



Notice of a Meeting

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Friday, 13 June 2025 at 1.00 pm

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 Liz Brighthouse OBE

Deputy Chair: Councillor Andy Graham

Councillors:	Dr Izzy Creed	Emma Markham	John Shiri
	Georgina Heritage	Toyah Overton	
	Johnny Hope-Smith	James Plumb	

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

Date of Next Meeting: 11 July 2025

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Committee Officer: *Richard Doney*

Email: *scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk*

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

June 2025

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

Climate change, transport, highways, planning and place-based services. Including the delivery of regulatory services, fire and rescue, community safety and community services such as libraries. NB This Committee will act as the Council's 'Crime and Disorder Committee'.

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 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 28th March 2025, and, 20th May 2025, and to receive information arising from them.

4. **Petitions and Public Address**

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

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9.00 a.m. three working days before the meeting, i.e., Tuesday 10 June, 2025.

Requests should be submitted to the Scrutiny Officer at scrutiny@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

Where there are a number of requests from persons wishing to present similar views on the same issue, the Chair may require that the views be put by a single spokesperson. It is expected that only in exceptional circumstances will a person (or organisation) be allowed to address more than one meeting on a particular issue in any period of six months.

The public is reminded that the Committee is not a decision-making body and that it cannot investigate individual complaints. The Committee requests that no individual children are named when addressing the Committee.

5. **Education Act 1996 (Section 19) - Response to Local Government Ombudsman's Report (Pages 11 - 22)**

The Ombudsman has required the Council to report to the Committee presenting its review outcome and action plan so that the Committee can decide how progress against the plan should be monitored.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leffman, will present the report and be accompanied by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, and Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion.

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.

6. **Home to School Transport Policy** (Pages 23 - 134)

Cabinet will be asked to approve the revised Home to School Transport Policy on 17 June 2025. The Committee had asked to consider the report before it was submitted to Cabinet. The Committee has therefore been provided with the report and annexes which Cabinet is expected to consider.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leffman, will attend accompanied by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion, and Stephen Good, Home to School Transport Programme Manager.

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.

7. **Draft EOTAS Policy** (Pages 135 - 152)

The Committee considered a draft Education Otherwise Than At School policy at its meeting on 22 November 2024. In accordance with the Committee's recommendation, the draft policy has been revised. The Committee had requested that it review the draft policy before it is submitted to Cabinet. The policy is currently expected to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 15 July 2025.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leffman, will attend accompanied by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, and Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion.

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.

8. **Woodeaton Manor School Update** (Pages 153 - 158)

The Committee has requested an update on Woodeaton Manor School.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leffman, will attend and be accompanied by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, and Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education and Inclusion.

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.

9. **Committee Forward Work Plan** (Pages 159 - 162)

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.

The Cabinet Forward Plan can be found

here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgListPlanItems.aspx?PlanId=433&RP=115>

The most recent BMMR, submitted to Cabinet in March 2025, can be found

here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=7477&Ver=4>

10. Committee Action and Recommendation Tracker (Pages 163 - 168)

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

11. Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations (Pages 169 - 170)

Cabinet is expected to approve the attached draft response to the Committee's recommendations at its meeting on 17th June 2025.

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.

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EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 28 March 2025 commencing at 10.02 am and finishing at 1.00 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Nigel Simpson - in the Chair
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Trish Elphinstone
Councillor Andy Graham
Councillor Damian Haywood
Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Michael Waine

Co-opted Members Hana G
Katie N
Peace Nhaji

Other Members in Attendance: Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services

Officers: Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services
Jean Kelly, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care
Charlotte Davey, Assistant Director – County Services
Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director for Education and Inclusion
Clare Pike, Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School
Barbara Chillman, Pupil Place Planning Manager
Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Manager

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.

10/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS (Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Povolotsky, substituted by Cllr Haywood, and from Cllr Corkin.

The Chair thanked Cllrs Corkin and Povolotsky, neither of whom was standing for re-election, for their work on the Committee since it was established and on the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee before that. The Chair also thanked Cllr Waine, who was also not standing for re-election, for his years of service on this Committee and on earlier iterations of it.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services emphasised the importance of confidentiality, particularly regarding young people under 18, and proposed that the Council and committee adopt a principle to ensure no child is identified in public records. They suggested stopping the live stream if a speaker attempts to identify a child and reviewing past video streams to remove any such instances.

11/25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

(Agenda No. 2)

There were none.

12/25 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes for the meeting held on 28th February 2025 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

13/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4)

There were none.

14/25 RESPONSES TO SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee **NOTED** the Cabinet response of the Draft Education Other Than at School report.

15/25 COMMITTEE ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

(Agenda No. 6)

The Committee **NOTED** the action and recommendation tracker.

16/25 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PLAN

(Agenda No. 7)

The Committee **AGREED** to the work programme for the forthcoming meeting, confirming the proposed additional meeting on Friday, 13 June 2025.

The Committee also requested an item on Wood Eaton School, recognising that some aspects of the report would be likely to be considered in private.

17/25 UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S HOMES

(Agenda No. 8)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, attended to present the report. Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Jean Kelly, Deputy Director for Children's Social Care, and Charlotte Davey,

Assistant Director – County Services, also attended to answer the Committee's questions.

The Cabinet Member introduced the topic of children's homes, explaining the collaboration with the Department for Education (DfE) to increase the number of small, family-like children's homes in Oxfordshire. He highlighted the benefits of these homes in providing a more personal and supportive environment for children.

The Assistant Director provided an update on the development of new children's homes, detailing the progress of each home. Aspen House had opened recently, accommodating four children who were brought back into the county from out-of-county placements, and it had received a 'good' rating from Ofsted.

Peak House was ready to open, pending an initial Ofsted registration visit. Staff were in place and being utilised across other establishments until the home could officially open. Willow Bank was expected to open in autumn, following the model of Peak House.

Great Mead faced delays due to environmental concerns. Oat Hill required significant internal and external work, with planning permission and contractor issues causing delays.

The Assistant Director summarised the financial aspects, noting that the homes were coming in on budget, and any under-budget savings would be partially returned to the DfE.

Members asked about the current timeframe for getting children's homes registered, noting the complexity and lengthy process experienced in 2023. Officers advised that the process for getting children's homes registered had seen some improvements. In 2023, the timeframe was around 19 weeks from the point of having all necessary paperwork ready. By 2025, this timeframe had been reduced to approximately 12 weeks. However, it was acknowledged that the process could still take longer in some cases, due to the complexity of the registration process, including the requirement to have a registered manager and staff in place before applying for registration.

Members inquired about the number of children in unregistered placements and if Peak House could accommodate those needing Tier 4 beds for severe mental health issues or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The Assistant Director informed Members that the number of children in unregistered placements has dropped from a peak of 15 to fewer than five thanks to efforts to find suitable registered placements.

The Assistant Director also explained how Peak House was designed for children who require intensive support and cannot live with another child. The facility provided a safe environment for children with severe mental health issues or PTSD and worked closely with Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to ensure their needs were met.

Members inquired about private providers buying properties for children with disabilities, their registration process, and interaction with the Council. Officers

explained that these providers need registration through Ofsted or the CQC, and they seek planning permission from district councils.

Concerns were raised about using unregistered County beds for children. The Assistant Director stressed adherence to registration standards for ethical and legal reasons, ensuring high-quality care. The Council used only registered placements and kept Ofsted informed for transparency, while providing daily support from a multi-agency team to children in unregistered arrangements.

Members inquired about expanding the children's homes initiative and staff preparation for new openings. Officers stated the Council would review current developments before further expansion to ensure positive outcomes. The Council was also part of the Southeast Regional Care Cooperative programme to manage residential care over the next three years. For staff preparation, the Council had a recruitment campaign, with new staff undergoing inductions in existing homes. Registered managers were appointed and assisted in other homes as needed.

Members inquired about the number of children in various placements (out of county, in county, in private homes) and progress in working with neighbouring authorities for specialist care. The Assistant Director and the Deputy Director of Children's Services shared that the Council was caring for 777 children, including 80 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Of these, 66 were in privately run homes outside the county due to a lack of local specialist provisions. Oxfordshire had 99 beds in private settings, but the Council faced competition and high costs for these placements. Progress had been made through the Southeast Regional Care Cooperative programme to manage residential care collaboratively over the next three years, aiming to maximise capacity and ensure high-quality care in the region.

The cost differences between county-run homes and private sector care was discussed, with the Committee stressing that the priority should be children's well-being. The Assistant Director noted county homes cost around £4,500 per child per week, while private sector costs often exceeded £7,000, sometimes reaching £17,000 or £18,000. The Council stressed the focus should remain on providing quality care rather than solely financial considerations.

