that they are due to turn 5, providing there is existing transport running from the child's home area to the educational setting. This is subject to the Council completing a travel needs assessment.
- 2.5 If it is determined by the School Transport Eligibility Team that a child with an EHCP attending a reception class would be eligible to receive Council funded home to school travel assistance once they turn 5, then we would consider providing travel assistance if the child needs it before the age of 5. This would be the case even if there was no existing transport provision running from the child's home area to the educational setting. These cases can be brought to the Transport Exceptions Panel for consideration.
- 2.6 If travel assistance is offered, this is likely to be in the form of a Direct Travel Payment subject to a consideration of a family's ability to make suitable transport arrangements for their child's journey to school.

Statutory school age (5 to 16 years - Mainstream and SEND)

- 2.7 Statutory school age begins with the start of term following a child's 5th birthday and ends on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they turn 16. Children of statutory school age need to attend a school or educational setting on a full-time basis; this is defined as 190 days (or 380 sessions) each academic year.
- 2.8 There are 4 categories of statutory school age students living in Oxfordshire and attending their nearest suitable school who are eligible for Council funded travel assistance:
 - children who live beyond the statutory walking distance
 - children from low income families (where extended rights apply – see section 2.25)
 - children whose walking route to school is unsafe

- children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), a disability or a mobility difficulty
- 2.9 The nearest suitable school is defined as ‘the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the child's age, ability, aptitude, gender and any special educational needs they may have’. A ‘qualifying’ school is:
- a maintained school or nursery, or a special school approved under s.342 of the Education Act 1996
 - a pupil referral unit or Alternative Education Provision
 - an academy
- 2.10 Where a child has an EHCP, the school named in the EHCP will normally be considered to be their nearest suitable school.
- 2.11 The nearest suitable school used for the transport eligibility assessment may not be the same as the catchment school or nearest school for admissions purposes.
- 2.12 Where at least 20% of addresses are nearest to the catchment/designated area school and the rest are nearest to another school, free transport will be provided to the catchment school for all addresses if the distance is beyond the “statutory walking distance” or there is no safe walking route. This is referred to as the ‘al village’ entitlement. This additional entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP. A list of the villages affected can be found under ‘Villages’ on at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport .
- 2.13 When school applications are processed, where a preference is expressed for and a place is offered at the nearest suitable school, and this school is out of county, then this is considered in the school transport eligibility assessment.
- 2.14 When determining the nearest suitable school for transport purposes, the assessment does not take into account whether a child is qualified for grammar school. Therefore, the nearest suitable school may be an upper/all-ability school. In these instances, if a child chooses to attend a grammar school further away, Council funded transport will not be provided to that school.
- 2.15 Parents/carers should always express a preference for their nearest suitable school on their application. The School Transport Eligibility Team will determine places available and therefore families do not need to be concerned about whether their child is likely to secure a place at the nearest suitable school.
- 2.16 ‘Places available’ does not apply to admissions to Special Schools or Additionally Resourced Provision.
- 2.17 Parents are not required to name the nearest suitable school as their first preference when they make their school application, but it must be listed as their first preference if they want to be considered for transport. If a place cannot be offered a place at the nearest suitable school, then transport could be provided to the next nearest school.
- 2.18 If parents do not express their nearest suitable school as one of their preferences, and instead choose a place at a school which is not the nearest suitable school, the pupil will not be eligible for Council funded travel assistance unless the

extended rights apply (see section 2.25 – 2.30).

Statutory Walking Distances

- 2.19 The statutory walking distances are used to determine whether a pupil is eligible for Council funded travel assistance. The statutory walking distances are as follows:
- up to 2 miles (if below the age of 8)
 - up to 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)
- 2.20 The statutory walking distance is measured along the shortest route along which a child, accompanied by a responsible adult, may walk with reasonable safety. The route may include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads. All such routes need to be open to the public. Even where the distance is calculated to have been longer than the statutory walking distance it will still be measured using this method.
- 2.21 If the distance between home and the nearest suitable school is more than these limits, the pupil is eligible for Council funded travel assistance. Pupils who live beyond the statutory walking distance may be required to use public transport and in these cases the Council will provide a bus or train travel pass in order for them to use the relevant public transport service.
- 2.22 Where a pupil lives within the statutory walking distance of their nearest suitable school and is not eligible for Council funded travel assistance on any of the other grounds set out in this policy, the parent/carer is responsible for making suitable arrangements for their child's travel to school.
- 2.23 If issues are raised over the possible safety of a walking route the School Transport Eligibility Team will arrange for an initial assessment and, if necessary, a full assessment by a member of the Road Safety Team.
- 2.24 For pupils who fall within the 'Extended Rights' eligibility criteria the 6 mile and 15 mile upper limits are not walking routes. These routes are those which are passable using a suitable motorised vehicle. In short, the two upper limits will be measured along road routes.

Extended rights for pupils from low income families

- 2.25 A pupil may be eligible for extended rights under the 'low income' provisions. The Council defines low income families as those where a child receives free school meals because their parents or carers receive at least one of the benefits listed below:
- Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Child Tax Credit – provided their parents/carers are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
 - Universal Credit - if they apply on or after 1 April 2018 their household income must be no more than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)
 - The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- 2.26 If the pupil is not entitled to free school meals, another benefit that is accepted is entitlement to the maximum level of Working Tax Credits. This means that there is no reduction due to income in the Working Tax Credits elements section of their HM Revenue & Customs award notice for the current tax year and their annual income is no more than £16,190.
- 2.27 Where extended rights apply, pupils aged 8 to 10 from low income families who live more than 2 miles (rather than 3) from their nearest suitable school become eligible for Council funded home to school travel assistance.
- 2.28 Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home will be eligible for Council funded home to school travel assistance even if the school they attend is not their nearest suitable school, providing it is one of the three nearest schools which the pupil is qualified to attend (for example a mainstream pupil is not qualified to attend a special school even if it is one of the three nearest schools and therefore it would be discounted).
- 2.29 Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend a school between 2 miles and 15 miles away from home will be entitled to Council funded home to school transport if their parents/carers have expressed a wish for them to be educated at that particular school based on the parents/carer's religion or belief and, having regard to that wish, there is no nearer suitable school. This applies to parents/carers with a particular religious or philosophical belief, including those with a lack of religion or lack of belief.
- 2.30 When assessing whether a child lives within the 6 or 15 mile upper limits, the Council will measure road routes only.

Pupils whose route to school is unsafe

- 2.31 A pupil is eligible for Council funded travel assistance if they attend their nearest suitable school, and
- it is within the statutory walking distance of their home, and
 - the nature of the route means they could not be expected to walk there in reasonable safety, even if accompanied by their parent/carer, and
 - there is no alternative route within the statutory walking distance that they would be able to walk in reasonable safety, even if accompanied by their parent/carer.
- 2.32 All walking routes are assessed by the Council in accordance with the Road Safety GB and RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) guidelines. The Council will assess the route at the times the pupil would be using it and will consider:
- The age of the pupil
 - whether risks might be less if the pupil were accompanied by their parent/carer
 - the width of the road and the existence of pavements
 - the volume and speed of traffic
 - the conditions at different times of the year
- 2.33 Where a route previously assessed as unsafe is reassessed and determined to be safe (for example by reviewing the route, through route improvements, upgrades or maintenance, the building of new footpaths or installing pedestrian crossings, etc.) the transport eligibility for all pupils who are using the previously assessed

unsafe walking route will be reviewed. Pupils who are no longer eligible once the route is reassessed as safe will be given a minimum of one half term's notice before Council funded travel assistance is withdrawn. It will then be the parent/carer's responsibility to make suitable travel arrangements for their child.

- 2.34 It is clear from relevant case law that assessments must look at the relationship between pedestrians and traffic only and that personal safety/security issues of children travelling alone should not be considered. Therefore, routes are assessed in terms of road safety rather than personal safety/security in any other sense.
- 2.35 The assessment carried out is a road safety assessment. This assessment does not include the weight of the bags carried by an individual, the local weather conditions, temporary surface conditions such as mud or puddles, the presence of uncut hedges, difficult terrain and the arduousness of the route or whether the accompanying responsible adult will also have a younger child or pram with them.
- 2.36 If a footway is over ½ a metre in width the footway is classed as an available route.
- 2.37 If a footway is less than ½ a metre in width then traffic volumes and speeds are included in the assessment to determine whether the footway is an available route.
- 2.38 Even if there is not a footway, the walking route will still be assessed as available if it is safe to walk, accompanied, as necessary, by a responsible adult. The assessment will take account of traffic flows and whether drivers have enough time to slow down or pedestrians have time to step-off the road or verge. It is the responsibility of a parent to ensure that a child is accompanied as necessary on the walking journey to school.
- 2.39 No walking route can be absolutely safe. The term used in the Road Safety GB guidance to describe the accepted standard is "reasonable safety".
- 2.40 Assessments will usually take place in the morning during the times children will be travelling to school and assessments may also be undertaken when returning home in the afternoon. Visits will be timed, where possible, so that crossing assessments of main roads take place at the times when the number of children travelling to school is highest.

Transport to schools that are not the nearest

- 2.41 If a place cannot be offered at the nearest suitable school when this has been expressed as the preference school, then travel assistance to the next nearest suitable school will be offered. Where the Council allocates a school place which is not a preference, we will only consider providing Council funded travel assistance if the nearest suitable school was expressed the 1st preference.

Split Site Schools

- 2.42 In the case of split site schools, as with all other schools, when assessing whether a child should receive free travel because of the walking distance to that school, the distance will be measured to the site they initially attend. This decision will not be reviewed because a child subsequently moves to a different site of the same school.
- 2.43 The following Oxfordshire secondary schools currently have split sites:
- The Cherwell School

- King Alfred's Academy
- Lord Williams' School
- Heyford Park School

Home to school transport provision in specific circumstances

- 2.44 There may be specific circumstances where Council funded travel assistance could be provided. These are provided at the Council's discretion .
- 2.45 Parents/carers of pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria above, may have reasons why they think their child should be provided with travel assistance which they want the Council to consider. The Council has a 2 stage appeal process for parent/carers to challenge decisions about transport eligibility.
- 2.46 Each appeal must be made in writing. The appeal will be considered and transport may be provided at the discretion of the Council.
- Discretionary assistance will be:
 - dealt with on a case-by-case basis
 - granted for a set period of time
 - is subject to review more frequently than other circumstances
 - may cover the whole cost of transport provision or be a contribution to the cost of the travel assistance

Criteria for home to school transport for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility issues

- 2.47 Pupils who have SEND or mobility issues may require assistance with getting to school or to another educational setting. This may be over and above the provision made for other pupils. Pupils with SEND who attend their nearest suitable school/setting and satisfy the distance, unsafe walking route or low income assessment criteria set out above are eligible for Council funded travel assistance.
- 2.48 Having an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) does not automatically mean that a child will be eligible for travel assistance.
- 2.49 A pupil with an EHCP will not usually be provided with Council funded travel assistance unless they meet the statutory eligibility criteria, or they live within the statutory walking distance limits and the pupil has a special educational need, disability or mobility issue which prevents them from walking to school in reasonable safety, even if accompanied.
- 2.50 The Council considers the individual needs of pupils, including professional advice, and will consult with parents/carers and teachers about travel needs and assistance. Where appropriate the pupil will also be consulted.
- 2.51 The Council will take the following into account when determining eligibility for transport assistance for pupils with SEND:
- distance to nearest suitable school
 - medical needs
 - behaviour that challenges, impacting on reasonable safety
 - mobility issues
 - whether the pupil is able to walk to school in reasonable safety if accompanied by their parent/carer
 - vulnerability (including age, young parents and those at risk of

- disengaging from employment, education or training)
- low income family criteria
- practicality

This list is for guidance only, and satisfying one or more of these factors does not automatically support entitlement to Council funded travel assistance.

- 2.52 When determining the most appropriate type of travel assistance for pupils with SEND, the Council will consider the following:
- age of the pupil
 - nature and severity of the pupil's SEND
 - availability of public transport
 - length and nature of the journey
 - most cost-effective mode of transport
 - safety of handover arrangements
 - travel training readiness
 - pupil's ability to use public transport independently
- 2.53 Parents of pupils with EHCPs may, in certain circumstances, be given the option of a personal budget to meet some or all of the provision detailed in the Plan and special transport will be an element of the personal budget.
- 2.54 A parent will be formally notified, in writing, of the travel arrangements that the Council believes to be appropriate. At that point the parent may appeal against the mode of transport decided upon through the normal transport appeal process set out in this document. The first stage of this process is to request a review from the School Transport Eligibility Team. Prior to any appeal the Council will only make available the transport decided upon in the assessment. The result of any transport appeal is binding on the Council.

Elective Home Education

- 2.55 Where parents/carers decide to provide Home Education for their children instead of sending them to a school, this is called elective home education (EHE). In the case of EHE, no assistance will be available from the Council in connection with any transport need arising.

Education other than at school (EOTAS)

- 2.56 Education other than at school (EOTAS) must be agreed by the Council. Where the Council arranges for a pupil/student to have education other than at a school, the Council may consider transport subject to the normal eligibility criteria as detailed in section Criteria for home to school transport for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility issues of this Home to School Transport Policy. Circumstances will be reviewed and agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative Education Provision

- 2.57 Where a pupil's placement has broken down and the pupil continues to be maintained on the school roll (of the pupil's original school) pending next placement but attends an Alternative Education Provision to ensure continued access to education (similar to S61/S19) then assistance with travel may be agreed to the nearest suitable provision.

- 2.58 Both the school and the council must agree and confirm that the original placement has broken down, and this is confirmed by both the school and the council. Any support with travel in these circumstances will be reviewed and agreed on a case-by-case basis in consideration of the established eligibility criteria for Home to School Transport assessments.

Looked After Children (under the care of the Council - all ages)

- 2.59 The Council is committed to supporting those most in need, ensuring that travel assistance is available to those who require it. It is recognised that Looked After Children face specific challenges and barriers to achieving their full potential, and as corporate parents we are committed to reducing those barriers.
- 2.60 For Looked after Children under our care, transport will be provided as follows:
- if a Looked After Child is educated at a school that is not the nearest suitable school for less than one term, transport will be provided by the Council for this period
 - if a Looked After child is educated at school that is not the nearest suitable school for more than one term, transport will be provided by the Council for one term. During this term it is expected that an application will be made to the nearest suitable school, unless there are exceptional circumstances as to why the pupil should not move to this school. The view of the Head Teacher of the Virtual School will be taken into account when senior officers consider any exceptional circumstances

Non-statutory school age (16 to 25 years - Mainstream and SEND)

- 3.1 Under national legislation, students are required to be in education, employment or training until their 18th birthday. This could involve staying in full-time education in school/college, starting an apprenticeship or traineeship, or spending 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering while in part-time education or training. There has not, however, been any change to statutory school age which ends at the end of the academic year in which the student turns 16.
- 3.2 Under the current law, there is no automatic entitlement to Council funded transport from home to school or to another educational setting once a student is 16 and over. However, the Council is required to facilitate the attendance of all those of sixth form age i.e. those students over compulsory school age who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday. This may involve travel assistance but the Council does not need to provide this assistance free of charge. Responsibility for attendance lies with the student and their parents/carers.
- 3.3 Where a student with SEND starts a new course at aged 19 or older, any transport assistance which is necessary to facilitate attendance must be free of charge i.e. fully Council funded, as they are Adult Learners. More information is provided in our Post-16 Transport Policy Statement.

Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

- 3.4 The Council has a duty to prepare and publish an annual Transport Policy Statement. This statement specifies the arrangements for transport that the Council considers it necessary to make in order to facilitate the attendance of sixth form students receiving education or training.

- 3.5 The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement includes information on:
- fares, Passes and Travel Cards
 - travel options for mainstream students including the Spare Seats Scheme
 - travel assistance for students with SEND
 - financial hardship
 - bursaries
 - independent Travel Training
- 3.6 This Post-16 Transport Policy Statement takes account of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 to 25 years.