The Committee **AGREED** to a recommendation under the following heading:

- That the Council should encourage Ofsted to ensure the registration period for children's homes is as short as possible and thereby expedite the process of placing children in registered settings.

18/25 REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

(Agenda No. 9)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, attended to present a report on the Virtual School and to provide an update to the Committee on the extended responsibilities laid on the Virtual School as well as ones that were anticipated to come into force under new legislation.

Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director for Education and Inclusion, and Clare Pike, Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School, also attended to answer the Committee's questions.

The Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services introduced the virtual school report and shared positive feedback from the February 2024 Ofsted inspection, praising the school's ambition and vision. Concerns about challenges faced by children in care were raised, particularly with in-year school admissions. The Cabinet Member voiced his support for the bill proposing local authorities handle in-year admissions.

The Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School presented the report, outlining work done between September 2023 and August 2024. She described the core duty of promoting education for children in care and care leavers, and extended duties for previously cared-for children, children with a social worker, and children in kinship care. Achievements included reducing school move times, improving educational outcomes, and increasing university attendance and graduation rates among care leavers.

Members asked about co-production in personal education plans (PEPs) for children in care and the awareness of school governors. The Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School described how PEPs were significantly co-produced, ensuring the young person's voice was included. Efforts were made to ensure governors knew the number of children in care in their schools and their educational progress. Training for governors was being reviewed, and they were encouraged to attend relevant sessions, addressing non-attendance with governance leaders.

Members interrogated suspension statistics in measuring school success, noting that some schools might favour internal exclusions or rest days for children instead of official exclusions. The Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School agreed that suspension statistics were not as detailed as they might be, and was aware of this issue and planned further inquiries into how schools might be masking other forms of exclusion. The Acting Headteacher emphasised the relational schools programme, which aimed to create trauma-informed, shame-sensitive, relational, and restorative environments to reduce suspensions and exclusions by fostering belonging and support for all students.

Members discussed the careful consideration required for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in their transition plans, including extended periods away from education to ensure effective transitions. The Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School emphasised the need for tailored support and involving young people in planning. The Council stressed the importance of collaborative efforts to address the child's needs during reintegration into school, noting thoughtful planning was vital for sustainable support.

The Committee sought assurance that there was sufficient capacity existed in the Admissions team to manage the increase in in-year admissions. The Acting Headteacher of Oxfordshire Virtual School believed the team was capable, noting that the workload depends on the number needing placements. Directing academies to take these children would simplify the process. The Council recognised some

academies' reluctance to delegate but hoped the government would uphold the bill changes for better management. Officers had not heard opposition from any Academy Trusts and anticipated compliance once the bill came into force.

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

- That the Council should continue to highlight the work of the virtual school with governing boards and social workers to ensure they are well-informed and engaged in supporting the education of children in care.
- That the Council, in subsequent annual reports of the Virtual School, should report in more detail on exclusions including informal internal processes.

Katie N left the meeting at this stage.

19/25 SCHOOL PLACE PLANNING AND DELIVERY (Agenda No. 10)

Cllr John Howson, Cabinet member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services, attended to present the report on School Place Planning and Delivery. Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services, Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director for Education and Inclusion, and Barbara Chillman, Pupil Place Planning Manager, also attended to answer the Committee's questions.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report on school place planning and delivery, highlighting the challenges posed by falling birth rates and the impact of significant house building in Oxfordshire. Concerns were expressed about the capital expenditure required for new schools and the potential risks to funding for school replacements. The Deputy Director for Education and Inclusion provided additional context, mentioning the recent allocation of high needs capital funding and the principles and criteria for allocating this funding to schools. The Pupil Place Planning Manager then detailed the sustainable school's strategy, explaining the flexible approach to new schools, the reduction of admission numbers, and the repurposing of surplus accommodation for SEND provision.

Members discussed the use of Section 106 funds for schools and emphasised the need to engage planning authorities for comprehensive service delivery, including primary healthcare. They advocated reviewing the formula and process to better integrate services. The Council noted that Section 106 contributions are legally bound by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations, which require the funds to be proportionate to development impacts and necessary for planning approval. This meant the funds could increase school places but not necessarily improve them. Collaboration with district councils at the local planning stage was crucial to identify infrastructure impacts and secure land and funding for schools and other services. The corporate property group was highlighted for its role in coordinating efforts and ensuring an inclusive planning process.

Members raised concerns about flexible school place planning due to declining intake numbers. The Pupil Place Planning Manager explained that the Council adopted a

flexible strategy to ensure sustainability and manage impacts on existing schools. Priorities included expanding existing schools, relocating them, and using split sites before considering new standalone schools. This sensitive approach to population changes mitigated risks to other schools.

The Council successfully implemented this strategy by relocating and expanding schools in Shrivenham, Farringdon, and Wallingford to improve site constraints and sustainability. Collaboration with Academy Trusts and stakeholders ensured cooperative planning aligned with community needs, facilitating creative solutions to address falling intake numbers.

Members sought clarification on the term "expansion" and expressed concerns about relying on temporary resources like portacabins. The Pupil Place Planning Manager explained that expansion generally meant permanent additions using permanent structures, avoiding temporary solutions unless absolutely necessary.

Single age group classes were preferred by many head teachers and leadership teams for easier management, but mixed-age classes in smaller rural schools had been very successful. Smaller mixed-age rural schools help alleviate strain on SEND and alternative provisions, offering a supportive environment for families with children with SEND. Decisions on class structures were made by the school's head teacher, chair of governors, and senior leadership based on their specific needs and circumstances.

Members explored how smaller class sizes might impact on effectiveness of efficient education. The Pupil Place Planning Manager and Deputy Director acknowledged the concern, stating that while one teacher's view might be subjective, generally classes below 25 could challenge financial viability. The funding formula based on pupil numbers influenced class sizes, aiming for high 20s with a maximum of 30 for reception and key stage one classes. The Council balanced effective teaching and financial viability, using evidence-based research to plan school places and support schools' unique needs. They aimed to place children in nearby schools to enhance educational experience and community integration, with transport costs considered but focusing mainly on quality and environmental impact.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 May 2025 commencing at 12.04 pm and finishing at 12.06 pm.

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE
Councillor Izzy Creed
Councillor Andy Graham
Councillor Georgina Heritage
Councillor Johnny Hope-Smith
Councillor Emma Markham
Councillor Toyah Overton
Councillor James Plumb
Councillor John Shiri

Officers: Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and
Monitoring 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.

20/25 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE 2025/26 COUNCIL YEAR

(Agenda No. 1)

Cllr Brighthouse was nominated by Cllr Creed and seconded by Cllr Plumb.

There being no other nominations, Cllr Brighthouse was elected Chair for the 2025/2026 municipal year.

21/25 ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR FOR THE 2025/26 COUNCIL YEAR

(Agenda No. 2)

Cllr Graham was nominated by Cllr Shiri and seconded by Cllr Overton.

There being no other nominations, Cllr Graham was elected Deputy Chair for the 2025/2026 municipal year.

22/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 3)

There were none.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Divisions Affected - ALL

**EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
– 13 June 2025**

**Education Act 1996 (Section 19) – Response to Local Government
Ombudsman’s Report**

Report by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children’s Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Acknowledge the requirements of DfE Statutory Guidance and the learning from complaints to the Council relating to section 19 provision.
 - b) Support the process of developing the local authority’s Section 19 Policy and Pathway of Action to manage applications for provision following 15 days of school absence.
 - c) Monitor the response to the February 2025 improvement request from the Local Government Ombudsman and bring back a monitoring report to Scrutiny in early 2026.

Executive Summary

2. In February 2025, Oxfordshire County Council received the following directive from the Local Government Ombudsman:
‘Within six months of our final decision the Council will review thirteen cases in the past two years where we found fault with its section 19 duty to provide alternative education to a child out of school. It will: a) produce a dated action plan of how it will avoid recurrence of the same faults by making changes to practice and procedure or staff training; and Final decision b) report this review outcome and action plan to its relevant scrutiny and oversight committee, so it can decide how progress against the plan should be monitored. C). The Council will provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions’
3. Immediate action was taken in February 2025 to review the 13 complaints upheld by the Ombudsman in relation to the Council’s failure to make alternative provision for pupils who had missed more than 15 days of

education. Most cases came under the category of Health Needs, citing mental health and well-being as the reason for prolonged non-attendance. Many of the cases were linked to delays in SEND assessment and the provision of EHCPs.

4. Since February 2025, an action plan has been in place to address the issues made manifest by the case reviews. (Attached as Annex A).

Section 19 Requirements for Pupils with Health Needs

5. The Statutory Guidance for the arrangement of education for children who cannot attend school appears in the following legislation:
 - (a) Section 19 of the Education Act 1996
 - (b) Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
 - (c) Equality Act 2010
 - (d) Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014
 - (e) Arranging alternative provision: a Guide for Local Authorities and Schools (Department for Education, February 2025)
 - (f) Arranging Education for Children who Cannot attend school because of health needs (Department for Education, December 2023)
6. The statutory duty known as 'Section 19 Provision' covers a broad spectrum of arrangements for alternative education. The focus of this report is the provision for pupils with Health Needs detailed in the 2023 publication ['Arranging Education for Children Who Cannot Attend School Because of Health Needs'](#) and, in particular, those whose non attendance is related to their mental health and well-being. Another helpful document demonstrating the application of the law is ['Out of School, Out of Sight'](#) However, it is worth noting that case law suggests that there is a broad and differing interpretation of the duty by parents, professionals and the Ombudsman. Other local authorities are also reviewing their Section 19 provision in the light of case law and other advice since this is a complex area of policy and legislation.
7. The responsibilities for schools and local authorities complement each other. School governing bodies are responsible for arranging full time education from the sixth (or earlier) school day of a suspension for any child of compulsory school age, whilst the local authority has a duty to arrange suitable and (normally) full-time provision for children of compulsory school age who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not receive suitable education without such provision being arranged.
8. Literal interpretation of the duty indicates that after a pupil is absent from school for 15 days, the Local Authority is obliged to consider the use of alternative education provision to ensure continued engagement with learning. Parents can request provision directly from the Local Authority, although 'technically' there is no such thing as a 'request'. In essence, parents are raising with the local authority it's duty to provide education. There are often

complex and challenging circumstances surrounding the delivery of this duty. Examples of complexities present in the 13 Oxfordshire cases include:

- Children remaining at home beyond 15 days. Parents claiming the child is unable to co-operate with the adjustments to provision being offered by the school and submitting a 'request' for section 19 directly to the Council.
- Schools and Local Authority Officers delaying prosecution for non-attendance in an effort to work with the family to restore engagement in learning.
- Schools trying out various support strategies beyond 15 days to keep children learning and encourage them into school before considering alternative provision.
- Schools and Local Authority officers taking time to assess the nature of the absence and whether parents/ carers are contributing negatively to the prolonged non-attendance or whether there is evidence of health-related school avoidance (also known as Emotionally Based School Avoidance – EBSA).
- Overlapping roles between the school and the Local Authority in terms of the duty to educate and the need for pupils to remain on the roll of the school.
- Pupils genuinely experiencing anxiety-related school avoidance exacerbated by prolonged absence.
- Lack of evidence of Mental Health needs warranting Section 19 intervention.
- Schools having to be challenged by the Council to fund alternative education provision since the school's budget contains a notional £6k per pupil to support those with SEND but without an EHCP.
- Confusion amongst schools, Local Authority staff and parents as to what the duty involves and how provision should be funded.

Learning from Complaints in Oxfordshire

9. Between December 2022 and February 2025 Oxfordshire County Council was found at fault by the Local Government Ombudsman in 13 separate complaints cases of failure to manage prolonged school absences in line with the section 19 duty. The majority of these cases were also linked to delayed SEND assessments and time lapses in issuing EHCPs.
10. In February 2025 the Ombudsman required OCC to write an action plan for improvement and report the subsequent learning and progress to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Action Plan is attached as Annex A.
11. There are common themes in the 13 cases in question in terms of children who are waiting for a Special Educational Needs assessment or waiting for an EHCP to be issued. These include:
 - Delays in the EHCP process contributed, in most cases, to stress and anxiety for the child/young person resulting in prolonged school absence where section 19 provision should have been applicable under the Medical Needs duty.

- In all cases OCC demonstrated confusion about the obligation to arrange and fund alternative education provision.
 - The findings of the Ombudsman in the cases where there was fault indicate that the Council should have responded to absences longer than 15 days by moving quickly either to fund alternative education provision or to prosecute for non-attendance.
 - The Council response to stage 1 and 2 complaints from parents demonstrated differences in understanding and interpretation of the section 19 duty. In all 13 cases the Ombudsman found fault.
 - The absence of a clear policy and pathway of action from Oxfordshire contributed to misinterpretation of the statutory duty.
12. It is clear from the review of the 13 cases from the Ombudsman and from similar complaints to the Council, that more accurate consideration of the statutory duty is needed on a case-by-case basis, supported by a clear documentation.

Summary of Actions to Date

13. The detail of actions and progress are contained in the enclosed action plan Annex A.

The main improvements include:

- Securing additional capacity to enable an interim appointment of a Section 19 officer.
- Drafting a revised Section 19 Medical Needs Policy and Pathway of Action which is currently subject to consultation with stakeholders.
- Training staff who are likely to be involved in intervention. Increase awareness and understanding of their legal responsibilities resulting in appropriate advice and action.
- Ensuring the Council has a clear process for managing Section 19 interventions, including via parental 'requests', allocating High Needs funding to support Alternative Education Provision where necessary. (A draft process is attached as Annex B)
- Revising the approach to working with schools to act swiftly to re-engage learners who are unable to attend school due to anxiety and mental health needs.
- Agreeing Alternative Education Provision and funding arrangements with schools, regardless of the existence of an EHCP, if the absence meets OCC published criteria for Section 19 intervention.
- Supporting the plans already in place via the Send Improvement Board to improve the timeliness of SEND assessments and the issuing of EHCPs.

The action plan is attached as Annex A.

Improved Outcomes

14. In the first quarter of 2025, 15 'requests' were made under the S.19 duty. In quarter 2, 12 new 'requests' have been received although this is for two months only.
15. Training was delivered to 42 staff in March 2025. Further training is planned for June and September.
16. New arrangements are in place to receive and deal with requests for Alternative Provision for students unable to attend school due to anxiety and mental health needs in order to re-engage them with learning.

Future Monitoring and Performance Management

17. Ongoing monitoring of improvements will be overseen by the Children Education and Families Directorate Leadership Team and reported to Scrutiny as appropriate. A formal monitoring report on progress will be submitted to Scrutiny in early 2026.
18. SEND Improvements are reported regularly to the improvement board, the DfE and Ofsted and part of ongoing dialogue and due process.

Financial Implications

19. The introduction of an interim Section 19 officer will temporarily increase the cost of this service; however, these costs are being managed with the overall existing staffing budget for the Education service.
20. The actions set out in this report suggest that this could result in a change in the financial position for the council in relation to the cost of alternative provision. However, at this stage it is not possible to accurately estimate what this will be and will likely vary from case to case. For example, in some cases a quicker decision may result in support being funded over a longer period than at present resulting in increased total spend, but in other cases it may result in earlier intervention creating a different outcome and lower total costs for some young people.
21. The council's Section 19 duties are funded from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. It should be noted that the council currently has an annual and accumulated deficit against the grant and any change in spend will impact on this accordingly.

Comments checked by:

Thomas James, Head of Financial Services,
thomas.james@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Finance)

Legal Implications

22. Section 19 statutory guidance is covered by:
Department for Education (2025): Arranging alternative provision a guide for local authorities and schools
Department for Education (2023): Arranging education for children who cannot attend school

Our response to the Ombudsman report has been grounded in this guidance alongside the Local Government Ombudsman report (2022): Out of School, Out of Sight

Comments checked by:

Leanne Schrouder, Locum SEN and Education Solicitor,
Leanne.Schrouder@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

23. Training for staff on the Section 19 duty is already underway. Any changes to the staffing structure to support improvements, will be captured as part of the wider realignment of the education service.

Michelle Higgs, HR Business Partner (Schools and Education),
Michelle.Higgs@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

24. The ability to provide access to appropriate education provision is a cornerstone of equality and inclusion legislation. Enabling an effective Section 19 service is central to the work to improve inclusion across the education system.