Support for students with SEND 19-25 years

- 3.7 The Council outlines the support available to students aged 19 to 25 with SEND in the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement described above.

Application and Review Process

Application process

- 4.1 For enquiries about school transport eligibility for pupils/students with EHCPs please contact the School Transport Eligibility Team.
- 4.2 For all other pupils, school transport eligibility is assessed and confirmed by the School Transport Eligibility Team. Enquiries about school transport eligibility can be made using the School Transport Eligibility Team 'Contact us' form.
- 4.3 Pupils/students without an EHCP do not normally need to apply for free home to school transport. Eligibility will be checked when a school place is offered. Where you have either applied to a school directly, moved to a new home address, or if there has been a change in your circumstance, then you will need to contact the School Transport Eligibility Team to apply directly for assistance.

Review process

- 4.4 Provision of travel assistance at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement, and the requirement will be reviewed by the Council on a regular basis.
- 4.5 All pupils/students who receive travel assistance will be subject to review:
- at the end of Year 3 in which the pupil attains the age of 8 years;
 - at the end of Year 6;
 - following the successful completion of Independent Travel Training;
 - following a change in circumstances.
- 4.6 If during the course of any school year the Council determines that the provision of home to school transport does not need be provided any longer, it will stop at the end of the term in which the decision is made.

How to challenge a decision

Concerns about transport arrangements

- 4.7 Transport arrangements are based on the Council's assessment of the young person's individual transport needs and relate to how their transport is delivered.

Examples include the type of vehicle, number of passengers, use of a passenger assistant.

- 4.8 If you have a concern about your child's transport arrangements, you should contact Supported Transport in the first instance. If your concern is not resolved, view section How to make a Home to School Transport complaint.

Appeals about transport eligibility

- 4.9 Transport eligibility relates to whether the child or young person:
- has a legal right to have transport provided, or,
 - meets Oxfordshire Council's criteria for exceptional reasons to have transport provided
- 4.10 The Council has a 2 stage appeal process for young people and parents/carers to challenge a decision about transport eligibility.

Stage 1 – Review by a senior officer/officer panel

- 4.11 Parents/carers have 20 working days to request a review of our decision about home to school transport eligibility or provision. Parents/carers should write to us, detailing why the decision should be reviewed, giving details of any personal/family circumstances and include all supporting evidence to be considered, for example, evidence from a medical professional. In most cases the parent/carer will be asked to complete a form for further information. The parent/carer will receive an acknowledgement when we have received their written request for a review.
- 4.12 The parents/carers of pupils/students should write to the School Transport Eligibility Team using the School Transport Eligibility 'Contact us' form.
- 4.13 The decision will be reviewed by a senior officer or via the Transport Exceptions Panel. The Transport Exceptions Panel meet throughout the year and is made up of officers from Children's Services, the Support Transport team and Integrated SEND teams.
- 4.14 Within 20 working days of receipt of their written request including all supporting evidence, parents/carers will be advised in writing of the appeal decision.

Stage 2 - Review by an Independent Appeal Panel

- 4.15 Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of our Stage 1 appeal decision notification letter to write to ask for it to be reconsidered at Stage 2, which is a review by an Independent Appeal Panel. Details of where to send the Stage 2 request will be included on the Stage 1 appeal decision letter. Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents/carers Stage 2 request, an Independent Appeal Panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent/carer and officers involved in the case. The Independent Appeal Panel will give a detailed written notification of the outcome within 5 working days of the panel meeting.
- 4.16 The Independent Appeal Panel is made up of officers who have experience and knowledge of transport issues. These officers are independent of the original decision making process.

Stage 3 - Complaint to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 4.17 Parents/carers can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman only if they consider that:

- there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules
- if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled

4.27 For further information contact the School Transport Eligibility team.

Types of travel assistance

5.1 The travel assistance offered by the Council may take the form of:

- a public bus or train travel pass
- Independent Travel Training
- a Direct Travel Payment
- a Council arranged coach/bus service
- a Council arranged minibus
- a Council arranged shared taxi
- a Council arranged solo taxi, based on a travel needs assessment undertaken by the Council
- Passenger assistant support, based on a travel needs assessment undertaken by the Council
- Other alternative assistance based on needs/circumstances (case by case)

5.2 In order to determine the most appropriate travel option for pupils/students and the most cost effective means of travel assistance, the Council will use a range of criteria.

5.3 In exceptional circumstances, considered on a case by case basis, a Direct Travel Payment may be offered to the parent/carer of mainstream (non-SEND) pupils who are eligible for Council funded travel assistance, as an alternative to Council organised transport. However, in these instances Council funded and organised travel assistance is always available if this is the preference.

Direct Travel Payments and Mileage claims for pupils with SEND

Direct Travel Payments

5.4 The Families of pupils/students of all ages with SEND who are eligible for transport can apply for a Direct Travel Payment. This is awarded at the Council's discretion to support the pupil to travel from home to their school or educational setting.

5.5 A Direct Travel Payment is paid on the assumption that a pupil of statutory school age attends their school/educational setting 190 days a year (as determined by the government definition of a school year); or for students who are over 16 years old, that they attend a full-time programme of learning that is at least 540 guided learning (planned and funded) hours per year.

5.6 If a pupil or student receives a Direct Travel Payment part way through the school year, or attends school or learning on a part-time basis, the total payment is on a pro rata basis to account for the reduced amount of time that a parent/carer would be responsible for transport arrangements.

What is a Direct Travel Payment?

5.7 A Direct Travel Payment allows families to have the freedom and flexibility to make their own travel arrangements rather than travelling on Council organised transport. A Direct Travel Payment is awarded at the discretion of the Council. It is a sum of money to support the pupil or student to travel from home to their school

or educational setting. It is not a short-term alternative while a transport application is being processed.

- 5.8 A Direct Travel Payment could be used in many ways, including:
- to pay for fuel and/or running costs on a family vehicle that is used to transport a pupil or student to school/educational setting
 - lease a vehicle to use if the family don't have one
 - paying for a shared taxi with other pupils or students
 - paying for another person to take a sibling to school to free a parent/carer up to transport the pupil or student with SEND
 - buying travel passes for other children in the family so that they can travel to and from school, allowing the parent/carer to transport the pupil or student with SEND
 - paying for childcare for another child to allow a parent/carer to take the pupil or student with SEND to school/educational setting
 - working with the school to join up transport options with other parents (for example car share), encouraging a sense of community
 - A Direct Travel Payment allows families to have the freedom and flexibility to make their own travel arrangements rather than travelling on Council organised transport. A Direct Travel Payment is awarded at the discretion of the Council. It is a sum of money to support the pupil or student to travel from home to their school or educational setting. It is not a short-term alternative while a transport application is being processed.
- 5.9 Direct Travel Payments can be used for any non-Council provided transport service. This means for, example, a public transport bus pass, commercially-provided closed school bus pass or rail pass. A Direct Travel Payment cannot be used for Council organised transport services, for example the Council's Spare Seats scheme or to pay for Council arranged transport for an annual fee.
- 5.10 All eligible pupils or students for whom a Direct Travel Payment request is made will have their application assessed. We will take into consideration any cost to the Council of arranging the transport and will make a best value assessment based on the cost of council arranged transport as well as the specific needs of the pupil/student.

Conditions of use for Direct Travel Payments

- 5.11 If a parent/carer uses the Direct Travel Payment to employ someone (for example for childcare), then they will be responsible for complying with relevant rules regarding Tax and National Insurance, Employment Law, Insurance, Health and Safety or any other relevant rules or legislation in force at that time. In addition, parents/carers should make relevant and appropriate checks on whether employed staff have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates; and parents/carers should arrange or pay for those checks if directly employing an individual who doesn't have one.
- 5.12 Similarly, if a parent/carer uses the Direct Travel Payment to enter into contracts with organisations for example after school/extra-curricular clubs, or individuals, the parent/carer would be responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of those contracts. This may include payment arrangements or notice of cancellation.
- 5.13 All children with an Education, Health and Care Plan in the same family would be considered when agreeing the amount awarded via a Direct Travel Payment.

There may be some circumstances where it is appropriate for a family to have one child travelling on Post-16 SEND Council arranged transport (and paying an annual fee), while the other child has a Direct Travel Payment. Where this is an appropriate arrangement, this would be discussed with the family. Where a pupil or student attends more than one educational setting, their eligibility for a Direct Travel Payment to each setting will be assessed separately.

- 5.14 Regular and proportionate checks will be carried out to ensure that Direct Travel Payments are used appropriately, in accordance with the Council's Direct Travel Payment agreement with the parent/carer.
- 5.15 A Direct Travel Payment may be withdrawn in some circumstances or a reduction in the payment amounts made, including if:
- a pupil/student's attendance falls below 90% (this aligns with the government definition of "Persistent Absence" in school-age children which is an absence rate of 90% and below) - it would be recognised that attendance for some pupils may be affected by their medical needs, and the details and evidence of this will be taken into consideration in determining whether to withdraw, reduce or reclaim a Direct Travel Payment
 - a pupil/student regularly arrives late at their educational setting in the mornings or in an unfit state to learn
 - a Direct Travel Payment is not being used appropriately
 - it is not cost-effective for the Council to continue providing the Direct Travel Payment
 - it has been assessed that the pupil/student is no longer eligible for travel assistance
 - there is a change to national legislation and/or the Council's policies

Agreeing the amount of Direct Travel Payments

- 5.16 To determine the appropriate Direct Travel Payments amount, the following factors, alongside discussion with the family, will be considered:
- the special educational needs and disabilities of the pupil/student
 - the travel distance as measured by the Council
 - how the pupil/student might travel to their educational setting
 - the time the journey takes
 - whether the pupil/student is able to travel alone or if they need to be accompanied
 - the age of the pupil/student
 - whether any specialist equipment might be required

- 5.17 The standard amount that would be awarded with a Direct Travel Payment (DTP) based on the straight-line distance (using the Council's transport software system) between the pupils home and their main school and calculated based on the mileage band. It is expected the value of the DTP will support the cost of two return journeys per day of attendance at their educational setting (i.e. all four legs of the journeys). Any variation to the standard amount will be considered as part of the pupil/student's travel assessment. As a Direct Travel Payment can be used in many ways there is no expectation that the parent/carer will use the same route as measured by the Council.

- 5.18 Where a pupil receives a DTP partway through the academic year, the total payment will be offered on a pro rata basis to account for the reduced timescale

that the parent/carer will be responsible for transport arrangements.

- 5.19 Where a pupil is accessing education on a part-time basis, or they are making use of boarding facilities, their DTP payments will be offered on a pro rata basis to account for the reduction in journey frequency.
- 5.20 There might be circumstances where a Direct Travel Payment is not appropriate. This could include where the Council can arrange transport at a lower cost and would take into account the specific needs of the pupil/student. This will be assessed as part of the application process. The Council will make the final decision based on all the available information.
- 5.21 More detailed information on mileage banding and Direct Travel Payment values can be found on our [Direct Travel Payment webpage](#). Banding and values are reviewed annually and updated accordingly to ensure ongoing sustainability and value for money.

Mileage allowance for pupils/students with SEND

- 5.22 Direct Travel Payments have replaced mileage allowance. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where a mileage allowance could be offered. These are assessed and offered to parents/carers on a case-by-case basis.

Sustainable modes of travel

- 5.23 The Council has a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.
- 5.24 School Travel Plans identify, and address congestion, safety, health and environmental issues associated with car use on the school journey.
- 5.25 Schools may organise campaigns and projects, run initiatives and events and promote activities to reduce single occupancy car use for the journey.

Spare Seats Scheme

- 5.26 The Council contracts with companies to provide school bus transport for pupils who are eligible for Council funded transport. Spare seats on these vehicles may be sold where there are seats remaining after the allocation of seats to eligible pupils have been made. More information about the Council's Spare Seat Scheme can be found on our website.
- 5.27 Spare seats on Council provided transport are extremely limited. All purchased seats are subject to the seat being withdrawn with 5 working days' notice if it is required for a pupil who is eligible.
- 5.28 Where free travel is provided or a seat is purchased through the Spare Seat Scheme, travel is provided for attendance at the beginning and end of the school day only and not for extracurricular activities. This applies both to children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan and those who do not have such a plan.
- 5.29 On routes where spare seats are available and where applications are received by the advertised deadline, spare seats will be prioritised and allocated in the following order
- renewal applications

- looked After Children or former Looked After Children who have been adopted
 - pupils/students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
 - children of Armed Forces personnel - in line with our duty as part of the Oxfordshire Armed Forces Covenant
 - siblings of pupils/students allocated a place in priority 1 and siblings of eligible pupils travelling on the same route.
 - all others - on a first come first served basis from date of application
- 5.30 Detailed terms and conditions on the Spare Seats Scheme are published on our website.
- 5.31 The travel pass provided for this transport is the responsibility of the pupil/student. If lost or damaged, contact us online to request a replacement quoting a valid student reference number, name, address and date of birth. An administration charge will apply.

Passenger Assistants for pupils/students with SEND

- 5.32 Passenger assistants are responsible for the supervision of pupils/students to and from school. They will oversee the pupil's/student's conduct and safety in such a way that the driver is able to drive the vehicle safely. The role of the passenger assistant is to help the driver to ensure the pupil/student can access their transport provision in a safe and appropriate way.
- 5.33 The needs of each individual pupil/student will be assessed to determine whether they will require supervision by a passenger assistant. There is no minimum and maximum age that determines whether a passenger assistant is required.
- 5.34 Passenger assistants receive training to understand the needs of pupils/students placed in their care. All Council passenger assistants are subject to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- 5.35 Every effort will be made to ensure that the same passenger assistant and driver continue to transport a pupil/student. We understand disruption can be unsettling and will do our best to minimise changes. This may not always be possible and changes may need to be made, for example as a result of staff unavailability/staff turnover/contract renewals.
- 5.36 The passenger assistant is not responsible for the administration of routine medical aid/medication during the journey. If an eligible pupil/student has a medical condition which will require the administration of routine medical aid/medication during the journey, the Council will make suitable transport arrangements. Alternatively, the parent or carer could choose to receive a Direct Travel Payment and arrange their own transport.

Medical needs while onboard transport

- 5.37 The driver and/or any passenger assistant are not responsible for the administration of routine medical aid or medication during the journey. If a pupil/student has a medical condition which would require the administration of routine medical aid or medication during the journey, the Council will make suitable transport arrangements in line with the pupil's/student's travel needs assessment.

For example, the Council will make suitable arrangements for medical aid onboard transport where a child has complex medical needs requiring a medical professional to administer treatment or medication during the journey. The transport arrangements will be informed by supporting evidence from a senior medical professional e.g. a consultant. Alternatively, the parent/carer may choose to receive a Direct Travel Payment and make their own suitable transport arrangements.

- 5.38 In the event of a medical emergency while the pupil/student is onboard transport, the driver will stop the vehicle where it is safe to do so. The driver and/or passenger assistant will call 999 and while they wait for paramedic assistance, they will follow the instructions given to them by the emergency operator.
- 5.39 Parents/carers are responsible for advising the Council of any changes to their child's medical needs which may affect their transport arrangements.

Boarding & Alighting Arrangements

- 5.40 Appropriate transport arrangements will be made based on the age and needs of the child. Pick-up and drop-off times cannot be rescheduled to take into account other family commitments. Parents/carers who are unable to be home at the specified pick-up and drop-off times and location will have to make alternative arrangements.
- 5.41 Pupils/students receiving mainstream transport assistance are expected to walk up to 1 mile to their pick up point, with or without a parent/carer as appropriate. The pick up point for SEND pupils/students may be a short distance from their home address.
- 5.42 Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child is at the pick-up point near their home and for accompanying their child to/from this point where required. Where necessary, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring they are waiting to meet their child at the setting down point on the return (homeward) journey.