Sustainability Implications

25. None.

Risk Management

26. The local authority acted swiftly once the Ombudsman's advice was received. This has mitigated the risk to the local authority and will lead to improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

Consultations

27. None.

Lisa Lyons

Annex A: Section 19 Action Plan
Annex B: Section 19 process flowchart

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education & Inclusion,
Kate.Reynolds@oxfordshire.gov.uk

May 2025

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Annex A: Section 19 Action Plan – Progress as at May 2025

Action	Lead	Deadline	Progress
Analyse the Ombudsman Report	DDoE	February	Complete
Review all cases	DDoE	March	Complete
Draft action plan	DDoE	March	Complete
Staff training session 1	DDoE	March	Complete 20 March 2025
Appoint interim S19 Officer	DDoE	March	Complete
Set up S19 email inbox	DDoE	April	Complete
Publicise S19 email inbox on the local offer	AD SEND and Inclusion	April	Complete
Set up a process map	S19 officer	April	Draft complete (attached as Annex B)
Revise the medical needs policy	DDoE	April	Complete
Briefing for Headteachers	S19 officer	May	Complete
Consult with schools on the revised policy	DDoE	May	In hand
Consult with other stakeholders on the revised policy	DDoE	June	In hand
Staff training session 2	DDoE	June	Date agreed 4 June
Develop parents guidance	S19 officer	July (ready for new academic year)	
Revised the AEP framework to ensure fit for purpose, value for money and education QA	DDoE	July (ready for new academic year)	In hand.
Agree AEP funding provision	DDoE	July (ready for new academic year)	
Staff training session 3	S19 officer	September	Date to be determined.

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Annex B:

Section 19 Process Flowchart for Illness and Otherwise "Additional areas of responsibility and points of contact"

All requests to be submitted via educationsection19@oxfordshire.gov.uk and acknowledged within 2 working days.

S19 Panel Representative of – S19 Officer, Education Inclusion Manager, CAT Officer, EHCP Rep, Strategic Rep, School Rep (HT, Dep HT, HoY, Inclusion, SENCo).

Child Missing Education (CME)

CME / School Admissions / EHCP Casework Teams responsible for ensuring suitable education provision in place

If CME, In-Year Admissions Policy to be followed. 10-day timescale for LA to communicate outcome of School Admissions application.

Section 19 Officer
Margaret.springer@oxfordshire.gov.uk

CYP with medical needs

Oxfordshire Hospital School (OHS) responsible for ensuring suitable education provision in place for CYP whose medical needs meet their criteria

School to refer to OHS. If it meets OHS criteria, OHS to put suitable education provision in place asap. Provision funded by school or LA as appropriate. If referral is not accepted move to section 19 panel

OHS Headteacher
head@ohs.oxon.sch.uk

CYP Looked After

are supported by the Virtual School, responsible for ensuring suitable education provision in place

School provide or commission initial AEP of online or face-to-face learning to start on Day 16 (following S19 request for service) and liaise with the Virtual School. Provision funded by school with top-up from the Virtual School, as appropriate.

Virtual School Head
Clare.Pike@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

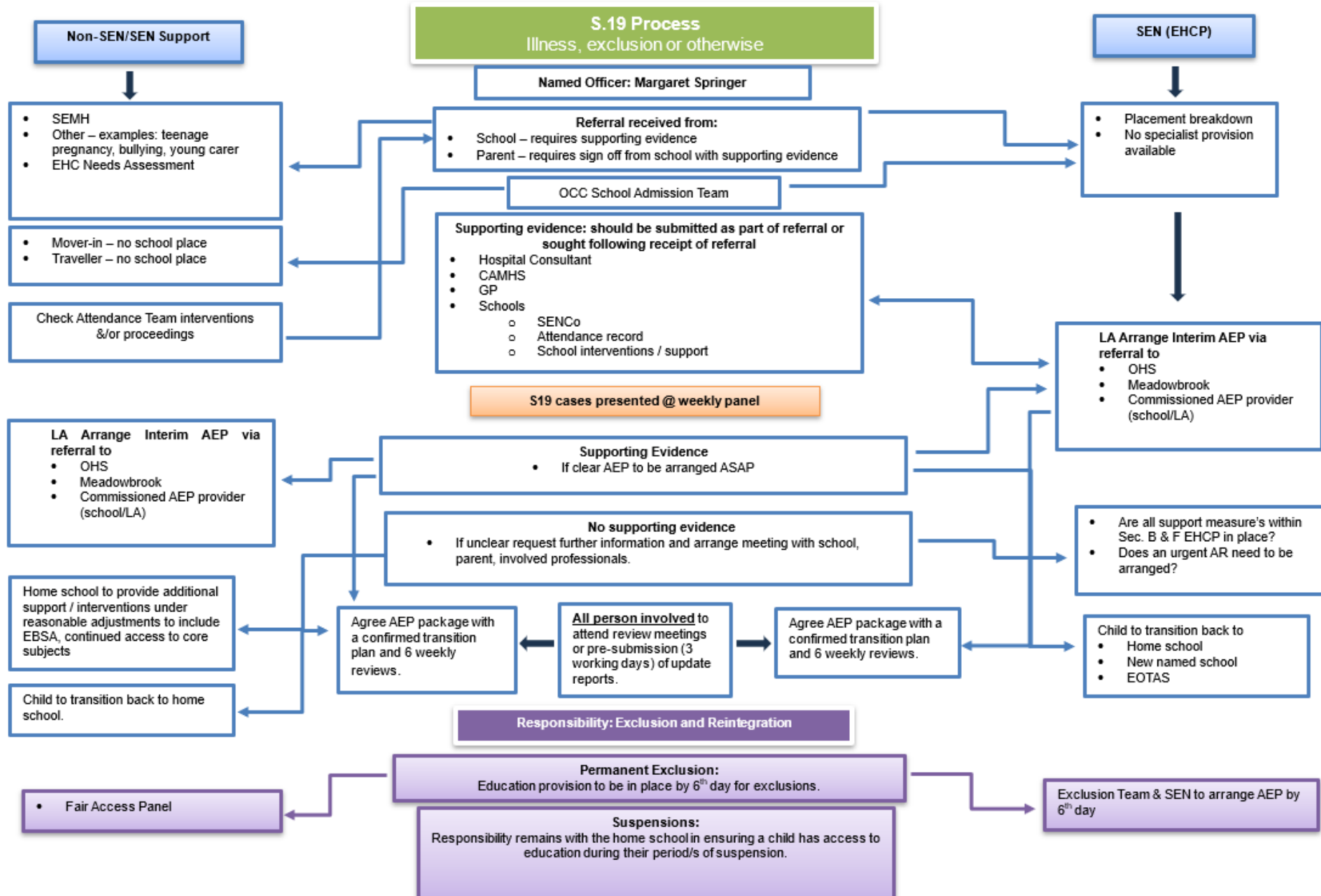
All pupils in the last 6 weeks of Year 11 or in public examinations to be made known to EET

S19 does not apply to a child

- ❖ who will cease to be of compulsory school age within the following 6 weeks
 - ❖ does not have any relevant examinations to complete

S19 does apply to all children

- ❖ with active EHCP's or who are currently going through an ECHNA



Divisions Affected -

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 June 2025

Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policies 2025/26

Report by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED TO ENDORSE** the recommendations following analysis of the public consultation feedback in relation to the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11.
2. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED TO AGREE** to the adoption of the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27, which reflects the consultation analysis recommendations to not introduce a contribution charge for those eligible for support under this policy.

Executive Summary

3. Based on the consultation feedback, benchmarking analysis and the Council's desire to deliver effective and efficient services the following recommendations have been identified:
 - (a) Officer recommendation is for the Council to adopt the updated policies for Home to School Travel & Transport 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11, and the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27 (see appendix). These policies reflect the original review of the existing policies and the feedback received through the consultation, including the implementation of review area 1 which aimed to improve language, format and user experience, whilst ensuring alignment with DfE guidelines. It also incorporated improved wording and information within the policy (review area 2 and 3) which focussed specifically on Direct Travel Payments and Alternative Education Provision travel.
 - (b) Officers have also recommended that the Council does not introduce contribution charges (review area 4) for young people in Post 16 education using travel provided by the Council based on the feedback received through the consultation and in recognition of the potential impact. The introduction of a contribution charge should also continue

to be reviewed for future consideration and possible implementation in reflection of any existing issues and/or circumstances changing in the future.

4. 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.
 5. Local authorities should keep their school travel policy under regular review to ensure it continues to meet local needs and comply with statutory requirements. Due to the significant time that had passed since the previous consultations, a review of the policies was undertaken in 2024. The purpose of the review was to ensure alignment with the Council's statutory obligations and identify existing areas of discretionary provision.
 6. The review, which included engagement from the OxPCF SEND Listening Event in October 2024, parents/families, officer feedback, and feedback from committees/sprint groups, identified that the current policies are hard to understand, and the locating of specific information is difficult. This creates frustration and contributes to difficulty establish consistent and understandable expectations of the service.
 7. The primary focus of the update to the policies was to improve the accessibility of the Policy documents by improving its structure, flow, and language. The purpose was to improve effectiveness and usefulness of the documents for both officers, families, schools, and other key stakeholders.
 8. During the review it was identified that the existing policies include a few areas of discretionary provision. This included:
 - (a) extended support for children and young people living in "split villages",
 - (b) the delivery of the spare seat scheme,
 - (c) and the provision of travel support for young people in Post 16 education free of charge
 9. The consultation included a proposal to introduce a contribution charge for Post 16 travel. Split villages and the spare seat scheme were also included within the consultation, but only as an early engagement to seek understanding of the perception of the public about these two areas of extended provision, beyond the Council's statutory obligations.
- Public Consultation
10. The public consultation ran between 23 January 2025 and 9 March 2025 (11:59pm) It included the proposed refreshed policies, the proposal to introduce contribution charges to Post 16 travel, and explored early engagement/feedback about existing discretionary provision.
 11. The consultation focused on 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 the consultation also explored views on the following discretionary elements of both policies where proposals for change had not yet been developed:

Review area 5: Discretionary travel at split village locations

Review area 6: Spare seat scheme

12. During the consultation, members of the public were able to seek clarification and further understanding of the proposals through four engagement events. The consultation received 81 registrations to attend the events.
13. Feedback from the public regarding the proposals was received through an online survey. 649 surveys were submitted during the consultation period.
14. Updates to the format and language (**Review Area 1**) of the policies to improve understanding, awareness and general experience receive significant support with 66% of respondents either significantly or somewhat approving of the proposed changes.
15. Significant support was also received for **Review Areas 2 and 3**, which related to specific updates to wording within the policy in relation to Direct Travel Payments (DTP's) and travel support for those in Alternative Education Provision. 63% were in support of the updated wording for Review Area 2, and 39% for Review Area 3, 42% neither agreed or disagreed with Review Area 3 proposals.
16. **Review Area 4** was the final proposed change, relating to the introduction of a contribution charge for young learners with an EHCP in Post 16 education where the Council provides support with travel. 60% of respondents disagreed with the proposals.
17. The primary reason for disagreeing with the proposal is the affordability and financial impact of the proposal. Those individuals and families affected are often associated with additional costs which other families may not experience.

18. Feedback also indicated that the financial impact would also have significant impact on a young person's ability to continue their education with respondents indicating the proposal would create a barrier to education.
19. In the consultation it was explored whether the Council should review the support provided to families living in 'split villages', which is discretionary support currently being offered, and if the Council was to make changes to this support what would the impact be. Feedback from the consultation indicated that 43% believed there would be a negative impact on the community if this support was reduced. If this support was withdrawn completely then 55% of responses indicated this would have a negative impact.
20. The consultation also explored the existing discretionary support available through the selling of spare seats. Feedback indicated that if the Council considered to reduce the service in the future, then 65% felt this would have a negative impact. If the Council was to explore increasing the contribution paid to access a spare seat, then 53% indicated this would have a negative impact.
21. Due to the feedback received in relation to Review Area 4 a number of mitigations were considered to explore to understand if the concerns/impact of the proposal could be reduced. This included:
 - (a) Phasing of the proposal for new Post 16 learners, protecting existing learners
 - (b) Enabling monthly payment option in addition to the original termly payment proposal
 - (c) Removing the higher rate contribution band of £1,015 per annum to create a single contribution requirement of £546 per annum irrespective of distance from home to education setting. Waiver to remain for low-income households.
 - (d) Reducing contribution to £350 per annum, irrespective of distance from home to education setting, with waiver removed for low-income households.
22. After a review of possible mitigation measures and consultation feedback it is recommended that the original proposal for Review Area 4 is withdrawn and support continuing to be made available to those meeting the agree eligibility criteria without the need for a contribution charge.
23. Proposals from Review Area 1, 2 and 3 are recommended for implementation and publishing in the policies for the 2025/26 academic year.

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.

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

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 Outturn £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000
Mainstream	£7,665	£7,551	£9,468	£9,700

SEND	£20,485	£24,721	£30,228	£33,393
Total Spend	£28,151	£32,271	£39,695	NA
Total Budget	£26,381	£29,139	£39,899	£43,093

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

Cost Efficiencies and Savings

31. Management of demand is a key to ensure efficient and effective delivery of transport services, with significant increases in cost associated for each child or young person using the service.
32. A significant proportion of demand and cost pressures are not influenceable by the Council. Children and young people meeting the statutory eligibility criteria are entitled to free travel support, whilst economic fluctuations directly impact the cost of travel arrangements the Council makes on behalf of those entitled children and young people.
33. Provision of travel for children and young people, exceeding the Council's statutory obligations continues to be under review. Current cost pressure and potential benefits have been identified and captured within the directorates savings targets, any alteration to planned activity will require the identification of an alternative means to deliver unrealised savings.
34. Proposed changes to existing policies outlined in the recent public consultation were forecast to reduce service spend in the Children, Education and Families Directorate, by £207k per annum.

Integrated Transport Delivery Hub Programme

35. Demand management activity directly impacts the organisation and provision of transport services. Property & Assets directorate has responsibility for delivery of Home to School transport services.
36. The objective of the Integrated Transport Delivery Hub Programme is to address the ever-growing pressures being generated across ASC, CEF and Supported Transport and the proposed overall budgetary reduction of £5 over 3 years.
37. To effectively manage spend in this area the Council must ensure that it affectively assesses each application to identify the most appropriate form of travel, provision of public transport. Alternative/independent travel options continue to be the most cost-effective form of travel offered by the Council.
38. The Council must also ensure that any provision is effectively organised and co-ordinate to maximise the use of available resources and minimise unnecessary travel, such as dead mileage or under capacity vehicle/routes.
39. The Council must also ensure that it effectively procures and sources travel arrangements in order to secure value for money.

40. In total the programme has an agreed savings target of £5m to be delivered over a 3 year period. This will support the Council to sustainably deliver this service within the agreed budgetary financial constraints. Without this action the service will continue to be delivered, exceeding agreed budgets adding financial pressure to the service whilst increasing risk to other support provided by the Council by other service areas.

Policy Review

41. 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.
42. 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.
43. 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.
44. The service review of the policy identified that the majority of the policy detailed the statutory obligations of the Council, the remainder contained 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
45. 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).

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 was necessary to consult to ensure they continued to remain appropriate and effective.
47. Feedback from key stakeholders outside of the consultation period previously 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. It was decided that the Council would consult on the refreshed policies, and in recognition of the Council's financial situation it was agreed 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 consultation ran from the 23 January 2025 to 9 March 2025.
50. The consultation's objective was 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 proposed changes mentioned above, the consultation also targeted responses to explore public views on the following discretionary elements of both policies. Proposals had not been developed for the consultation and review areas were included to inform future thinking with no changes planned or developed. These included:

- **Review area 5:** Discretionary travel at split village locations
 - **Review area 6:** Spare seat scheme
51. The consultation was accessible via Lets Talk using the following link <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hometoschool>. It provided 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.
 52. Consultation document, information & survey were available online, it also included options for the public to request printed versions, alternative formats and an Easy Read version.
 53. Publicity of the consultation involved directed mailing to existing service users via post and email. The consultation was also promoted through Member Briefing, School News, Your Oxfordshire, and via promotion through social media. OxPCF provided support by promoting the consultation by directly messaging their members and through social media.

54. To support survey responses and improve understanding of the consultation, four engagement events took place, with events taking place during lunchtimes and evenings. There were 81 registrations to attend these events although actual attendance was approximately 30.
55. Follow up communication was also undertaken directly to those who registered for the events to ensure both those attending and those that decided to not attend, had the necessary information to allow them to submit their views via the survey.
56. The consultation pack, survey, and draft policies can be found in the annex of this paper.

Consultation Analysis

57. A total of 649 surveys were submitted in response to the consultation. 173 of the surveys related to a family with a child/young person with SEND, 61 from individuals living in an existing 'split village', and 116 from those currently using a spare seat to access their education setting.
58. **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. Improving the overall customer experience of these policies. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	236	37%
Agree Somewhat	188	29%
Neither Agree or Disagree	161	25%
Disagree Somewhat	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	17	3%
Not Sure	37	6%

Table 3

59. **Review Area 2:** 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. Including more clearly defined requirements and explanations of how decisions in relation to 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 implementation of the proposed changes to the policy. Those responding were requested to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	196	31%
Agree Somewhat	205	32%
Neither Agree or Disagree	176	27%
Disagree Somewhat	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	14	2%
Not Sure	45	7%

Table 4

60. **Review Area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy were shared in relation to travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings, reflecting current government guidelines and Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements. Specifically to reflect that alternative provision is now not solely based a Meadowbrook College.