Passenger Travel Times

- 5.43 The Council will make every effort to ensure that travelling times to and from school are a maximum of:
- 45 minutes each way at primary school age;
 - 75 minutes each way at secondary school age
- 5.44 The distances involved mean that some pupils/students will have longer journeys. As return journeys are not constrained by specific times, homeward journeys may be quicker than advertised. Every effort is made to ensure that the waiting time on school premises, before and after school, and at pick up and set down points, does not exceed 20 minutes.
- 5.45 Parents/carers will receive a schedule of journey pick up times and will be notified if there are any changes.

Transport during the school / college day

- 5.46 Transport is only provided Monday to Friday. The only exception to this may be instances where weekend travel is required for pupils/students who are boarders

at residential schools. Transport is provided at the start and end of the normal school or college day. Transport will not be provided for journeys made during the school/college day.

- 5.47 Travel assistance will not be provided outside of the pre-agreed timetable. Examples of circumstances where travel assistance will not be provided are:
- to enable pupils/students to undertake work experience, work placements, apprenticeships or traineeships
 - to enable the pupil/student to attend any off-site provision arranged by the school/college
 - to transfer the pupil/student between the main school/college site and a satellite site during the normal school or college day
 - for induction or taster days
 - to take students home after extra-curricular activities or detentions
 - for students who are taken ill at school/college to enable them to return home
 - to enable students to attend medical or dental appointments
- 5.48 In the above circumstances the school, college or parent/carer, as appropriate, must make their own arrangements and pay for transport.

Transport for pupils/students with SEND transferring to a different school

- 5.49 Where an eligible pupil or student with SEND receives Council funded travel assistance, this is arranged from home to the designated school/setting only. When an eligible pupil or student with SEND transfers to a different school/setting, Council funded travel assistance will be withdrawn and the pupil's/student's eligibility for Council funded travel assistance from their home to the new school/setting will be assessed.
- 5.50 The parent/carer will need to make suitable travel arrangements while eligibility to the new school/setting is assessed. If the pupil/student is not eligible for Council funded travel assistance to the new school/setting, the parent/carer is responsible for their child's travel arrangements, including the cost of those arrangements.
- 5.51 If a pupil or student is confirmed as being eligible for travel assistance to their new school/setting, their travel needs may be reassessed. It can take up to 15 working days from the date that the travel needs assessment is completed to make Council funded travel assistance arrangements. During this time, the parent/carer is responsible for school attendance.

Safety of Transport Arrangements

- 5.52 The Council will monitor the routes and vehicles used to ensure that they are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk to anyone travelling on the vehicle or using the route to travel to school. Any vehicle or route found to be unsafe will be withdrawn and alternative arrangements made until normal service can be resumed. The Council reserves the right to make changes to routes and types of travel as necessary.
- 5.53 If you are concerned regarding the safety of a route, you can report this to Support Transport.

Identification of new routes

- 5.54 The Council reserves the right to review all routes in light of any changes to the Admissions Policies, the availability of walking routes and/or areas of new housing. If such changes mean that a pupil/student will no longer be eligible for Council funded travel assistance, then they will be given one half term's notice from the date of notification to the parent/carer before Council funded travel assistance is withdrawn.
- 5.55 Examples of change could include the building of new roads or housing developments, opening of new or repairs to existing footpaths, or changes to the safety of a route as determined by the Council.

Changes to school transport due to severe weather

- 5.56 If a school decides it needs to close early or not open because of severe weather, we will attempt to advise parents/carers of these changes, using the contact details we hold. This may not always be possible especially in the case of larger schools. The school will advise parents/carers of their procedures in the event of an emergency closure.
- 5.57 In severe weather conditions, the transport operator is the sole judge of whether to begin or complete a school transport journey, giving priority to the safety of the pupils/students on the vehicle.
- 5.58 Parents/carers must ensure that the pupil/student is appropriately dressed in case the journey to or from school is very slow or even halted in severe weather.
- 5.59 In the event that transport is not able to operate in the morning because of adverse weather conditions, but a parent/carer nevertheless decides to take the pupil/student to school, then they are expected to make their own arrangements to collect the pupil/student either at the end of the day or at the time of early closure.
- 5.60 Drivers are required to seek the safest route and may therefore make changes to the normal routes in order to stay on major roads or to avoid specific hazards. They are instructed that they must only set-down pupils/students at specific set-down points. Where transport is not able to access the predetermined set-down point due to severe weather, passengers may be required to leave the vehicle at an alternative safe location.
- 5.61 Where a road is too hazardous for school transport in the morning due to severe weather conditions, the transport operator is under no obligation to attempt the afternoon run. Parents/carers would be informed if this is the case so they can make alternative arrangements to collect their child from school.

Parents/Carers of pupils or students with SEND who are not at home

- 5.62 In the event that parents/carers of pupils/students with SEND are not at home when the pupil/student is returning from school, the driver or passenger assistant will notify the Council's Client Transport team to seek advice. Where possible, they will continue their route and make a return visit to the family home to check if the parent or carer has returned.
- 5.63 If the parent/carer has not returned by the end of the route, the driver or passenger assistant will contact the Supported Transport team to inform them of the situation. The Supported Transport team will then inform the Head Teacher and/or the

relevant Social Care team. Drivers and passenger assistants will receive further instructions following the advice given by the Head Teacher and may be required to travel back to school to leave the pupil/student with an appropriate adult. In all cases, a note will be left for the parent/carer containing details of who they should contact and the whereabouts of the pupil/student.

- 5.64 If an incident happens after 5pm Monday to Thursday, and after 4.30pm on a Friday, contact will be made with the Social Care Emergency Duty Team. All incidents will be recorded and considered by the Council.

Residential Schools

- 5.65 The frequency of transport for pupils/students in 52-week placements will be determined on a case by case basis.
- 5.66 The frequency of transport for pupils/students in a standard 40 week placement will depend on the number of weeks in the school calendar. The following numbers are for guidance only:
- termly Boarders: 2 journeys each term, 6 journeys per academic year
 - half Termly Boarders: 2 journeys each half term, 12 journeys per academic year
 - fortnightly Boarders: 2 journeys each fortnight, 38 journeys per academic year
 - weekly Boarders: 2 journeys each week, 76 journeys per academic year
- 5.67 Where a pupil/student is unable to make their journey to school due to sickness or family matters and the Council has been informed at least 24 hours before the journey is due to take place, the journey will be provided at an alternative date agreed between the Transport Officer and the parent/carer. A parent/carer will be expected to make their own transport arrangements if the Council is notified less than 24 hours before the journey is due to take place.

General Home to School Transport Guidance

Home address

- 6.1 Transport assistance is based upon the distance from the home address to school and will be verified using the information supplied by the parent/carer. Normal home address is defined as being the address at which the parent/carer ordinarily resides and with whom the child normally lives.
- 6.2 In situations of joint parental custody, the home address would normally be that at which the parent/carer, in receipt of the child benefit for that pupil, resides. If child benefit is not received, then the address at which the child is registered with a GP will be used. If this is not conclusive then we will use the address the child spends the greater proportion of the school week.

Educational placement for pupils/students with an EHCP

- 6.3 Parents/carers have the right to ask for a preferred school/setting to be named in their child's EHCP when the plan is first drawn up and when the Council amends the existing plan. Where naming the parent's preferred school/setting would be unsuitable for the pupil's/student's age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs, or incompatible with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of

resources, the Council must name a different school that would be appropriate for the pupil/student.

- 6.4 There is no automatic entitlement to travel assistance.
- 6.5 Where a parent/carer would prefer their child to attend a school that is further away from their home than the nearest school with available spaces that would be able to meet their child's needs, the Council will consider the cost of the two educational placements. Where relevant, this will include the estimated costs of Council funded travel assistance to each setting. If the Council determines naming the parent's preferred school would be incompatible with the efficient use of its resources, the Council may:
- name a different school that would be appropriate for the child's needs, which may be the nearer school, or
 - name the parent's preferred school on the condition that the parent arranges and provides all of the cost of the travel.
- 6.6 This is at the discretion of the Council based on efficient use of resources. The decision will be made in line with the Council's legal responsibilities in completing the EHCP.
- 6.7 The Council will record the decision to name the parent's/carer's preferred school on the condition that the parent/carer arranges and pays for their child's home to school travel. The Council may review the school named in the EHCP if the parent/carer is later unable or unwilling to arrange or pay for their child's travel.

Change of address and emergency contact details

- 6.8 Parents have an obligation to notify the council when they move house.
- 6.9 If an eligible pupil or student moves to an address further away from the school such that their current school is no longer the nearest suitable school, Council funded travel assistance will be withdrawn from the moving date.
- 6.10 If the parents/carer apply for and are allocated a place at their nearest suitable school, the pupil's/student's eligibility for Council funded travel assistance will be reassessed.
- 6.11 If a pupil or student is confirmed as being eligible for travel assistance from their new home address to their nearest suitable school, it can take up to 15 working days to organise the transport arrangements. During this time, the parent/carer is responsible for ensuring school attendance.
- 6.12 Parents/carers must provide the council with up to date emergency contact numbers and email addresses. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to provide updated information where there are changes.

Inaccurate Applications

- 6.13 The Council reserves the right to reclaim the cost of any transport provided, if it is found that any incorrect information has been submitted in order to gain travel assistance.

Students living outside of Oxfordshire

- 6.14 Students who live outside of Oxfordshire attending a school in Oxfordshire should apply to their own Local Authority for assistance with transport.

Grounds of religion or belief

- 6.15 There is no eligibility for transport assistance for pupils on the grounds of religion or belief, except in relation to low income families.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

- 6.16 Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out on all drivers and passenger assistants prior to them being employed on Home to School Transport contracts. Following a satisfactory check and appropriate safeguarding training and other relevant training, an identity badge will be issued to drivers and passenger assistants by the Council which is worn at all times as proof of approval to undertake the work. If a driver or passenger assistant cannot produce their badge, you should notify the Supported Transport immediately and not let your child travel in the vehicle.
- 6.17 If you have any concerns regarding the behaviour of drivers or passenger assistants, report this immediately to Supported Transport.

Data Protection

- 6.18 The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) regulates the way we use your personal information.
- 6.19 You provide this information when you seek services from or come into contact with us. The Act provides a legal framework to the way we handle this data. Data Protection compliance is not an activity that is done once, and we regularly review our compliance.
- 6.20 The Council employs a Data Protection Officer. Our data protection policy can be found here on the Council's website.

Expected level of behaviour for all pupils/students

- 6.21 We aim to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils/students travelling on Home to School Transport. All pupils/students using Council organised transport are expected to meet standards of behaviour that will ensure their own safety and that of other passengers. The Council will work in partnership with schools and other educational settings to promote appropriate standards of behaviour and pupils/students being transported will be expected to follow the same behaviour codes as they do when in school or other educational settings. Behaviour that does not meet our standards will be monitored and appropriate action taken.
- 6.22 When behaviour first becomes an issue dialogue with the parents/carers and the school/educational setting will begin, with a view to resolving issues prior to any further action being taken. If the issues are not resolved, parents/carers will be notified when transport will be suspended or withdrawn, giving 5 working days' notice of the suspension/exclusion. This will take the form of a written warning letter, suspension or withdrawal letter. If an incident is of a serious nature the Council reserves the right to withdraw the pupil/student from transport immediately

to ensure the safety of the pupil/student and others. In these instances, the parent/carer will be notified.

- 6.23 The withdrawal or suspension of transport for a set period would be a matter of last resort. The length of the suspension or withdrawal from home to school transport will be dependent upon the seriousness of the incident.
- 6.24 The decision to suspend or withdraw transport for eligible pupils/students will take into account any special educational needs and disabilities the pupil/student may have that impact on their presenting behaviour. Where this is the case, the Council will work with parents/carers and the pupil/student with SEND (where they have capacity) to identify alternative solutions to safely transport them to their school/educational setting. As this is an exceptional circumstance, if an immediate solution cannot be identified a Direct Travel Payment may be offered on a temporary basis.
- 6.25 Parents/carers are responsible for transporting their own children during any period of suspension or exclusion from transport due to inappropriate behaviour that is unrelated to any special educational needs and disabilities. No refunds for transport provided under the Spare Seat Scheme will be made during this period.
- 6.26 Behaviour that falls below the required standard includes that which is likely to significantly offend or endanger others, including, but not limited to:
- serious damage to the vehicle by the pupil/student
 - actions which may constitute a health and safety risk to themselves or others
 - assaults on others
 - verbal, written or online abuse of other people including but not limited to swearing, taunting, racist, sexist, transphobic or homophobic comments, threatening behaviour
 - incitement of others to engage in misbehaviour
 - making repeated malicious false allegations of mistreatment requiring investigation
 - serious misuse of a travel pass including allowing others to use their travel pass
 - failure to comply with the reasonable instructions of the driver, passenger assistant, Council officer, or authorised member of school / establishment staff
- 6.27 During the period of suspension or withdrawal, it is expected that parents/carers take steps to address the behaviour. The parent/carer, pupil/student (where reasonable) and school/educational setting will be consulted on arrangements for the return to transport.
- 6.28 Parents/carers who wish to appeal a decision taken to suspend or withdraw transport should follow the process outlined in the suspension or withdrawal notification letter. This will enable a review of the case.

How to make a Home to School Transport complaint

- 6.29 Any pupil, parent or carer wishing to make a complaint relating to Home to School Transport arrangements should complete the School Transport Eligibility Contact

Us Form.

6.30 Formal complaints should be made through our Feedback and Complaints Procedure.

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Appendix 1

Schools that have opted out of the In-Year Admissions Scheme

This information was correct at the time this policy was published. An up-to-date list is available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/apply-school-place/transferring-or-moving-school/before-you-start

All-through schools with an age-range of 4 to 18 years. The normal point of entry to these schools is Reception year group.

- Heyford Park School
heyfordparkschool.org/
01869 232203

Primary schools with an age range of 4 to 11 years. The normal point of entry to these schools is Reception year group.

- Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp Church of England Primary School
www.ashburyprimary.org.uk/default.asp
01793 710259
- Bampton Church of England Primary School
www.bamptonprimaryschool.org.uk/
01993 850371
- The Blake Church of England Primary School, Witney
www.blake.oxon.sch.uk/website
01993 702840
- Brize Norton Primary School
www.brizeprimary.org/
01993 842488
- Dr South's Church of England Primary School, Islip
dr-souths.co.uk/
01865 372323
- Goring Church of England Primary School
www.goring.oxon.sch.uk/
01491 872289
- John Henry Newman Academy
www.jhnacademy.co.uk/website
01865 772495
- Kidmore End Church of England Primary School
moodle.kidmore-end.co.uk/
0118 357 3149
- North Leigh Church of England Primary School
www.northleighprimaryschool.org.uk/
01993 881525
- Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Cowley
ourladyscowley.co.uk/
01865 779176
- St Christopher's Church of England Primary School, Langford
www.st-christophers.oxon.sch.uk/
01367 860318

- St Christopher's Church of England Primary School, Oxford
www.st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk/
01865 779772
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame
www.st-josephs.oxon.sch.uk/
01844 214278
- St Mary & St John Church of England Primary School, Oxford
www.ssmj.oxon.sch.uk
01865 245768
- St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Alvescot
www.stpeters.oxon.sch.uk/
01993 842535
- Tyndale Community Primary School, Oxford
www.tyndalecommunityschool.co.uk/
01865 454000

Secondary schools with an age range of 11 to 18 years. The normal point of entry to these schools is Year 7.

- Wykham Park Academy, Banbury
wykhampark-aspirations.org/
01295 251451

Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges with an age range of 14 to 18 years. The normal point of entry to these schools is Year 10.