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	137	21%
Agree Somewhat	116	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	266	42%
Disagree Somewhat	6	1%
Strongly Disagree	13	2%
Not Sure	101	16%

Table 5

61. **Review Area 4:** This proposal explored the introduction of financial contributions for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) travelling to post 16 settings.

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

The proposed charge for Post 16 travel was 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 mirrored the cost of the council's spare seat scheme, including the existing waiver of a contribution due to low-family income. Those responding were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	47	7%
Agree Somewhat	85	13%
Neither Agree or Disagree	95	15%
Disagree Somewhat	82	13%
Strongly Disagree	302	47%
Not Sure	32	5%

Table 6

62. A review of the responses disagreeing with the proposal indicated two key reasons for their response. This was that the proposal was not financially viable for families, and that the proposal would create a barrier to education.
63. **Review Area 5:** Discretionary travel is currently provided at split village locations. Through the consultation the Council explored whether this support should continue to be available for pupils living in 'split villages' and continue to enable them to access travel support to either the nearest suitable school or the designated/catchment school for the village/area.

This discretionary provision for split villages has been in place since the last consultation in 2014. In the consultation we explored 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 asked for views on whether the council should continue to provide discretionary transport support to two destinations in split villages locations (catchment school and nearest suitable school), whilst other locations in the county can only access this support to 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.

Respondents were asked to indicate the potential impact on families, school and wider community if proposals were developed (in the future) to **reduce** this service?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	13	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	15	2%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	133	21%

Somewhat Negative Impact	97	15%
Significant Negative Impact	181	28%
Not Sure	203	32%

Table 7

64. In the future, if proposals were developed to withdraw this service, what would the potential impact be on families, schools, and wider community?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	17	3%
Somewhat Positive Impact	4	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	87	14%
Somewhat Negative Impact	79	12%
Significant Negative Impact	276	43%
Not Sure	176	28%

Table 8

65. **Review Area 6:** Early exploration of whether the discretionary selling of spare capacity seats on existing home to school transport services (which the Council organises) should continue into the future.

The discretionary provision of the spare seat scheme has been in place for many years. In the consultation it was explored, at an early stage, if this support should continue to be made available in its current format and approach. This included 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, the Council also wanted to understand what the impact might be on families, schools, and wider community if the spare seats scheme was to be changed or withdrawn. No proposals for changing the spare seats have been developed.

Respondents were asked, if proposals were developed to change the level of spare seat contribution (increase), what would the potential impact be on families, schools, and wider community?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	27	4%
Somewhat Positive Impact	31	5%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	84	13%
Somewhat Negative Impact	121	19%
Significant Negative Impact	215	34%
Not Sure	156	25%

Table 9

66. Respondents were also asked to provide feedback based on the Council developing proposals to reduce this service, what might the potential impact be on families, schools, and wider community?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	12	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	8	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	65	10%
Somewhat Negative Impact	108	17%
Significant Negative Impact	305	48%
Not Sure	134	21%

Table 10

Local Authority Benchmarking

67. A review of Post 16 travel provided by other Local Authorities was also undertaken, to enable comparison of the Council's current approach and the proposal detailed within the consultation.
68. A review of 20 County Councils and 12 Unitary Councils in England was undertaken, reviewing their latest Post 16 Travel Policy Statements. A list of those Councils reviewed is detailed in the table below:

Cambridgeshire County Council	Derbyshire County Council	Devon County Council	East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council	Gloucestershire County Council	Hampshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council
Kent County Council	Lancashire County Council	Leicestershire County Council	Lincolnshire County Council
Norfolk County Council	Nottinghamshire County Council	Staffordshire County Council	Suffolk County Council
Surrey County Council	Warwickshire County Council	West Sussex County Council	Worcestershire County Council

Table 11: List of County Councils Reviewed

Bath & North Somerset Council	Bedford Borough Council	Buckinghamshire Council	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cumberland Council	Durham County Council	North Somerset Council	Northumberland County Council
Shropshire Council	Somerset Council	West Berkshire Council	Wiltshire Council

Table 12: List of Unitary Councils Reviewed

69. 85% of County Council's reviewed require a contribution to be paid before any travel arrangements are finalised, as part of the assessment and eligibility

process. From the sample of Unitary Council's reviewed, only 58% of those Council's required a contribution payment to be made.

70. A summary from the Council's reviewed is listed in the table 13 below, detailing the number of Councils that charge a contribution, the lowest/highest contribution charges identified, and the average charge from review.

Type of Council	No. Council's Review	No. Council's Requesting Contribution Charge (SEND)	Lowest Contribution Charge	Highest Contribution Charge	Average Contribution Charge
County	20	17	£438 Per Annum	£1,632 Per Annum	£787.43 Per Annum
Unitary	12	7	£464 Per Annum	£1,300 Per Annum	£902.57 Per Annum
Total	32	24	£438 Per Annum	£1,632 Per Annum	£821.01 Per Annum

Table 13

71. Hertfordshire County Council had the highest single rate fare. Derbyshire County Council had the lowest single rate fare. Central Bedfordshire Council, the highest Unitary single rate fare, Bedford Borough Council the lowest Unitary single rate fare.

Contribution Rate Type – Single Rate vs Mileage Banding

72. 22 out of the 24 Council's reviewed who request a contribution payment use a single rate that applies to all young people applying for support. Irrespective of the distance travelled, the mode of transport or individual circumstances, everyone pays the same contribution. Hampshire County Council and Warwickshire County Council use a mileage rate to calculate the contribution rate based on the distance between home and their education setting.

Discounted Contributions – Low Income Threshold

73. From the 24 Councils who require a contribution payment to be made, 14 enable a discounted rate to be paid if specific criteria are met. In the case of these 14 Council's, the young person or family would need to evidence they meet the agreed low income threshold set by the Council.
74. Across the 14 Council who offer a reduction of contribution, the contribution reduced on average by 44%, if agreed criteria is met.
75. The remaining 10 Councils who request a contribution payment but do not offer a reduction in contribution, expect the full value of the contribution to be paid before eligibility is finalised and travel arrangements are put in place.

Officer Recommendations

76. Based on the consultation feedback, benchmarking analysis and the Council's desire to deliver effective and efficient services the following recommendations have been identified:
- (a) It is recommended that the Council adopts the updated policies for Home to School Travel & Transport 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11, and the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27. This is based on the review of the existing policies and the consultation feedback of the proposed policies (see appendix), which supports the aims to achieve the improved understanding of Home to School Transport Services, including updated clarity in relation to Direct Travel Payments and Alternative Education Provision travel.
 - (b) It is recommended that the Council does not introduce contribution charges for young people in Post 16 education using travel provided by the Council. The introduction of a contribution charge should also continue to be reviewed for future consideration and possible implementation in reflection of any existing issues and/or circumstances changing in the future.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

77. 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.
78. 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

79. The proposals detailed within this paper maintain the existing financial pressure currently placed on the Home to School Transport budget, which is currently presenting a outturn for 2024/25 of £39.6m from a budget of £39.8m. The proposals do not create additional pressure based on current service demand, if demand is maintained. However, there is forecast demand growth based on increasing pupil numbers and therefore any existing pressure is expected to be maintained.
80. The original consultation proposal for the introduction of a contribution charge for Post 16 travel was forecast to create a reduction in budget pressure of £207k per annum.
81. Alternative improvements will need to be identified within the service to mitigate the impact of not realising the benefit of introducing contribution towards travel costs for Post 16 pupils.

Comments checked by: Emma Wren, Finance Business Partner – Education.
Date – 15/05/25

Legal Implications

- 82. The changes proposed during the Consultation and supported through the feedback have been adopted in the proposed policies recommended for adoption in this paper.
- 83. They continue to reflect the statutory obligations of the Council in relation to support provided for Home to School Travel and access to Post 16 travel. The improvements provided to the policies during this process provides greater clarity and understanding for everyone referring to the documents, whilst provided a robust framework for officers to work to when undertaking eligibility assessments and delivering the service.

Comments checked by: Leanne Schrouder, Locum SEN and Education
Solicitor
Date – 15/05/25

Staff Implications

- 84. Based on the proposed recommendations, no staffing implications have been identified.

Comments checked by: Michelle Higgs, HRBP Schools and Education
Date – 14/5/25

Equality & Inclusion Implications

- 85. The changes being proposed continue to maintain access to education for children and young people in Oxfordshire. The Council's position of continuing to provide its statutory duties remain unaltered, this maintains the support available for protected groups within the framework of the Council's statutory duties, whilst the Council continues to maintain the power to exercise its discretion and provide support where it deems necessary through the established application process. In addition to the statutory support available the proposals maintain the existing extended support for families living in designated 'split villages' and the additional support for children and young people not meeting the existing eligibility criteria with the continued option of purchasing of spare seats.

86. The proposals present a neutral impact, with adequate mitigations to continue to support those protect groups within the community to continue to access education within Oxfordshire.

Sustainability Implications

87. No sustainability implications have been identified relating to the proposed recommendations

Risk Management

88. Analysis of the consultation feedback have been considered in the recommendation outlined in this paper. It reflects the concerns raised by respondents that some proposals may impact access to education.
89. Recommendations also support the maintaining of existing support ensuring access to education continues to be supported through the Council's statutory obligations and discretionary powers. Therefore, no new risks have been identified.
90. The Council continues to maintain discretionary powers when deciding whether to provide support, this is managed through the established application and assessment process where families are able to request support even though they fail to meet the stated eligibility criteria, evidence of the family circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the evidence provided.

Consultations

91. The consultation of proposals relating to Home to School Transport and Post 16 Travel was live between 23 January 2025 to 9 March 2025.
92. Direct communication was sent to 8000 existing users of the service to make them aware of the consultation, how to access details of the proposals, and how to provide feedback.
93. 4 engagement events were held during the consultation period, providing opportunity for the public to seek further information and clarity on the proposals before submitting their response. Sessions were held during the day and in the evening to accommodate pre-existing commitments and arrangements for those likely interested in the consultation.
94. Feedback in the form of submitted surveys were analysed and considered when finalising recommendations identified in this paper.

Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services

Annex:

[Consultation Pack](#)

[Consultation Survey](#)

[Consultation Feedback Analysis](#)

[Proposed Home to School Transport Policy](#)

[Proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026/27](#)

[Equality Impact Assessment](#)

Background papers:

Nil

Other Documents:

[Existing Compulsory School Age Home to School Transport Policy 2024/25](#)

[Existing Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2024/25](#)

[Public Information relating to Split Villages \(inc. current list\)](#)

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June 2025

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 Transport Policy & Post 16 Policy Statement Consultation

Feedback Analysis

Summary of Responses

649 Surveys Submitted (Total)

173 Relate to a child/young person with SEND

61 Live in an existing split village

116 Use the Spare Seat School

Response Detail

Review Area 1: For OCC to updated/refresh Policy improving wording, layout and understanding (drafts included in consultation information)

Response	No. Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	236	37%
Agree Somewhat	188	29%
Neither Agree or Disagree	161	25%
Disagree Somewhat	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	17	3%
Not Sure	37	6%

Review Area 2: Proposed updated wording relating to Direct Travel Payments

Response	No. Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	196	31%
Agree Somewhat	205	32%
Neither Agree or Disagree	176	27%
Disagree Somewhat	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	14	2%
Not Sure	45	7%

Review Area 3: Proposed updated wording relating to Alternative Education Provision travel

Response	No Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	137	21%
Agree Somewhat	116	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	266	42%
Disagree Somewhat	6	1%
Strongly Disagree	13	2%
Not Sure	101	16%

Review Area 4: Proposed introduction of Contribution Charging for Post 16 Travel (SEND)

Response	No Responses	% of Responses
Strongly Agree	47	7%
Agree Somewhat	85	13%
Neither Agree or Disagree	95	15%
Disagree Somewhat	82	13%
Strongly Disagree	302	47%
Not Sure	32	5%

Main comment/feedback is that it is too expensive for those families, they couldn't pay the contribution and therefore a barrier to education post 16.

Review Area 5: Exploring the continued support of Split Villages

Reducing the service – What would be the potential impact?

Response	No Responses	% of Responses
Significant Positive Impact	13	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	15	2%

Neither Positive or Negative Impact	133	21%
Somewhat Negative Impact	97	15%
Significant Negative Impact	181	28%
Not Sure	203	32%

Main comment of reducing choice of school and financial impact on families

Withdraw the service – What would be the potential impact?

Response	No Responses	% of Responses
Significant Positive Impact	17	3%
Somewhat Positive Impact	4	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	87	14%
Somewhat Negative Impact	79	12%
Significant Negative Impact	276	43%
Not Sure	176	28%

Review Area 6: Exploring Continued Sustainability of Spare Seat Scheme

Increasing Contribution – What would be the potential impact?

Response	No Responses	% of Responses
Significant Positive Impact	27	4%
Somewhat Positive Impact	31	5%
Neither Positive or	84	13%

Negative Impact		
Somewhat Negative Impact	121	19%
Significant Negative Impact	215	34%
Not Sure	156	25%

Reducing Service – What would be the potential impact

Response	No Responses	% of Responses
Significant Positive Impact	12	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	8	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	65	10%
Somewhat Negative Impact	108	17%
Significant Negative Impact	305	48%
Not Sure	134	21%

Most comments relate to the scheme is already really expensive, sometimes more than the public bus. Without it you take away education choice and unable to attend school they want to attend. Issues with public transport and accessing areas of Oxford, especially rural locations was also raised.

Response Break Down by User/Type

Review Area 1: For OCC to updated/refresh Policy improving wording, layout and understanding (drafts included in consultation information)

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Strongly Agree	5 (36%)	74 (43%)	17 (29%)	43 (38%)	236	37%
Agree Somewhat	3 (21%)	50 (29%)	19 (33%)	32 (28%)	188	29%
Neither Agree or Disagree	3 (21%)	32 (19%)	16 (28%)	30 (27%)	161	25%
Disagree Somewhat	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	1 (7%)	2 (1%)	1 (2%)	1 (1%)	17	3%
Not Sure	2 (14%)	12 (7%)	5 (9%)	6 (5%)	37	6%
Total	14	171	58	113		

Review Area 2: Proposed updated wording relating to Direct Travel Payments

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Strongly Agree	4 (29%)	58 (34%)	16 (28%)	36 (32%)	196	31%
Agree Somewhat	5 (36%)	51 (30%)	17 (29%)	39 (35%)	205	32%
Neither Agree or Disagree	4 (29%)	42 (25%)	18 (31%)	32 (28%)	176	27%
Disagree Somewhat	1 (7%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	1 (2%)	1 (1%)	14	2%

Not Sure	0 (0%)	17 (10%)	6 (10%)	5 (4%)	45	7%
Total	14	171	58	113		

Review Area 3: Proposed updated wording relating to Alternative Education Provision travel

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Strongly Agree	2 (14%)	42 (25%)	8 (14%)	23 (20%)	137	21%
Agree Somewhat	1 (7%)	36 (21%)	11 (19%)	20 (18%)	116	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	9 (64%)	51 (30%)	29 (50%)	50 (44%)	266	42%
Disagree Somewhat	1 (7%)	3 (2%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	6	1%
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)	4 (2%)	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	13	2%
Not Sure	1 (7%)	34 (20%)	7 (12%)	20 (18%)	101	16%
Total	14	170	58	113		

Review Area 4: Proposed introduction of Contribution Charging for Post 16 Travel (SEND)

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Strongly Agree	0 (0%)	10 (6%)	3 (5%)	21 (19%)	47	7%
Agree Somewhat	3 (21%)	9 (5%)	7 (12%)	21 (19%)	85	13%
Neither Agree or Disagree	1 (7%)	8 (5%)	5 (9%)	25 (22%)	95	15%

Disagree Somewhat	2 (14%)	12 (7%)	16 (28%)	15 (13%)	82	13%
Strongly Disagree	8 (57%)	125 (73%)	22 (39%)	22 (19%)	302	47%
Not Sure	0 (0%)	7 (4%)	4 (7%)	9 (8%)	32	5%
Total	14	171	57	113		

Review Area 5: Exploring the continued support of Split Villages

Reducing the service – What would be the potential impact?

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Significant Positive Impact	0 (0%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	13	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	1 (7%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	15	2%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	4 (29%)	30 (18%)	4 (7%)	25 (22%)	133	21%
Somewhat Negative Impact	2 (14%)	16 (9%)	11 (19%)	16 (14%)	97	15%
Significant Negative Impact	6 (43%)	40 (24%)	33 (58%)	36 (32%)	181	28%
Not Sure	1 (7%)	76 (45%)	9 (16%)	29 (26%)	203	32%
Total	14	170	57	112		

Withdraw the service – What would be the potential impact?

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
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		an EHCP)				
Significant Positive Impact	0 (0%)	6 (4%)	0 (0%)	5 (4%)	17	3%
Somewhat Positive Impact	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	4 (29%)	14 (8%)	4 (7%)	18 (16%)	87	14%
Somewhat Negative Impact	2 (14%)	12 (7%)	5 (9%)	11 (10%)	79	12%
Significant Negative Impact	6 (43%)	68 (40%)	40 (70%)	54 (48%)	276	43%
Not Sure	1 (1%)	68 (40%)	8 (14%)	24 (21%)	176	28%
Total	14	168	57	112		

Review Area 6: Exploring Continued Sustainability of Spare Seat Scheme

Increasing Contribution – What would be the potential impact?