- Bicester Technology Studio
www.bicestertechstudio.org.uk/
01869 203012
- Futures Institute Banbury
www.futuresbanbury.org/
01295 257942
- UTC Oxfordshire, Didcot
www.utcoxfordshire.org.uk/
01235 391587

Appendix 2

Split Villages

Transport will be provided to the designated area school from all addresses in the contiguous built-up area of the village because more than 20% of the addresses are closest to the designated area school. Transport will also be provided from individual addresses to the relevant nearest school (if different) where appropriate.

Village *	Nearest Schools	Designated Area School
Adderbury/Twyford	Blessed George Napier Catholic School The Warriner School	The Warriner School
Ascott-under-Wychwood	Burford School Chipping Norton School	Burford School
Dry Sandford	Fitzharrys School Larkmead School	Fitzharrys School
Duns Tew	Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School Middle Barton School	Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School
Freeland	Bartholomew School Wood Green School	Bartholomew School
Great Haseley	Lord Williams's School Wheatley Park School	Wheatley Park School
Kirtlington	Gosford Hill School Heyford Park Free School The Marlborough CE School	The Marlborough CE School
Long Hanborough	Bartholomew School The Marlborough CE School Wood Green School	Bartholomew School
Old Boars Hill	Fitzharrys School Matthew Arnold School	Fitzharrys School
South Hinksey	Matthew Arnold School St Gregory the Great Catholic School	Matthew Arnold School
Tadmarton	Bloxham CE Primary School Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School	Sibford Gower Primary School
Twyford/Adderbury	Blessed George Napier Catholic School The Warriner School	The Warriner School
Yatscombe Copse	Fitzharrys School St Gregory the Great Catholic School	Fitzharrys School

* Oxfordshire County Council considers the 'village' to be the contiguous built-up area.

An address within the Civil Parish but outside the contiguous built-up area of the village does not qualify for free travel under the 'split-village' rule.

Similarly, where the village name forms part of the postal address, but the property is outside the contiguous built-up area of the village, free transport will not be provided under the 'split-village' rule.

School Transport Code of Conduct

The safety and welfare of students travelling on home to school transport is of paramount importance and therefore it is expected that all parties will abide by the School Transport Code of Conduct at all times. Failure to do so could result in home to school transport being withdrawn from a student or a contract with a Service Provider being terminated.

Any incident reported to Oxfordshire County Council involving school transport and the behaviour of students using school transport will be taken seriously and will be investigated by Quality Monitoring and some cases may be referred to Schools Safeguarding Transport and if necessary the School or Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) before any action is taken. Where there is a consistent concern or refusal to comply with the School Transport Code of Conduct and a student is excluded from travelling, it will then be the responsibility of parents or carers to ensure that there is a continued attendance at school.

Responsibilities of Oxfordshire County Council

- To provide free home to school transport by the most cost-efficient means for students living in Oxfordshire, who qualify for free travel under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy (Please refer to the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for further information)
- Provide a safe journey on all home to school transport contracts between the designated pick up point and the school site, and vice versa
- Ensure that the Service Provider provides a suitable vehicle and that all drivers and vehicles are suitably licenced and insured for the conveyance of students. Agree all routes and schedules with the Service Provider
- Ensure all Drivers and Passenger Assistants have an enhanced DBS check and Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Training
- Ensure all Drivers and Passenger Assistants are issued with an OCC Identification Badge
- Provide route schedule for mainstream primary and secondary routes
- Provide a pass for students who travel on vehicles of 20 seats and above
- Monitor contracts with Service Providers to ensure contract and law compliance
- Carry out risk assessments where appropriate to establish suitability of provision and routes
- To ensure there is a robust complaints procedure in place
- Investigate all complaints, liaising with schools and Service Providers, where necessary, and respond to all parties advising of the outcome
- Ensure that all confidential information is handled in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Responsibilities of the Service Provider

- To provide students safe travel between their designated collection point and the school site, and vice versa ensuring all safeguarding protocols are followed
- To provide vehicles and drivers that meet all legal and contractual requirements
- To have appropriate employers' liability, public liability and vehicle insurance cover
- Ensure they hold an appropriate operator's or local authority licence where applicable
- Comply with all terms and conditions of contract
- Ensure all Drivers and Passenger Assistants hold a valid Oxfordshire County Council Identification Badge

- Ensure that all Drivers are issued with the most up to date route and schedule
- Ensure that no changes are made to the schedule without approval from the Supported Transport Service. This includes location of designated pick up and drop off points.
- Immediately inform Oxfordshire County Council where a serious incidence has occurred
- To notify Oxfordshire County Council and the school of any incidents of unacceptable student behaviour as soon as possible
- Ensure Drivers and Passenger Assistants conveying students with Special Educational Needs have sight of students Risk Assessment Passenger Passport
- Ensure that all confidential information is handled in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Responsibilities of the Driver and Passenger Assistant

- Always be presentable and courteous
- Adhere to the Taxi Driver, Passenger Assistant and Coach Driver Code of Conduct
- To be in possession of an appropriate license to drive the vehicle being used to convey students and be able to produce it on demand
- Hold a valid Oxfordshire County Council Identification Badge and be able to produce this when requested
- To undertake Oxfordshire County Council Safeguarding and Disability Awareness Training
- Follow the route and schedule as agreed and not deviate from this without prior authorisation, unless exceptional circumstances (e.g. a road closure) make a deviation necessary – they should notify their controller in these circumstances so that the school and/or parents and carers may be notified of any delay
- Never leave a designated collection point earlier than the published time
- Do not pick-up or drop-off at any point other than a designated stop
- Check passes issued to students on vehicles over 20 seats, on a regular basis and only transport those students who can produce a valid pass for the vehicle that they are attempting to board
- In the event of a vehicle breakdown, maintain a safe environment for all passengers and contact their controller
- Must not sell or supply goods of any kind to students or stop en route for students to obtain goods of any kind
- To be responsible for the safety of the students for the entire duration of their journey
- If there is an emergency on board and it is safe to do so, stop the vehicle and follow protocols. If appropriate consult with the student's Passenger Passport and where necessary, ring 999. If it is not safe to stop, or it would be safe to continue, once at the nearest safe destination (home or school) inform their controller who will then inform the Supported Transport Service, school and parents
- Never try to resolve any acts of misconduct (unless a student's behaviour presents a danger to the vehicle or other students on board) but report the names of the miscreants to the school at the earliest opportunity
- Unless there are genuine concerns for the safety of the students on board the vehicle, the vehicle should not be stopped. If stopped, it must be in safe place and for as short a period of time as possible and the school and Service Provider must be notified of such a break to the journey
- Serious incidents or accidents involving the safety of children, the vehicle or other road users must be reported immediately to the Service Provider who will be responsible for notifying Oxfordshire County Council's Supported Transport Service.
- Must not provide food, sweets or drinks to students in their care
- No student should be put off any vehicle mid-journey
- Seek immediate advice from the Service Provider where a serious incident occurs

- Report any incident to their management as soon as it happens
- Where a student travels in a wheelchair, anchor and secure the webbing on the chair on all journeys
- If conveying a student with Special Educational Needs will ensure they have read the Risk Assessment Passenger Passport
- Ensure when transporting a primary aged student or student with Special Educational Needs they are handed over to an appropriate responsible adult before leaving designated stop (school, home or bus stop)
- Can refuse to transport a student whose behaviour would put the driver, passengers and any other road user in danger for the immediate short term and until further guidance has been received from Supported Transport Service
- If the student's behaviour on the vehicle presents a danger to themselves or others, transport may be withdrawn - we will work extensively with the parent/carer and school, college or unit before withdrawing transport. The parent/carer has a responsibility to manage the student's behaviour and if transport is withdrawn, it does not excuse the student from attending their school, college or unit
- The Driver and Passenger Assistant's duty of care does not do not end until the last student has been discharged. On no account must this duty be delegated to any other person

Drivers and Passenger Assistants are responsible for ensuring that a seat belt or safety harness is provided for passengers and that it has been secured. However, they are not responsible for securing seatbelts or harnesses. Neither are they responsible for escorting students from the vehicle into home or into school premises. Drivers are not permitted to lift or assist by manually handling passengers in or out of vehicles.

Responsibilities of the School

The Department for Education expects schools to promote appropriate standards of behaviour by students on their journey to and from school through rewarding positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behaviour. The Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 empowers headteachers to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when students are not under the legal control of the school, but when it is reasonable to do so. In the Department for Education's view, this would include behaviour on school transport, or otherwise on the route to and from school, whether or not the students are in school uniform. A school cannot exclude a student from transport provided by Oxfordshire County Council.

- To be responsible for the behaviour of students from the start to end of their home to school transport journey, both morning and afternoon.
- To have a zero-tolerance policy in relation to inappropriate behaviour on home to school transport
- Identify a lead member of staff to have responsibility for home to school transport and provide contact details for this person. This person will act as the main point of contact for reporting incidents of misconduct and will be responsible for notifying Oxfordshire County Council's Supported Transport Service Quality Monitoring Team of such incidents
- To be the initial point of contact for complaints about student misconduct or anti-social behaviour on all school transport.
- Keep an up to date record of all incidents, misconduct and anti-social behaviour on home to school transport
- Treat seriously any notification of an incident that is reported on home to school transport and notify the Supported Transport Service Quality Monitoring Team

- To work with students, parents and carers to ensure that any unacceptable behaviour issues either on the home to school transport journey or at the designated stop are addressed and take action to issue appropriate sanction
- Only issue temporary passes for travel on transport provided by Oxfordshire County Council where a current bus pass has been lost, stolen or forgotten. However, a temporary bus pass should not be issued to a student who does not already have entitlement to travel
- School staff are responsible for assisting students onto and off of school transport

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

- To support the school and the Service Provider by ensuring that the Student Code of Conduct has been read and is followed at all times
- Ensure that your child is at the boarding point five minutes before transport is due and that young children are accompanied until the transport has departed
- Ensure that your child arrives at the designated stop safely in the morning and reaches home safely from the designated stop in the afternoon.
- Where a student is of primary school age or has Special Educational Needs or a disability and they hold an EHCP, they will need to be met at the designated stop or home address by a responsible adult. Failure for a responsible adult being present could result in a child being returned to the school or the nearest police station.
- Teach your child, where they do not need to be accompanied to and from the designated stop, the safest walking route between home and the designated stop, including the safest crossing points on their route
- Teach your child to think about their own and others' safety, while walking to and from the designated stop and on the transport
- Teach your child the importance of waiting for the transport in an orderly, courteous and calm manner and ensure that they know what to do if the transport does not arrive within 15 minutes of the scheduled time, or if access to the transport is refused
- Ensure that any travel pass is carried at all times (drivers and Service Providers will make necessary checks that students are permitted to travel and have the right to refuse to carry a student without a pass)
- Prior to the start of transport ensure your child has read the No Pass No Travel Guidance, where a pass has been issued
- Ensure any Special Educational Needs Risk Assessment Passenger Passports are carried at all times
- Where a student's behaviour in a vehicle presents a danger to themselves or to others, home to school transport may be withdrawn. However, where a student's behaviour in a vehicle is due to their Special Educational Needs or disability, the Supported Transport Service will work extensively with parents, carers, school or college before withdrawing transport in these cases
- If transport is withdrawn it is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure their child's continued attendance at school
- Remind your child that they need to wear any seatbelt or harness that is provided at all times
- For students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, ensure that seat belts and harnesses are fastened and secured before the vehicle pulling away
- Ensure your child is aware that in the event the vehicle has to make an unscheduled stop, that they must follow the driver's instructions. If the driver's instruction is not followed, then this is at the student's own risk
- Cooperate with the school, Service Provider and Oxfordshire County Council if your child exhibits bad behaviour on home to school transport

- Ensure that any incidents or concerns are reported to Oxfordshire County Council and the school as soon as possible. You should not contact the Service Provider directly unless you have been asked to do so
- Ensure that the school and Oxfordshire County Council School Transport Eligibility are advised of any change in the students' personal circumstances or family circumstances which may have an impact on eligibility for free home to school travel e.g. change of address, no longer eligible for free school meals. Where there has been a change of address, evidence of the new address will be required before any new travel arrangements can be approved.
- Parents and carers are not permitted to board the vehicle
- Parents and carers should not act in a threatening or abusive way towards the driver, passenger assistant or any other students either on or around the vehicle. Any concerns should be reported to the school and or the Supported Transport Service. If there are any additional adults or children present with you at the stop when the school transport arrives, you are responsible for ensuring that they also adhere to the rules.

It is important that students should behave in an appropriate manner towards any Driver, Passenger Assistant, other students or members of staff at Oxfordshire County Council. All students who use home to school transport are expected to abide by the School Transport Code of Conduct and any student who fails to abide by this when using any transport provided by Oxfordshire County Council may be excluded from using the transport in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy.

If your child is excluded from home to school transport for a fixed-term or permanently, you will be responsible for ensuring that they continue to attend school. Alternative travel arrangements will not be put in place.

If your child is found to be responsible for bad behaviour on home to school transport, which does not result in them being excluded, it is your responsibility to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to modify that behaviour and to stress to your child the importance of behaving in an appropriate manner while travelling on home to school transport. It is also your financial responsibility to meet the costs for repair or replacement of equipment or any property intentionally damaged as a result of your child's actions.

Oxfordshire County Council has a determined procedure for dealing with cases of poor behaviour reported to us and will write to you to warn you that your child is at risk of being excluded from home to school transport.

If your child has been excluded from travelling under the School Travel Code of Conduct and you feel that it has been applied unfairly or incorrectly, you can lodge an appeal by emailing schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Responsibilities of the Student

- To ensure they abide by the School Transport Code of Conduct at all times
- To act responsibly while travelling to and from the designated stop and while travelling to and from school on home to school transport
- To behave well at all times and not to act in a way that may compromise the safety of others
- Show respect at all times for the driver, Passenger Assistants and all other passengers
- Ensure that they follow the instructions of the driver or Passenger Assistants at all times
- To report any concerns about safety to the named member of staff at school

Before the journey to school

- Arrive at the designated stop 5 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time
- Wait at the designated stop for 15 minutes past the scheduled pick-up time before notifying Supported Transport Service and await advice. If transport still has not arrived, follow the procedure you have agreed with your parent or carer (for example go home to organise alternative transport) and notify your parent/carer and school.
- Wait in an orderly, courteous and calm manner
- Keep away from the kerb and well clear of other traffic
- Only board the home to school transport you have been allocated when it is stationary
- Always carry your pass (if a pass has been issued), and show it to the driver when boarding the vehicle – see No Pass No Travel Guidance

During the school journey

- Find a seat quickly and remain seated for the whole journey
- If provided, seatbelts and harnesses must be worn
- Only occupy one seat per passenger
- Never distract the driver or be discourteous
- Do not be abusive or shout at the driver, other students or other passengers in the vehicle. Bad language and unruly behaviour will not be tolerated
- Treat all on board with care and respect and do not bully any other students. Any form of bullying will not be tolerated
- Follow any instructions given by the driver or Passenger Assistant quickly and without hesitation
- Do not vandalise the vehicle or other people's property
- Do not smoke, use electronic cigarettes, drink alcohol or consume illegal substances
- Do not carry an offensive weapon, real or replica
- Do not throw objects from or within the vehicle
- Do not eat or drink while on the vehicle or leave litter
- Keep the aisle clear. Bags go under the seat, on the parcel shelf or on your lap. Make sure you have all your belongings as you leave the vehicle
- Do not open the emergency door unless the driver instructs you to, or if there is a genuine emergency

At the end of the school journey

- Ensure all of your belongings are taken with you when you exit the vehicle
- Stand back from the road when the vehicle moves off
- If you need to cross a road, only do so once the vehicle has moved off and the road is clear in both directions

It is important to understand that bad behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated and may lead to students being excluded from home to school transport. Where students are excluded this does not excuse them from attending school and parents and carers will be responsible for the cost and provision of transport during this time. Where students fail to attend school, they may be referred to the County Attendance Team.

Any criminal offences that result in a student being excluded may also be reported to the police.

Oxfordshire County Council may choose to refuse Spare Seat Scheme applications from students who have been excluded multiple times for disobeying the School Transport Code of Conduct.

Complaints and Concerns

If at any time, you wish to report an incident involving the behaviour of an adult or student in connection with school transport you should email Quality Monitoring & Contract Compliance at QMCC@Oxfordshire.gov.uk.

All complaints regarding passenger or parent behaviour received by Oxfordshire County Council will be investigated and, if necessary, they will be passed for further investigation to the Transport Safeguarding Officer, the School, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or the Police.

'No Pass No Travel' Guidance for Parents, Carers and Students

Where a pass has been issued it MUST be shown in order to travel. This is necessary to ensure everyone has a seat and can travel safely and in reasonable comfort.

- If a student who is entitled to travel is unable to produce a bus pass because they have forgotten to carry it, or the pass has been lost or stolen, a temporary pass can be obtained from the school.
- Temporary passes are valid for 10 days to enable a replacement pass to be arranged. If a valid replacement pass cannot be produced after 10 days, the driver can refuse travel.
- If a pass has been lost or stolen a replacement can be purchased. Further information can be found at:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/travelling-school/information-existing-users-travel-assistance/replacement-school-bus-pass>
- Parents or carers who take students to a stop to meet the vehicle are advised to either ensure that the student is carrying a valid pass or wait with them until the vehicle arrives and advise the driver accordingly.
- Out of date passes will be confiscated.
- If the vehicle has not arrived 15 minutes past its normal pick up time, students should call the number on the back of their pass.
- Transport is arranged by Oxfordshire County Council through its Supported Transport Service.
- Queries regarding Mainstream School Transport should be sent to mainstream.schooltransport@oxfordshire.gov.uk and for SEND School Transport to ee-specialeducationalneedsITU@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- If your enquiry is urgent and you need to speak to us by phone you can contact Mainstream School Transport on 01865 323500 and SEND School Transport on 01865 323795
- If transport is no longer required, please return the pass to Supported Transport Service, PO Box 867, Oxford, OX1 9NR. This will enable us to allocate the place to another student.

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**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

(Draft) Post 16 Transport Policy Statement – Academic Year 2025-26

Transport policy statement for young people aged 16–18 in further education, those continuing learners who are aged 19 and those young people aged 19- 24 (inclusive) with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities do not have a legal responsibility to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support, but they do have a legal duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement covering those young people of sixth form age receiving education or training. However, they are able to agree a policy of providing transport assistance in specific circumstances.
- 1.2 Nevertheless, in most circumstances young people accessing Post 16 education will make their own travel arrangements to access their chosen school or college. They may walk, cycle, use public transport or the council's Spare Seat Scheme to travel to school or college.
- 1.3 For most young people, any travel costs incurred will be their responsibility, or that of their parent or parents.
- 1.4 This policy statement details the transport provision and financial assistance with transport that the council believes are necessary for Oxfordshire residents of sixth form age who are receiving education or training. Therefore, this statement covers those young people in Oxfordshire aged 16 to 18 and those continuing learners who started their course before their 19th birthday.
- 1.5 Travel assistance may also be made available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 19 up until they reach the age of 25 years. However, travel assistance for this age group involves submitting a request for a Care Assessment. These assessments are the responsibility of Adult Social Care, not the Transport Eligibility Team.
- 1.6 Travel assistance will normally only be considered if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or if the student has a disability which means he/she requires transport arrangements to be provided and the establishment attended is **the nearest suitable placement to the student's main address**.
- 1.7 In all cases, the student, or their parent, will need to apply for transport assistance using Oxfordshire's online system and provide evidence that without transport assistance the student will be unable to attend the educational placement. Therefore, when assessing whether to provide transport assistance we consider:
 - whether transport assistance is being requested to attend the nearest suitable school or college than can meet that student's special needs;
 - whether there is a closer educational provision which is suitable and can meet a student's special educational needs
 - whether there is evidence that a student will otherwise be unable to attend Post 16 education or training
 - whether distance thresholds have been met
 - any supporting evidence from professionals involved with the student and their family;
 - the best use of the county council's resources

2. Who Is Support Available For?

- 2.1 Where it is not possible to access Post 16 education, for example the nearest school

or college is over 3 miles from the student's home, there is no public transport service, and there is no private transport available, the council may be able to assist with travel. In these circumstances, the student or parents should contact School Transport Eligibility at:

SchoolTransportEligibility@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

- 2.2 Those young people beyond statutory school age who are aged 16 to 19 and have learning difficulties and/or disabilities may receive assisted travel when they attend the **nearest suitable educational placement** to their home address that has an available place and one of the following applies:
- the distance from their home to the educational placement is over 3 miles; or,
 - the distance from their home to the educational placement is less than 3 miles but there is no available walking route; or,
 - it would not be reasonable to expect the young person to walk to the educational placement because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their learning difficulty and/or disability, or because of a temporary or long-term medical condition (evidence is required from a GP or Consultant).
- 2.5 The nearest suitable educational placement is one at which the student's needs can be met. For those with EHCPs, this will be established by the School Transport Eligibility Team from the responses to the formal consultations with schools and colleges undertaken by the SEN Team. If a school or college responds to a consultation stating that need can be met, whether or not it gives reasoning that will establish that it is a suitable establishment. Preference for a particular course or establishment is not relevant to the decision on whether a school or college is considered to be the nearest suitable school or college. In all other cases, the decision of the School Transport Eligibility Team as to suitability of a placement is final and is not open to review.
- 2.6 If a young person attends an educational placement where there is more than one site, travel assistance will only be provided to the nearest of those sites at which the young person's needs can be met. The council will not provide assisted travel between sites. Any dispute over whether the provision at a particular site "meets need" will be determined by confirmation from the School or College as to whether it can meet need at that particular site.
- 2.7 Those who wish to study a course at an alternative educational placement to the nearest one that can meet their needs, will be responsible for the full cost and provision of any travel arrangements that will be required for them to attend.
- 2.8 The transport needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed individually. Therefore, if travel assistance is approved the travel arrangements will be made according to the student's needs, for example, if travel assistance has been agreed and the student is in a residential placement, travel arrangements would be made on a weekly or termly basis.
- 2.8 An officer within the School Transport Eligibility Team is responsible for the assessment of eligibility for travel assistance.
- 2.9 There is a distance related charge for all students with an EHCP who receive travel assistance for taxi transport or travel by rail or public bus service. This is payable

termly in advance of travel and this charge may not be waived by a Stage 1 Review or a Stage 2 Transport Appeal. The charges are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Post 16 Distance Related Charge for Travel by Taxi, Rail or Public Bus Service or other travel provision (subject to change)

Charge	2025/26
Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£182.00 per term (£546.00 per annum)
More than 3 miles from home to school/college	£338.64 per term (£1015.92 per annum)

NB No decision has yet been taken on whether to increase the distance related charge for 2025/26

2.10 Independent travel training for students who face difficulties with transport may be provided on a one-to-one basis depending on the level of need and the availability of trainers. There is no charge for this service.

3. Oxfordshire County Council Spare Seat Scheme for those aged 16-19

3.1 If a young person does not qualify for travel assistance, it may be possible to purchase a seat on home to school transport through the Spare Seat Scheme.

3.2 It may be the case that there is already transport arranged by Oxfordshire County Council from where a student lives for young people who are eligible for free travel to their school or college, and if there is space in the vehicle it may be possible to purchase a seat.

3.3 This is a paid service that is only available on existing transport and where there would be no additional cost for Oxfordshire County Council to add the young person to the journey

3.4 If a student would like to be considered for any place available under the Spare Seat Scheme, they need to submit an application using the following link:

[Paid home to school travel assistance \(spare seats scheme\) | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

3.5 There is no guarantee that a seat will be available or will continue to be available for the duration of the period of study for a young person. It is important that students consider how they may travel to school or college if this service is not available.

3.6 Seats on coaches provided for home-to-school transport are made available on payment of a distance related charge. The charges for the 2025/26 academic year are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Post-16 Charges for the Spare Seat Scheme

Spare Seats Scheme Charge	2025/26
Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£182.00 per term (£546.00 per annum)
More than 3 miles from home to school/college	£338.64 per term (£1015.92 per annum)

NB No decision has yet been taken on whether to increase the distance related charge for 2025/26

3.7 The charge will depend on the distance from a student's home to their school or college. The distance from home to school or college will be measured along the shortest available route on Oxfordshire County Council's Geographic Information System.

3.8 If there are more requests to pay for seats on a route than there are seats available, they will be allocated in the descending order of priority shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Priority for Spare Seat Scheme

Priority	Category
1	Those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan naming the school
2	Looked After Children
3	Years 12 and 13 (if there is no available service bus route)
4	Those in receipt of Free School Meals or whose parent or carer is in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
5	Those who travelled on the route the previous term
6	By year group, in ascending order of priority from Reception to Year 11 (or to Year 13 if there is an available service bus route)

** Where there are more applicants than places in any of the above categories, priority will be given to those living closest to the destination school (measured using the shortest available route on Oxfordshire County Council's Geographic Information System)*

4. 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

4.1 To help with funding school and colleges have a fund provided by the government called the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund which is available for students in Post 16 Education and can be used toward the cost of travelling to and from school or college.

4.2 There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups;
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

4.3 Further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund is available on Gov.UK web pages at the following link [16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/topics/16-to-19-bursary-fund)

4.4 16-19 Bursary funds are managed by schools and colleges. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen institution to make an application.

4.5 Students aged under the age of 19 enrolled on courses for higher education qualifications are not eligible for support.

5. Support for students aged 19-25 (Adult Duty) – Continuing with a first course of study begun before the 19th birthday

5.1 The Transport and Eligibility Team will consider applications for travel assistance made by, or on behalf of, those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged between 19 and 24 years of age (inclusive) if they are continuing with a first course of study begun before their 19th birthday. An assessment will be made taking account of the specific circumstances of the applicant and the case for assistance with travel. Once a student is starting a course of study after their 19th birthday any requests for travel assistance will need to be made to Adult Social Services through an application for a Care Assessment.

5.2 If travel assistance is agreed, it will continue until the end of the agreed course of study, or until the end of the academic year in which the student's 25th birthday occurs, whichever is the sooner. However, travel assistance will be reviewed throughout the course and independent travel will be encouraged.

5.3 More information about Oxfordshire County Council's Local Offer for young people attending education or training can be found here:

[Education and employment for young people | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Further helpful information is contained in the following Moving into Adulthood online Handbook at:

[OxFSN | Moving Into Adulthood](#)

6. Young parents / Care to Learn

6.1 If a student is a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for childcare and related travel costs, up to £160 per child per week, while they are learning. Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- childcare, including deposit and registration fees.
- a childcare 'taster' session (up to 5 days).
- keeping a childcare place over the summer holidays.
- taking the student's child to the childcare provider.

6.2 More detailed information on this and how to apply can be found here:

[Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

7. Types of travel assistance

7.1 Where assistance from the Council is necessary, the Council may consider provision of one of the following forms of travel assistance:

- a public bus or train travel pass
- Independent Travel Training
- a Direct Travel Payment
- a Council arranged coach/bus service
- a Council arranged minibus
- a Council arranged shared taxi
- a Council arranged solo taxi, based on a travel needs assessment

- undertaken by the Council
- Passenger assistant support, based on a travel needs assessment undertaken by the Council
- Other alternative assistance based on needs/circumstances (case by case)

- 7.2 In order to determine the most appropriate travel option for pupils/students and the most cost effective means of travel assistance, the Council will use a range of criteria.
- 7.3 Information on Direct Travel Payment, what they are, what they can be used for, and their values, can be found on our Direct Travel Payment webpage. Banding and values are reviewed annually and updated accordingly to ensure ongoing sustainability and value for money.
- 7.4 The Council operates its own Independent Travel Training Programme (ITT), designed to help young people with special educational needs and/or Disabilities use public transport. The programme helps young people obtain knowledge and experience of a planned route and attain a high level of road safety skills. Assessment for suitability of ITT will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis and reflect the needs/circumstances of the young person. Where it is identified that ITT is not appropriate then it will not be offered and an alternative for of travel will be provided.
- 7.5 The programme provides Individual travel training on a bespoke one-to-one basis with young people. By directly assisting the young people, their families and support networks, the training is tailored to suit the needs of each individual student.

8. Transport Appeals

- 8.1 If a parent disagrees with the decision not to award travel assistance it is possible to appeal. Oxfordshire County Council follows a two-stage appeals process.
- 8.2 The Council has a 2 stage appeal process for young people and parents/carers to challenge a decision about transport eligibility.

Stage 1 – Review by a senior officer/officer panel

- 8.3 Parents/carers have 20 working days to request a review of our decision about home to school transport eligibility or provision. Parents/carers should write to us, detailing why the decision should be reviewed, giving details of any personal/family circumstances and include all supporting evidence to be considered, for example, evidence from a medical professional. In most cases the parent/carer will be asked to complete a form for further information. The parent/carer will receive an acknowledgement when we have received their written request for a review.
- 8.4 The parents/carers of pupils/students should write to the School Transport Eligibility Team using the School Transport Eligibility 'Contact us' form.
- 8.5 The decision will be reviewed by a senior officer or via the Transport Exceptions Panel. The Transport Exceptions Panel meet throughout the year and is made up of

officers from Children's Services, the Support Transport team and Integrated SEND teams.

- 8.6 Within 20 working days of receipt of their written request including all supporting evidence, parents/carers will be advised in writing of the appeal decision.

Stage 2 - Review by an Independent Appeal Panel

- 8.7 Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of our Stage 1 appeal decision notification letter to write to ask for it to be reconsidered at Stage 2, which is a review by an Independent Appeal Panel. Details of where to send the Stage 2 request will be included on the Stage 1 appeal decision letter. Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents/carers Stage 2 request, an Independent Appeal Panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent/carer and officers involved in the case. The Independent Appeal Panel will give a detailed written notification of the outcome within 5 working days of the panel meeting.

- 8.8 The Independent Appeal Panel is made up of officers who have experience and knowledge of transport issues. These officers are independent of the original decision making process.

Stage 3 - Complaint to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 8.9 Parents/carers can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman only if they consider that:

- there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules
- if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled

- 8.10 For further information [contact the School Transport Eligibility team.](#)

- 8.11 The LA will not consider requests for a further transport appeal within the same school academic year unless there has been a significant change of circumstance.

- 8.12 Complex Stage 2 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

9. Useful contact information

9.1 Oxfordshire County Council

School Admissions Team (Transport Eligibility)
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND
Tel: 0345 241 2487
Email: schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Web: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

Supported Transport Services
PO Box 867
Oxford
OX1 9NR

Tel: 01865 323500

Email: mainstream.schooltransport@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Web: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

9.2 Planning Transport to School/College

The public transport pages on the Oxfordshire County Council website give details of bus routes by parish as well as links to operators' websites and timetables:

www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/public-transport

9.3 Other useful sources of information on public transport

Traveline: <https://www.traveline.info/>

Oxford Bus Company: <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/>

Stagecoach Oxfordshire: <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/about/oxfordshire>

Thames Travel: <https://www.thames-travel.co.uk/>

10. Complaints

Any complaints arising from the processes and procedures set out above should be submitted via the Council's general complaints procedure, details of which are found at:

[Complaints about Oxfordshire County Council | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2024/25 onwards for Reception to Year 11

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Parents have a legal duty to make necessary arrangements to ensure that their statutory aged children attend school regularly. The council is only required to provide free school travel to children resident within the administrative area of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) who are eligible under the law and this policy. If children move to an address outside the administrative area of OCC, the responsibility for determining and, where appropriate, providing free or assisted travel passes to the child's new home authority.
- 1.2 The legal basis for the provision of home to school transport is set out in sections 508A, 508B, 508C, 508D and 509AD and Schedule 35B of the **Education Act 1996** (as amended by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) and, where appropriate, the Equality Act and English and European case law. In addition, local authorities are under a statutory duty to have regard to the "Travel to school for children of compulsory school age" issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in June 2023 and the "Post 16 transport and travel support to education and training" guidance issued in January 2019.
- 1.3 OCC is keen to encourage children to walk, wheel, cycle or scoot to the school they attend, or to make use of public transport.
- 1.4 Those who are not resident in Oxfordshire are advised to contact their own home local authority for details of any policy that their local authority may have regarding home to school.
- 1.5 Free and subsidised transport **is not provided to children of pre-school age** who attend a nursery or other Early Years settings, irrespective of whether they have an EHCP. Travel to nursery or early years settings is the responsibility of a child's parent. This is the case both for children who have an EHCP and those who do not have a such a plan.
- 1.6 There is no legal right of appeal should a parent believe the policy regarding free travel to a nursery or early years settings should be set aside in the case of their child or any other child.
- 1.7 Normally eligibility for free travel will be determined at the time that a school place is allocated through:
 - OCC's Coordinated Admissions Scheme for entry at the normal points of admission
 - the issuing of an EHCP
 - the operation of the Fair Access Protocol
 - the In-Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme

In addition, the School Transport Eligibility Team determines whether free transport should be provided for a temporary or permanent placement funded by the council at an alternative education centre, such as Meadowbrook College.

- 1.8 A parent applying for places outside of the normal admissions round at schools that are not part of the In-Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme for Oxfordshire will need to check the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy to see whether their child may be eligible for free transport. At that point, if they believe their child is eligible, they need to apply directly to the School Transport Eligibility. A list of schools currently opting out of this scheme is listed online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransfer

- 1.9 Having an EHCP does not give an automatic entitlement to travel assistance, free or subsidised. Therefore, if a school has been named in an EHCP in accordance with parental preference and it is not the nearest suitable school, and there is no other basis in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for agreeing free travel, there is no obligation on the council to provide free or subsidised travel. In these circumstances transport to school is wholly a parent's responsibility.
- 1.10 When, under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy, children are entitled to free travel it is provided by the most cost-effective means. This will usually be by the provision of a free bus pass. However, where numbers are small, children may sometimes have to be transported by taxi. If a parent wishes to take their child to school and it is therefore possible to avoid the provision of a taxi, OCC may agree to the payment of a mileage allowance. The mileage allowance is provided for the child's journey to school and the return to the child's home. The mileage allowance is the HMRC "All Car Rate". If, through a change in circumstance, the payment of the mileage allowance proves no longer to be the cheapest means of transporting the child to school, the alternative means of travel will be offered, and the parent will be given up to 6 weeks to consider the new arrangement. At the end of that period, or when the alternative means of transport is taken up, whichever is the sooner, the mileage allowance will be withdrawn.
- 1.11 Where free travel is provided or a seat is purchased through the Spare Seat Scheme, travel is provided for attendance at the beginning and end of the school day only and not for extracurricular activities. This applies both to children who have an EHCP and those who do not have such a plan.
- 1.12 Free or subsidised travel is not provided for children attending induction, taster or transitional days or sessions before joining a school.
- 1.13 If free or subsidised travel is provided to a school, there is no free or subsidised travel between sites at that school or from the school to any other education provider.
- 1.14 The responsibility for determining entitlement to free travel rests with the School Transport Eligibility Team. The responsibility for organising transport rests with the Supported Transport Service.
- 1.15 Any information regarding OCC's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy obtained from any source other than the School Transport Eligibility Team or OCC's public website should be disregarded.
- 1.16 Buses and coaches used on contracted home to school transport routes are public service vehicles and are subject to specific safety legislation. This is enforced by an initial inspection and certification of the vehicle followed by subsequent annual checks. Vehicles are also subject to random roadside checks undertaken by the 'Vehicle and Operator Service Agency' (VOSA). VOSA may prohibit the use of any vehicle that is non-compliant, i.e., is in a dangerous condition, not roadworthy and/or the driver's hours are irregular. Any service provider using sub-standard vehicles may lose their operator's license.
- 1.17 No free transport is provided to address poor attendance or non-attendance unless this is attributable to mobility issues due to a medical condition or disability that mean a child cannot walk to the nearest available school. This applies both to children who do not have an EHCP and those do have such a plan.
- 1.18 If free travel is agreed, children will normally be expected to use public transport (ordinary scheduled bus or train services) or, if this is unavailable, contracted transport such as a

coach or minibus. Up until the end of Year 5 children of primary school age who receive free travel to school by public transport will normally be expected to travel with a parent. A parent will not normally be able to accompany their children on contracted home to school transport routes.

- 1.19 Taxis will only be used where:
- there is no public transport
 - it would be too onerous to use public transport due to multiple changes of bus
 - it can be demonstrated that it would not be possible to travel on public transport or dedicated school transport because of a disability or medical condition,
 - the journey would take longer than 75 minutes for secondary school age child, or 45 minutes for primary school age child, and it would be a significantly shorter journey time by taxi.
- 1.20 There are circumstances in which a child will travel alone in a taxi. However, this is normally when there are no other travellers to be carried rather than because there is an actual requirement for the child to travel alone.
- 1.21 Specialised tail-lift vehicles will only be agreed after an assessment by the Supported Transport Service or following a successful Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal.
- 1.22 Lone taxi travel will also only be agreed after an assessment by the Supported Transport Service or following a successful Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal. Assessments will be made by specialist officers within the Supported Transport Service.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the Parent

- 2.1 A parent is responsible for ensuring that a child of statutory school age receives appropriate full-time education. In all, except a small number of cases, this involves attending a school.
- 2.2 A parent is responsible for making any necessary arrangements for attendance at an appropriate school, including submitting timely applications for admission.
- 2.3 Regarding travel to school, a parent is expected to:
- accompany their child as necessary when walking to and from school
 - accompany their child as necessary when walking to and from a pick-up point for transport to school and waiting with their child until the vehicle arrives
 - ensure that their child has any travel pass that has been issued before their child leaves home
 - ensure that their child knows what to do if they lose their travel pass and are refused travel, or if for any reason the vehicle does not arrive, for example, this could be return home, go to a neighbour or telephone the parent for assistance
 - provide evidence of personal circumstances in support of any appeal for free transport
 - submit any Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal
 - inform the School Transport Eligibility Team of any change of address or school and return any pass issued because of living at a previous address

- inform the council of any change in financial circumstances that may affect entitlement under the extended rights arrangements set out in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy

2.4 A parent has the right to express a preference for their child's admission to a specific school or schools. However, this right is solely concerned with admission to school and there is no eligibility for free transport based upon parental preference of school. Therefore, if a child is not eligible for free travel, the parent concerned is wholly responsible for getting their child to that school.

2.5 Similarly, a parent who transfers their child to an alternative school for any reason will not be able to claim eligibility for free travel unless the child concerned meets the eligibility criteria shown in this document, for example free transport will not be provided on the basis that a parent believes a child to be unhappy at their original school.

3. Statutory Walking Distance

3.1 In understanding home to school transport and what can and cannot be provided free of charge, it is important to understand what is referred to as "the statutory walking distance". This is 2 miles for children who are under 8 years of age, and 3 miles for those of statutory school age who are aged 8 and over. It is measured along the shortest route along which a child, accompanied by a responsible adult, may walk with reasonable safety. The route may include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads. All such routes need to be open to the public. Even where the distance is calculated to have been longer than the statutory walking distance it will still be measured using this method. If issues are raised over the possible safety of a walking route the School Transport Eligibility Team will arrange for an initial assessment and, if necessary, a full assessment by an officer from the Road Safety Team.

4. Walking Routes to School

4.1 OCC expects that, where necessary, a child will be accompanied to school by a responsible person, such as a parent or other adult. This is a well-established legal point regarding the responsibilities of a parent and means that any assessment of route safety assumes that a child will be accompanied, as necessary, by a parent or other adult.

4.2 It is also well-established in law that the shortest publicly accessible route may include:

- footpaths
- shared footpath/cycle tracks
- bridleways and other pathways
- recognised roads
- paths along trunk roads
- footpaths along which there is a permissive right of way

It is important to note that there is no requirement for a route to be maintained by OCC or by another public body. It simply needs to be available for public use.

4.3 If a parent is concerned that a child needs to be accompanied for safety reasons, but the route has been judged by OCC to be available, it is the responsibility of that parent to ensure that the child is accompanied on the route to and from school. Parental

perception of risk is not sufficient cause for the provision of free or subsidised travel.

- 4.4 Route Assessments are carried out by an officer from the Road Safety Team, in accordance with OCC's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy, the "Travel to school for children of compulsory school age" statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education in 2023 and the Road Safety manual "Assessment of Walked Routes to School" issued by Road Safety GB.
- 4.5 In accordance with the law, all routes are assessed with the assumption that pupils are accompanied as necessary by a responsible person (see paragraphs 2.3 and 4.1 above). Routes are not classed as unavailable solely due to any or all of the following factors:
- lonely routes
 - routes that pass close to canals, rivers, ditches, lakes, or ponds
 - routes that require railway crossings if a suitable authorised crossing is present
 - the absence of street lighting
- 4.6 It is clear from relevant case law that assessments must look at the relationship between pedestrians and traffic only and that personal safety and security issues of children travelling alone should not be considered. Therefore, routes are assessed in terms of road safety rather than personal safety and security in any other sense.
- 4.7 The assessment conducted is a road safety assessment. This assessment does not include the weight of the bags carried by an individual, the local weather conditions, temporary surface conditions such as mud or puddles, the presence of uncut hedges, difficult terrain, and the arduousness of the route or whether the accompanying responsible adult will also have a younger child or pram with them.
- 4.8 If a footway is over ½ metre in width the footway is classed as an available route.
- 4.9 If a footway is less than ½ metre in width, then traffic volumes and speeds are included in the assessment to determine whether the footway is an available route.
- 4.10 Even if there is not a footway, the walking route will still be assessed as available if it is safe to walk, accompanied, as necessary, by a responsible adult. The assessment will take account of traffic flows and whether drivers have enough time to slow down, or pedestrians have time to step-off the road or verge. It is the responsibility of a parent to ensure that a child is accompanied as necessary on the walking journey to school.
- 4.11 No walking route can be absolutely safe. The term used in the Road Safety GB guidance to describe the accepted standard is "reasonable safety."
- 4.12 Assessments will usually take place in the morning during the times children will be travelling to school and assessments may also be undertaken when returning home in the afternoon. Visits will be timed, where possible, so that crossing assessments of main roads take place at the times when the number of children travelling to school is highest.
- 5. Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND)**

- 5.1 Children who cannot walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND), will not automatically be refused free travel on the basis that they live within the statutory walking distance of the school attended, if that school is the nearest that they could attend.
- 5.2 A parent who believes their child is unable to walk to the nearest school that they could attend because of mobility problems or associated health and safety issues will be expected to provide supporting evidence from a GP or consultant. In the case of a child with an EHCP, the Plan may provide all the information required.
- 5.3 Free transport will not be agreed to *any* school irrespective of distance, journey time or number of other suitable schools that are closer to the family home. Free travel will only be provided to the nearest suitable school.
- 5.4 The Supported Transport Service may need to assess the mobility problems, or associated health and safety issues, related to a student's SEND to determine the type of free travel that can be made available to that student.

6. Children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

- 6.1 The **Children and Families Act** received the Royal Assent in March 2014, and this resulted in the gradual replacement of Statements of Special Educational Need with EHCPs.
- 6.2 Having an EHCP does not give automatic eligibility for free or subsidised travel. Therefore, if a school has been named in a Plan in accordance with parental preference, and there is a nearer suitable and available school, and there is no other basis in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for agreeing free travel, transport to the named school will be the responsibility of that child's parent, not the council.
- 6.3 Some children with EHCPs may have specific needs that require the use of specialist transport that is not widely available. If a specialist vehicle is not required, it may still be necessary to use more expensive transport provision, such as taxi transport, to meet the specific needs of the children concerned. However, in all cases, the council will provide the most cost-effective means of travel that will meet a child's need.
- 6.4 A parent of a child with an EHCP may, in certain circumstances, be given the option of a personal budget to meet some or all of the provision detailed in the Plan and special transport will be an element of the personal budget.
- 6.5 Whether there is a requirement to assist in meeting a child's travel needs will be considered when an EHCP is issued or amended. Liaison will take place between School Transport Eligibility and SEND Services to ensure the needs of the child are fully understood, as they relate to travel arrangements.

7. Assessments regarding travel arrangements

- 7.1 If free travel is agreed, an assessment regarding a child's means of travel will be made by the Supported Transport Service. This will normally only be necessary for children

with significant disabilities or special needs. In most cases the child will have an EHCP. Options will include:

- direct travel payments
- independent travel
- directly procured travel assistance

7.2 A parent will be formally notified, in writing, of the travel arrangements that OCC believes to be appropriate. At that point, the parent may appeal against the means of transport decided upon through the normal transport appeal process set out in this document. The first stage of this process is to request a review from the Admissions and Transport Services Manager. Prior to any appeal OCC will only make available the transport decided upon in the assessment. The result of any transport appeal is binding on OCC.

8. Children in Public Care (Looked After Children)

8.1 Children in Public Care (Looked After Children who are known in Oxfordshire as Children We Care For) and children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a Child Arrangements Order or a Special Guardianship Order) receive free travel to school if they meet the criteria set out in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. If a child is not entitled to free travel, it is the carer's responsibility to ensure that they will be able to get the child to and from school.

8.2 If the professionals working with the child believe that there are extenuating circumstances that should be considered, the child's social worker may refer the issue to the Admissions and Transport Services Manager for a Stage 1 review.

9. Split site schools

9.1 In the case of split site schools, as with all other schools, when assessing whether a child should receive free travel because of the walking distance to that school, the distance will be measured to the site they initially attend. This decision will not be reviewed because a child subsequently moves to a different site of the same school.

9.2 The following Oxfordshire secondary schools currently have split sites:

- The Cherwell School
- King Alfred's Academy
- Lord Williams's School
- Heyford Park School

10. Distance measurement for Free Transport for children of Low-Income Families

10.1 The 2 mile limit is measured in the same way as the "statutory walking distance". However, the 6 mile and 15 mile upper limits are not walking routes. The 6 mile and 15 mile limits are measured along routes that are passable using a road route suitable for motorised vehicles.

11. Home

- 11.1 In this policy document a child's home is defined as the child's main place of residence during the normal school week. Free travel can only be provided to and from that one address.
- 11.2 There is no use of notional addresses based on the midpoint between two parent's addresses or addresses of convenience such as the address of a grandparent, cousin, family friend or legal representative.
- 11.3 Where children spend time with parents at more than one address then the address considered as the main address will be the one that they live at (i.e., sleep at) for most of term-time school nights (Sunday night to Thursday night). If children spend time equally at different addresses, then the address used for admissions purposes and to determine transport will be the one registered for child benefit. We will request proof of the registered address, which must pre-date the application.
- 11.4 Free travel is not provided to and from the address of other family members with whom the child is not normally or mainly resident, for example the address of a grandparent or Childminder.

12. Travel to a friend's home, Induction/Taster Day, Breakfast/After School Clubs, Work Experience and Foreign Exchange Programmes

- 12.1 No free travel can be provided on an ad hoc basis to children wishing to travel to the homes of children who are entitled to free transport. In addition, no free transport will be provided to:
- attend work experience
 - attend an induction or taster day at another school/college
 - attend a school as part of a foreign exchange programme
 - attend appointments and activities for medical or sports reasons
 - attend breakfast or after-school clubs
 - attend extracurricular activities/clubs
 - attend school trips
- 12.2 Paragraph 12.1 applies both to children who do not have an EHCP and those who do have such a plan.

13. Escorts

- 13.1 Escorts are normally only provided when it has been established through the "Means of Travel Assessment" or appeals process that a child with an EHCP has a specific need to be accompanied. Escorts are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and undertake Safeguarding training. Escorts will not normally be provided in any other circumstances.
- 13.2 Examples of factors that may be considered when determining whether to provide an

escort are shown below:

- medical issues
- health and safety related issues, including risk to self or others
- the child's mobility
- severe learning or physical difficulties that necessitate continual care and supervision

13.3 If a passenger escort is provided, they will:

- travel with the child from an agreed pick-up point to an agreed drop-off point
- assist with entry to, and exit from, the vehicle
- ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe journey for the child and other passengers
- provide a caring environment whilst on the vehicle

13.4 Once transport with an escort has been arranged for a child, their parent must provide full details of any changes in the child's needs and circumstances, including any information specific to the journey or which should be passed on to others at the destination.

13.5 A passenger escort may supervise more than one child on a journey, consistent with providing the appropriate level of service for each individual child while they are on the vehicle.

13.6 It is a parental responsibility to get a child to the pick-up and from the drop-off point for education transport. Therefore, a parent or appointed responsible adult must be ready at the arranged pick up and drop off times to ensure the child's safe handover.

13.7 Escorts are not assigned for the specific purpose of managing behaviour. An acceptable standard of behaviour is expected of all children using transport contracted by the council.

13.8 The need for an escort is reviewed on an annual basis.

14. Drivers

14.1 Drivers used on contracted transport for home to school travel are subject to DBS checks and they undertake Safeguarding training.

15. Parents accompanying children in OCC transport

15.1 Parents will not normally be able to travel in OCC provided transport.

16. Change of address

16.1 If a child is in receipt of free travel and the family changes address the child's parent will need to inform the School Transport Eligibility Team. The child's eligibility for free travel will then be reassessed against the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy.

The parent will then be notified in writing if the child is still eligible for free travel.

17. “No Pass, No Travel”

- 17.1 All passengers are required to carry a pass if one has been issued to them. This establishes whether they may be carried on the vehicle, either under a statutory entitlement, a discretionary entitlement or under the Spare Seat Scheme.
- 17.2 OCC operates a “No Pass, No Travel” Policy for the safety of its passengers and to restrict access to vehicles to children who are not eligible. By limiting access to vehicles, OCC seeks to avoid situations where an eligible child cannot board because their seat is occupied by a non-eligible child. A full vehicle cannot safely carry additional children.
- 17.3 A child may not board a public service vehicle without a pass or the means to pay for the journey. “No Pass, No Travel” takes the same approach with contracted vehicles.
- 17.4 A child who is unable to present a pass when requested to do so by the vehicle driver or council officer will not normally be carried on the vehicle.
- 17.5 It is a parent’s responsibility to ensure that their child has a pass each morning to get on the vehicle to school or college. If not, the parent may have to return home with the child or make other arrangements to get them to school.
- 17.6 If a child loses the pass during the school day, they can approach the school to arrange for a temporary pass to get home. No child eligible for free travel will be refused access for the return journey. A child who has been issued with a pass and persistently travels without it may be banned from travelling on the vehicle.

18. Offer of free transport made in error

- 18.1 If free transport is offered in error, because of a mistake made by OCC, the free travel will be withdrawn after a notice period of not less than 6 weeks.
- 18.2 If free transport is offered in error because of false or inaccurate information provided by the parent, the transport may be withdrawn immediately.

19. Assessment of eligibility for free transport on admission to mainstream school, special school and alternative education providers

- 19.1 An assessment of eligibility for free travel is made by the School Admissions Team as part of the normal admissions process for entry to mainstream schools. A parent will normally be notified of the decision in the letter or email offering a school place.
- 19.2 If a child ceases to be eligible during the school term, for example due to moving address, the provision will be discontinued at the end of that term.
- 19.3 In the case of children who do not have an EHCP, and whose parents make in-year applications to mainstream schools that are not part of the Oxfordshire In-Year Scheme, eligibility will be determined when the parent concerned contacts the School Transport Eligibility Team to request an assessment. An up-to-date list of those schools that are

not currently part of the In Year Scheme in Oxfordshire can be found at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/apply-school-place/transferring-or-moving-school/before-you-start

- 19.4 The School Transport Eligibility Team also determines eligibility for free travel to alternative education providers and eligibility for free travel for children and young people with an EHCP. A parent of a child with an EHCP will need to speak to their Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) to determine if transport has been requested.

20. Free transport for those of school age (Reception to Year 11)

20.1 Children within the following categories are eligible for free travel:

- a. Children attending the nearest available school or educational placement to their address, if the distance from home to school is over the “statutory walking distance” of 3 miles if aged 8 or over or 2 miles if less than aged 8 and of school age. This applies whether the school was listed on the Common Admissions Form (CAF) or not and whether the child concerned does or does not have EHCP.
- b. Children attending the nearest school in Oxfordshire, if the distance from home to school is over the “statutory walking distance” of 3 miles if aged 8 or over or 2 miles if less than aged 8 and of school age. This applies whether or not the school was listed on the CAF and whether the child concerned does or does not have an EHCP.
- c. Children attending the nearest available school to their address even if it is less than the statutory walking distance, if it would not be safe for a child accompanied by an adult to walk from the home to the school. This applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP. If the route is subsequently determined to be safe to walk the parent will be given up to 6 weeks’ notice of the withdrawal of free transport. At the end of that period, free transport will be discontinued.
- d. Where at least 20% of addresses are nearest to the catchment/designated area school and the rest are nearest to another school, free transport will be provided to the catchment school for all addresses if the distance is beyond the “statutory walking distance” or there is no safe walking route. This is referred to as the ‘split village’ entitlement. This additional entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP. A list of the villages affected can be found under ‘Villages’ on at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport.
- e. Children who are aged 8 or over and are under 11 years old who are eligible for free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, and attend the nearest school if it is over 2 miles from their home. This entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP.
- f. Children aged 11 to 16 who are eligible for free school meals or whose

parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit and who attend one of their three nearest suitable schools (or places other than school at which they might receive education under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996), where they live more than 2 but not more than 6 miles from that school. The 2 mile distance is measured by “walking route” and the 6 mile distance is measured by road route. This entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP.

- g. Children aged 11 to 16 who are eligible for free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, and want their child to be educated in accordance with their religion or belief and they attend the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief that is over 2 miles but no more than 15 miles from their home. The 2 mile distance is measured by “walking route” and the 15 mile distance is measured by road route. This entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP.
- h. Children entitled to free transport, who move house during Year 11 and continue to attend their original school, subject to the following limits:
 - transport can be provided other than by taxi; and
 - the distance travelled is no more than 15 miles.This applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP.
- i. Children who cannot walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their SEND if the school they attend is the nearest suitable and available school that they could attend. In the case of a child with an EHCP the Plan may provide all the information required.
- j. Children who attend their nearest suitable and available school and are temporarily unable to walk to school because of a short-term illness or medical condition. Evidence of the medical condition and its effects is required from a GP or consultant. This applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP.
- k. Children who live at RAF Benson and attend Icknield Community College (annually reviewable). This applies whether a child does or does not have an EHCP

21. Free Travel to Alternative Education Providers

- 21.1 The School Transport Eligibility Team will determine whether free travel will be provided to a child who has been placed at an alternative education provider by OCC. A short-term full-time placement at an alternative education provider would normally follow a permanent exclusion from a mainstream school and some children may receive a long-term, full-time placement at an alternative provider. In addition, some children attend OCC-funded days at an alternative education provider and others attend a mix of OCC-funded and school-funded days at an alternative education provider.

- 21.2 Currently the main provider of alternative education for OCC is Meadowbrook College which is an academy and independent of OCC control. This determination will be made on the same basis as attendance at a mainstream school and the relevant criteria are shown in 20.1 of this policy (above). No free travel will be provided to school funded days at an alternative education provider.
- 21.3 Therefore, after a permanent exclusion from school, a child allocated an OCC-funded, short-term place at Meadowbrook College (or a similar establishment) will receive free travel if that child:
- lives over the statutory walking distance from the institution attended
 - lives under the statutory walking distance from the institution but the route is unsafe to walk, even if accompanied by an adult
 - meets the eligibility criteria related to family income
- 21.4 Free travel to both short and long-term places will be provided by the most cost-effective means.
- 21.5 If a child is allocated a mix of OCC-funded days and school-funded days at Meadowbrook College (or similar establishment), the criteria for provision of free transport will be applied and, if there is a right to free travel on the OCC-funded days, the transport costs for those days will be met by OCC. Any transport costs on school-funded days will be the responsibility of the school/family. Therefore, if a child or young person has two OCC-funded days (and meets the criteria for free transport) and two school-funded days at Meadowbrook College (or similar establishment), 50% of the travel cost will be met by OCC and 50% will be met by the school or family. Travel funded by OCC will be provided by the most cost-effective means.
- 21.6 If a child allocated a short-term or long-term OCC-funded place at Meadowbrook College (or a similar establishment) does not meet any of the criteria for provision of free transport, their parent will have the right of appeal. The transport appeal process is set out in this policy document.
- 21.7 If free home to school travel is agreed for a child attending an alternative education provider, it will only be provided at the beginning and end of the normal school day.
- 21.8 No free transport will be provided at OCC expense to address poor attendance or non-attendance at the alternative education provider.
- 21.9 If free travel is agreed, the “default” position will be that a child would be expected to use public transport (service bus or rail). Taxis will not normally be provided within urban and rural areas served by service bus or rail routes.
- 21.10 Taxis will only be used:
- if there is no public or contracted bus or minibus transport
 - it would be too onerous to use public transport because of multiple changes of bus
 - the journey would take longer than 75 minutes for a secondary age child, or 45 minutes if of primary school age, and it would be a significantly shorter journey time by taxi.
- 21.11 Most children within Oxford will not be eligible for free travel to Meadowbrook College given the relatively short distances that are likely to be travelled.

21.12 A child living in Bicester or Bloxham who attends an OCC-funded place at Meadowbrook College at West Bar in Banbury will normally be expected to use public transport.

21.13 A child living in Banbury will not usually be eligible for free travel to Meadowbrook College at West Bar in Banbury as they would not normally live far enough away from the school to meet the distance criteria.

21.14 As with children who attend mainstream or special schools, any necessary assessments regarding the travel arrangements for attending an alternative education provider will be made by the Supported Transport Service. The same appeal arrangements will apply as for all other children of statutory school age.

22. Naming a school in an EHCP when there is a nearer suitable and available school

22.1 Where a parent of a child with an EHCP requests a particular school and that school is named in the Plan, no free or subsidised transport will be provided to that school if there is a nearer suitable school that has been identified by the SEND Service that can meet that child's assessed needs.

23. Free Travel to Out County Residential Schools for those with an EHCP or Statement of Special Educational Need aged 11 to 16

23.1 Out County Weekly Boarding

A child is eligible for free travel at the beginning and end of each term and at the beginning and end of each school week up to a total of 76 single journeys per year.

23.2 Termly Boarding (3 terms per year)

A child aged 11 or over is entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term up to a maximum of 16 single journeys per year.

A child aged up to 11 is entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term, plus 4 discretionary journeys home per year, up to a maximum of 24 single journeys per year.

23.3 Termly Boarding (4 terms per year)

A child aged 11 or over is entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term up to a maximum of 16 single journeys per year.

A child aged up to 11 is entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term, plus 4 discretionary journeys home per year, up to a maximum of 24 single journeys per year.

23.4 Out County 52 Week Boarding (joint placement with another agency)

All boarders (or parents) are entitled to 12 single trips home per year (broadly relating to term times). Any additional trips will be the responsibility of the other agency.

23.5 Payment of parental journeys for those with children at Out County residential special schools

Payment will be made if one of the following applies:

- attendance at their child's annual review
- attendance at any meeting called by the council at the child's school
- journeys necessitated by a child's sickness or emergency medical appointments
- an agreed journey to visit a new school placement
- to attend up to three additional meetings per year at the school (called by the school or requested by the parents) if sanctioned by the council in advance
- to travel with the child on train or service bus journeys if the child needs an adult escort

23.6 Overnight accommodation

OCC will not normally reimburse the cost of overnight accommodation for a parent.

24. Application for Transport Assistance on grounds of Religion or Belief

24.1 In making decisions on assistance with transport the council will respect a parent's religious and philosophical convictions as to the education to be provided for their child as far as this is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

24.2 However, a parent will need to satisfy OCC of the genuine nature of the religious and/or philosophical belief and that the application is made in good faith. The burden of proof lies with the child's parent.

24.3 Examples of acceptable evidence are:

- the provision of a Baptismal Certificate
- a statement of atheism
- a statement of adherence to a particular faith
- a letter of support from a priest, rabbi or imam stating that the child belongs to a particular congregation

Normally, two pieces of evidence will be required.

24.4 It is important to note that OCC will consider the financial consequences of any applications for assistance and that setting up new coach services or taxi routes, or specifically continuing them when they could be discontinued, in order to accommodate new travellers would normally fall within the definition of "unreasonable public expenditure". However, where there are spare seats on already existing home to school transport routes, or scheduled public transport services, the council will be able to consider applications for places under the Spare Seat Scheme arrangements.

- 24.5 OCC will not consider academic grounds expressed for preferring a particular school when determining whether to provide assisted transport on grounds of faith or belief.
- 24.6 Decisions on applications for transport assistance on grounds of faith or belief will normally be taken by a panel of three.

25. The “Spare Seat” Scheme

25.1 The “Spare Seat” Scheme operates on contracted routes that are operated for the benefit of those who are eligible to free transport to and from school. The key points regarding this scheme are set out below:

- OCC cannot guarantee that a child will keep the seat for longer than one full term (based on a three-term academic year)
- Fare prices are reviewed annually
- A parent, or in the case of Years 12 and 13, the student, must complete an application form
- Payment is required in advance for one full term’s travel
- The price charged covers a return journey for every school day of the relevant period
- There will be no rebates for those deciding to travel for less than the maximum number of possible journeys per term. For example, there is no rebate if a child decides to use their bus pass for morning travel and returns by some other private means in the afternoon
- If a seat is available, a bus pass will only be issued on receipt of a completed application form, and correct payment
- There is no guarantee that the bus will continue to run throughout a child’s time at a school, or that the place on the bus will not be withdrawn at some future date if the place is required for a child or young person who is entitled to free travel
- The “Spare Seat” charge will be waived for those of statutory school age who are eligible for free school meals, or, in the case of those aged 5, 6 or 7, would be eligible for benefits related free school meals, or whose parent is in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
- If there are more applicants than places, a parent will be able to add a child’s name to a waiting list. Any waiting list for a specific route will operate for no longer than one academic year
- If there is an available home to school transport route operated on behalf of OCC, a young person who is no longer statutory school age and who is aged 16 to 18, may use the “Spare Seat” Scheme to purchase a seat on that route to enable access to their school or college
- When there are more requests to pay for seats on a specific route than there are seats available, they will be allocated in the descending order of priority shown in the table “Priority for Spare Seats”

Table 1. Priority for “Spare Seat” Scheme

Priority	Category
1	Those with an EHCP naming the school
2	Children We Care For
3	Years 12 and 13 (if there is no available service bus route)
4	Children in receipt of Free School Meals or whose parent/parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
5	Those who travelled on the route the previous term
6	By year group, in ascending order of priority from Reception to Year 11 (or to Year 13 if there is an available service bus route)

Where there are more applicants than places in any of the above categories, priority will be given to those living closest to the destination school (measured using the shortest designated route on Oxfordshire County Council’s Geographic Information System)

25.2 The fares for the “Spare Seat” Scheme for 2024/25 are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Charges for 2024/25 academic year

Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£546.00 per annum (£182.00 per term)
3 miles and over from home to school/college	£1,015.92 per annum (£338.64 per term)

26. Code of Conduct

26.1 The School Transport Code of Conduct for those travelling on Home to School Transport is available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/codeofconduct.

26.2 Free travel or “Spare Seat” travel may be suspended if a child breaches the School Transport Code of Conduct in a significant way. The child’s school may also potentially impose a disciplinary sanction. The School Transport Code of Conduct applies to all children travelling, although the special needs of a child with an EHCP will be taken into account when considering a response to breaching the Code.

26.3 If free travel is suspended, the child’s parent has a right of appeal against the decision. The appeal process is the two-stage process set out below. Stage 1 reviews are conducted by the Admissions and Transport Services Manager and Stage 2 reviews are conducted by an independent panel.

27. Home to School Transport Appeals

27.1 The appeals process set out below applies to:

- A child who lives in Oxfordshire, and is statutory school aged and attends a mainstream school

- A child who lives in Oxfordshire, has an EHCP and attends either a mainstream school or a special school
- children who live in Oxfordshire, are of statutory school age and are not on the roll of a mainstream or special school but attend alternative education provided at OCC's expense, for example at Meadowbrook College.

27.2 Two stage process

OCC annually publishes the appeals process on its website (with paper copies available on request). This sets out the two-stage process for parents who wish to challenge a transport decision, for example because of

- the transport arrangements offered
- a child's eligibility
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances
- the safety of the route

27.3 Stage 1: Review by the Admissions and Transport Services Manager

- A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent's written request the Admissions and Transport Services Manager will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review, setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached; and
 - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed, for example route safety assessments that have followed Road Safety GB guidance); and
 - information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process; and
 - what factors were considered; and
 - the rationale for the decision reached; and
 - information about how the parent can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).
- Complex Stage 1 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

27.4 Stage 2: Review by an independent appeal panel

- A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the written stage one response from the Admissions & Transport Services Manager to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent's request an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent and officers

involved in the case and give a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days), setting out:

- the nature of the decision reached; and
 - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g., Road Safety GB); and
 - information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process; and
 - what factors were considered; and
 - the rationale for the decision reached; and
 - information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).
- Stage 2 appeals will be heard by a panel of three comprising of one officer, one county councillor and one independent person. All panel members receive specific training prior to undertaking their role. The training includes information to ensure an understanding of the specific needs of children with SEND and EHCPs. The Audit & Governance Committee have governance oversight of the process. The county councillor will not be the councillor for the division within which the child resides. No officer will have been involved in the previous decision making. The independent person will be drawn from the volunteers for hearing admission appeals.
 - The Clerk to the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee will be from the Law & Governance Department and will not work for the Admissions Team or the Supported Transport Service.
 - A representative from the Admissions Team will present OCC reasons for not providing transport and appellants can present a case in writing or in person (if the parent wishes, accompanied by a friend). The format of the appeal is set out below:
 1. presentation of OCC's case
 2. committee members, and the parent, are then able to ask questions to OCC's representative
 3. presentation of the parent's case
 4. committee members, and OCC's representative, are then able to ask of the appellant questions (if present)
 5. summing up by OCC's representative
 6. summing up of the appellant's case
 7. both the OCC representative and the appellant(s) leave the hearing together
 8. consideration of the case by the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee in private when the independent panel members will decide whether to uphold or refuse the appeal
 - The decision of the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee will be considered binding on OCC and appellant and there is no further right of appeal.
 - OCC will not consider requests for a further transport appeal within the same school academic year unless there has been a significant change of circumstance.
 - Complex Stage 2 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

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Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2024-25

Transport policy statement for young people aged 16–18 in further education, those continuing learners who are aged 19 and those young people aged 19- 24 (inclusive) with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities do not have to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support but do have a legal duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement covering those young people of sixth form age receiving education or training.
- 1.2 This policy statement details transport assistance that the council believes to be necessary for Oxfordshire residents of sixth form age who are receiving education or training. Therefore, this statement covers those young people in Oxfordshire aged 16 to 18 and those continuing learners who started their course before their 19th birthday.
- 1.3 Travel assistance may also be made available for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 19 up until they reach the age of 25 years.

2. Who may receive free travel to college/school?

- 2.1 Those young people beyond statutory school age who are aged 16 to 19 and have learning difficulties and/or disabilities will receive free travel when they attend the **nearest suitable educational placement** to their home address that has an available place and one of the following applies:
 - The distance from their home to the educational placement is over 3 miles.
 - The distance from their home to the educational placement is less than 3 miles and there is no available walking route.
 - It would not be reasonable to expect the young person to walk to the educational placement because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their learning difficulty and/or disability, or because of a temporary or long-term medical condition (evidence is required from a GP or Consultant).
- 2.2 The nearest suitable educational placement is one at which the young person's needs can be met. For those with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), this will be established by the School Transport Eligibility Team from the responses to the formal consultations with schools and colleges undertaken by the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service. If a school or college responds to a consultation stating that need can be met that will establish that it is a suitable establishment. Preference for a particular course or establishment is normally not relevant to the decision on whether a school or college is considered to be the nearest suitable school or college.
- 2.3 If a young person attends an educational placement where there is more than one site, travel assistance will only be provided to the nearest of those sites at which their needs can be met. The council will not provide free travel between sites. Any dispute over whether the provision at a particular site "meets need" will be determined by confirmation from the school or college as to whether it can meet need at that particular site.
- 2.4 Those who wish to study a course at an alternative educational placement to the nearest one that can meet their needs, will be responsible for the cost and provision of any travel arrangements that will be required for them to attend.
- 2.5 The transport needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed individually. Therefore, if free travel assistance is approved the travel arrangements will be made according to their needs.

- 2.6 An officer within the School Transport Eligibility Team is responsible for the assessment of eligibility for free travel assistance.
- 2.7 Where it is not possible to access Post 16 education, for example the nearest school or college is over 3 miles from the young person's home and there is no public transport service, the council may be able to assist with travel. In these circumstances, the young person, or their parent or carer should contact School Transport Eligibility at: SchoolTransportEligibility@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
- 2.8 Independent travel training for young people who face difficulties with transport may be provided on a one-to-one basis depending on the level of need and the availability of trainers.

3. If free travel is agreed what form of transport is offered?

- 3.1 The council normally expects young people to use public transport (ordinary scheduled bus or train services) or, if this is unavailable, contracted transport such as a coach or minibus.
- 3.2 The council may agree to a taxi where:
- there is no public transport; or,
 - it would be too onerous to use public transport due to multiple changes of bus; or,
 - a young person is unable to travel on public transport or a contracted coach/minibus because of specific permanent or temporary disabilities/special needs; or,
 - the journey would take longer than 1 hour 15 minutes and it would be a significantly shorter journey time by taxi.
- 3.3 Wherever possible the council is committed to the use of shared travel arrangements. There are circumstances in which a young person will travel alone in a taxi, but this is normally only when there are no other young people to be carried on that route rather than because there is an actual requirement for the young person to travel alone.
- 3.4 Agreement to an actual requirement for the young person to travel alone normally requires an assessment by specialist officers within the Supported Transport Service or follows a successful Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal.
- 3.5 Specialist tail-lift vehicles are provided for some young people but only when this has been assessed as necessary by the Supported Transport Service or following a successful transport appeal.
- 3.6 Travel assistance is normally only available at the beginning and end of the 'normal school day' of the school or college.
- 3.7 In most circumstances young people accessing Post 16 education will make their own travel arrangements to access their chosen school or college. They may walk, cycle, use public transport or the council's Spare Seat Scheme to travel to school or college.
- 3.8 For most young people any travel costs incurred will be their responsibility, or that of their parent or carer.

4. Is any help available for those who are not eligible for free travel?

Oxfordshire's Spare Seat Scheme

- 4.1 Where the council has contracted dedicated school transport, and there are more seats in the vehicle than eligible travellers, it may be possible to purchase a seat through Oxfordshire's Spare Seat Scheme.
- 4.2 This is a paid service that is only available on existing transport and where there would be no additional cost to the council to add the young person to the journey
- 4.3 If a young person would like to be considered for any place available under the Spare Seat Scheme, they will need to apply. Further information on this scheme, including the cost and how to apply can be found here:
[Paid home to school travel assistance \(spare seats scheme\) | Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- 4.4 There is no guarantee that a seat will be available or will continue to be available for the duration of the period of study. It is important that young people consider how they may travel to school or college if this service is not available.
- 4.5 Seats on coaches provided for home-to-school transport are made available on payment of a distance related charge. The charges for the 2024/25 academic year are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Post-16 Charges

Spare Seats Scheme Charge	2024/25
Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£433.40 per annum
More than 3 miles from home to school/college	£806.30 per annum

- 4.6 The charge will depend on the distance from a young person's home to their school or college. The distance from home to school or college will be measured along the shortest route available to the public. This may not necessarily be a driving route.
- 4.7 If there are more requests to pay for seats on a route than there are seats available, they will be allocated in the descending order of priority shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Priority for Spare Seat Scheme

Priority	Category
1	Those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan naming the school
2	Looked After Children
3	Years 12 and 13 (if there is no available service bus route)
4	Those in receipt of Free School Meals or whose parent or carer is in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
5	Those who travelled on the route the previous term
6	By year group, in ascending order of priority from Reception to Year 11 (or to Year 13 if there is an available service bus route)

** Where there are more applicants than places in any of the above categories, priority will be given to those living closest to the destination school (measured using the shortest available route on Oxfordshire County Council's Geographic Information System)*

16 to 19 Bursary Fund

- 4.8 To help with funding school and colleges have a fund provided by the government called the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund which is available for young people in Post 16 Education and can be used toward the cost of travelling to and from school or college.
- 4.9 There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:
- a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups;
 - discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.
- 4.10 Further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund is available at:
[16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- 4.11 Schools and colleges manage 16-19 Bursary funds. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen institution to make an application.
- 4.12 Young people who are enrolled on courses for higher education qualifications who are aged under 19 are not eligible for support.

5. Is there any help available for those aged over 19?

- 5.1 Applications for travel assistance for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged between 19 and 24 years of age (inclusive) will be considered on an individual basis for continuing learners who started their course before their 19th birthday. An assessment will be made taking account the specific circumstances of the applicant and the case for assistance with travel.
- 5.2 Where travel assistance is agreed, it will normally continue during the agreed course of study until the end of the academic year in which their 25th birthday occurs. However, travel assistance will be reviewed throughout the course and independent travel will be encouraged.
- 5.3 More information about Oxfordshire County Council's Local Offer for young people attending education or training can be found here:
[Support for young people 16-25 years with SEND | Oxfordshire County Council](#)
- 5.4 Further helpful information is contained in the following Moving into Adulthood online Handbook at: [OxFSN | Moving into Adulthood](#)

6. Is there any help for young parents?

- 6.1 For young parents aged under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for childcare and related travel costs, up to £160 per child per week, while they are learning. Care to Learn can help with the cost of:
- childcare, including deposit and registration fees.
 - a childcare 'taster' session (up to 5 days).
 - keeping a childcare place over the summer holidays.
 - taking the student's child to the childcare provider.

6.2 Further information including how to apply can be found at [Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

7. Is it possible for those aged 16 to 18 and those continuing learners who started their course before their 19th birthday to appeal for help with travel to college/school?

7.1 If a young person or their parent or carer disagrees with the decision not to award free travel assistance it is possible to appeal. The council follows a two-stage appeals process.

7.2 This process is published on the council's webpages (with paper copies available on request) and sets out the two-stage process for those who wish to challenge a decision about:

- the transport arrangements offered.
- their young person's eligibility.
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances.
- the safety of the route.

7.3 Stage one: Review by the Admissions and Transport Services Manager

- A parent or carer has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- The written request should detail why they believe the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances that they believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request the Admissions and Transport Services Manager will review the original decision and send a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review, setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached.
 - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed, for example route safety assessments that have followed Road Safety GB guidance).
 - information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process.
 - what factors were considered.
 - the rationale for the decision reached.
 - information about how the parent can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

- Complex Stage 1 cases may take longer than the timescale given above

7.4 Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel

- A parent or carer has 20 working days from receipt of the written stage one response from the Admissions & Transport Service Manager to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- Within 40 working days of receipt of the request an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent or carer and officers involved in the case and give a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days), setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached.
 - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g., Road Safety GB).
 - information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process.
 - what factors were considered.
 - the rationale for the decision reached.
 - information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).
- Stage 2 appeals will be heard by a panel of three.
- The Clerk to the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee will be from the Law & Governance Department and will not work for the Admissions Team or the Supported Transport Service.
- A representative of the Admissions Team will present the LA's reasons for not providing transport and appellants can present a case in writing and/or in person (if the parent wishes, accompanied by a friend). The format of the appeal is set out below:
 - presentation of the LA's case by the LA representative.
 - committee members and the parent are able to ask questions of the LA representative.
 - presentation of the parent's case.
 - committee members and the LA representative are able to ask questions of the appellant (if present).
 - summing up by the LA representative.
 - summing up of the appellant's case.
 - both the LA representative and the appellant(s) leave the hearing together.
 - consideration of the case by the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee in private when the independent panel members will decide whether to uphold or refuse the appeal.
- The decision of the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee will be considered binding on the LA and appellant and there is no further right of appeal.
- The LA will not consider requests for a further transport appeal within the same school academic year unless there has been a significant change of circumstance.

- Complex Stage 2 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

8. Useful contact information

8.1 Oxfordshire County Council

School Admissions Team (Transport Eligibility)
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND
Tel: 0345 241 2487
Email: schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Web: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

Supported Transport Services
PO Box 867
Oxford
OX1 9NR
Tel: 01865 323500
Email: mainstream.schooltransport@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Web: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

8.2 Planning Transport to School/College

The public transport pages on the Oxfordshire County Council website give details of bus routes by parish as well as links to operators' websites and timetables:
www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/public-transport

8.3 Other useful sources of information on public transport include:

Traveline: <https://www.traveline.info/>
Oxford Bus Company: <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/>
Stagecoach Oxfordshire: <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/about/oxfordshire>
Thames Travel: <https://www.thames-travel.co.uk/>

9. Complaints

Any complaints arising from the processes and procedures set out above should be submitted via the Council's general complaints procedure, details of which are found at: [Complaints and comments about Oxfordshire County Council | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

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Transport will be provided to the designated area school from all addresses in the contiguous built-up area of the village because more than 20% of the addresses are closest to the designated area school. Transport will also be provided from individual addresses to the relevant nearest school (if different) where appropriate.

Village *	Nearest Schools	Designated Area School
Adderbury/Twyford	Blessed George Napier Catholic School The Warriner School	The Warriner School
Ascott-under-Wychwood	Burford School Chipping Norton School	Burford School
Charlbury	The Marlborough CE School Wood Green School Chipping Norton School	Chipping Norton School
Dry Sandford	Fitzharrys School Larkmead School	Fitzharrys School
Duns Tew	Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School Middle Barton School	Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School
Freeland	Bartholomew School Wood Green School	Bartholomew School
Great Haseley	Lord Williams's School Wheatley Park School	Wheatley Park School
Kirtlington	Gosford Hill School Heyford Park Free School The Marlborough CE School	The Marlborough CE School
Long Hanborough	Bartholomew School The Marlborough CE School Wood Green School	Bartholomew School
Old Boars Hill	Fitzharrys School Matthew Arnold School	Fitzharrys School
South Hinksey	Matthew Arnold School St Gregory the Great Catholic School	Matthew Arnold School
Tadmarton	Bloxham CE Primary School Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School	Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School
Twyford/Adderbury	Blessed George Napier Catholic School The Warriner School	The Warriner School
Yatscombe Copse	Fitzharrys School St Gregory the Great Catholic School	Fitzharrys School

* Oxfordshire County Council considers the 'village' to be the contiguous built-up area.

An address within the Civil Parish but outside the contiguous built-up area of the village does not qualify for free travel under the 'split-village' rule.

Similarly, where the village name forms part of the postal address, but the property is outside the contiguous built-up area of the village, free transport will not be provided under the 'split-village' rule.

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