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Significant Positive Impact	2 (15%)	7 (4%)	1 (2%)	8 (7%)	27	4%
Somewhat Positive Impact	0 (0%)	7 (4%)	1 (2%)	6 (5%)	31	5%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	4 (31%)	16 (10%)	5 (9%)	6 (5%)	84	13%
Somewhat Negative Impact	2 (15%)	23 (14%)	17 (29%)	24 (21%)	121	19%

Significant Negative Impact	4 (31%)	42 (25%)	23 (40%)	62 (55%)	215	34%
Not Sure	1 (8%)	71 (43%)	11 (19%)	6 (5%)	156	25%
Total	13	166	58	112		

Reducing Service – What would be the potential impact

Response	Young Person Using HTST	Parent Carer Using HTST (Child has an EHCP)	Lives in a Split Village	Spare Seat User	Total Final	% @ Final
Significant Positive Impact	1 (8%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	7 (6%)	12	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	8	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	2 (15%)	12 (7%)	5 (9%)	1 (1%)	65	10%
Somewhat Negative Impact	2 (15%)	25 (15%)	11 (19%)	6 (5%)	108	17%
Significant Negative Impact	8 (62%)	63 (38%)	35 (61%)	92 (81%)	305	48%
Not Sure	0 (0%)	62 (37%)	6 (11%)	6 (5%)	134	21%
Total	13	167	57	113		

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**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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

Transport policy statement for Home to School Travel and Transport
Responsible: xxxxx
Contact details: xxxxx
Document first release: xxxxx

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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.

Home to School Transport Eligibility

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 remains 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 academic year 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 a village has at least 20% of its addresses located 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 '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 the following webpage 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 miles and 15 miles 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 miles 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 six weeks 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 parents/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

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 a parent/carer have either applied to a school directly, moved to a new home address, or if there has been a change in their circumstances, then they 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 a parent/carer's have a concern about their child's transport arrangements, they should contact Supported Transport in the first instance. If their concern is not resolved, then they should refer to the How to make a Home to School Transport complaint section of this policy.

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/carers.
- 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/carers 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/carers 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 a parent/carer is concerned about the safety of a route, they should 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 a minimum of six weeks 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, the parent/carer should notify the Supported Transport immediately and not let their child travel in the vehicle.
- 6.17 If parent/carer's have any concerns regarding the behaviour of drivers or passenger assistants, they should 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 This information is provided when an application for support is made or when in direct contact with the Council. 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/carers 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/carers, 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.

- 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 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/carers 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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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 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 specifying the transport arrangements or other support facilitating the attendance of young people of sixth form age receiving education or training.
- 1.2 All eligible young people who require travel support must apply by completing an application form, see section 1.8 below.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 For most young people, any travel costs incurred will be their responsibility, or that of their parent or parents.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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**.
- 1.8 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
- 1.9 Education or training refers to learning or training at a school, further education institution, a council maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education, an

establishment funded directly by the Education Skills Funding Agency, learning providers delivering accredited programmes of learning which lead to positive outcomes and are funded by the council, for example, colleges, charities and private learning providers. Learners must be receiving education or training at one of the following:

- a school;
- a further education institution;
- a local authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education;
- a 16-19 Academy; or
- at any establishment (not falling within the above categories) at which the council secures the provision of education or training under section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996

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, or started their course before the age of 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.
- 2.9 An officer within the School Transport Eligibility Team is responsible for the assessment of eligibility for travel assistance.
- 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.
- 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)

Note: Charges are subject to review and change further information can be found on the Council's website

- 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/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](#)



Oxfordshire County Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

TITLE

DATE COMPLETED

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Children, Education and Families (DCS)
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Home to School Travel and Transport Policy and the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Existing Policy – Update & Refresh
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>Following consultation and review of feedback there are no proposed service changes. Changes to the existing policies are cosmetic to improve the ease of use and ensure alignment with the latest DfE Guidance and best practice.</p> <p>Both policies continue to deliver the Council's statutory duties which continue to support compulsory school age pupils and those in post 16 education, specifically those with additional needs (Special Educational Needs) to ensure access is available to the nearest appropriate school that can meet their needs. In addition to support available for individuals/families with disability, support is also available to enable access for those identified as low income, and/or those living in rural communities.</p> <p>Both policies continue to allow individuals to present their personal/individual circumstances for consideration through the application process, if they are unable to meet the described eligibility criteria but have difficulty accessing their child's education setting, these continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>The proposed changes therefore do not bias, discriminate, or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community.</p>
Completed By	Stephen Good – HtST Programme Manager
Authorised By	

Date of Assessment	
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Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>A review of the policies was undertaken, the primary focus of the update to the policies was to improve the accessibility of the Policy documents by improving its structure, flow, and language. The purpose was to improve effectiveness and usefulness of the documents for both officers, families, schools, and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>Updated policies were drafted and published for consultation, a public consultation ran between 23 January 2025 and 9 March 2025 (11:59pm) It included the proposed refreshed policies, the proposal to introduce contribution charges to Post 16 travel, and explored early engagement/feedback about existing discretionary provision.</p>
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	<p>Included in the consultation was a proposal to introduce a contribution charge for young people accessing support with travel to their Post 16 education setting. All other updates to the policy are an update of the existing policy to improve wording and use, no other changes to eligibility or service were included.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The current policies were last consulted on in 2014 and 2019, since then the DfE have reissued guidance for Home to School Travel. The proposed changes to policy reflect the latest updated guidance without changing existing service provision or entitlement.</p> <p>This course of action have been decided to ensure that the policy reflects DfE phrasing and guidance, providing the necessary clarity and consistency requested by families, schools and council officers. It also continues to provide valuable support across protected characteristic groups and wider community.</p> <p>Despite an original proposal to implement a contribution charge it is now proposed that this charge for post 16 travel support is not implemented. As a result there is no change to service under the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement, maintaining existing support across all protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities</p>	<p>The proposed policies were consulted upon between 23 January 2025 and 9 March 2025 (11:59pm) It included the proposed refreshed policies, the proposal to introduce contribution charges to Post 16 travel, and explored early engagement/feedback about existing discretionary provision.</p> <p>The consultation focused on seeking views on the following areas:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

<p>or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>As well as consulting on the proposed changes the consultation also explored views on the following discretionary elements of both policies where proposals for change had not yet been developed:</p> <p>Review area 5: Discretionary travel at split village locations</p> <p>Review area 6: Spare seat scheme</p> <p>Feedback from the public regarding the proposals was received through an online survey. 649 surveys were submitted during the consultation period.</p> <p>Updates to the format and language (Review Area 1) of the policies to improve understanding, awareness and general experience receive significant support with 66% of respondents either significantly or somewhat approving of the proposed changes.</p> <p>Significant support was also received for Review Area’s 2 and 3, which related to specific updates to wording within the policy in relation to Direct Travel Payments (DTP’s) and travel support for those in Alternative Education Provision. 63% were in support of the updated wording for Review Area 2, and 39% for Review Area 3, 42% neither agreed or disagreed with Review Area 3 proposals.</p> <p>Review Area 4 was the final proposed change, relating to the introduction of a contribution charge for young learners with an EHCP in Post 16 education where the Council provides support with travel. 60% of respondents disagreed with the proposals.</p> <p>The primary reason for disagreeing with the proposal is the affordability and financial impact of the proposal. Those individuals and families affected are often associated with additional costs which other families may not experience.</p> <p>Feedback also indicated that the financial impact would also have significant impact on a young person’s ability to continue their education with respondents indicating the proposal would create a barrier to education.</p>
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	<p>In the consultation it was explored whether the Council should review the support provided to families living in 'split villages', which is discretionary support currently being offered, and if the Council was to make changes to this support what would the impact be. Feedback from the consultation indicated that 43% believed there would be a negative impact on the community if this support was reduced. If this support was withdrawn completely then 55% of responses indicated this would have a negative impact.</p> <p>The consultation also explored the existing discretionary support available through the selling of spare seats. Feedback indicated that if the Council considered to reduce the service in the future, then 65% felt this would have a negative impact. If the Council was to explore increasing the contribution paid to access a spare seat, then 53% indicated this would have a negative impact.</p> <p>The Consultation feedback supports the proposed changes to both policies.</p>
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>Consideration was given to implement the proposal included in the public consultation in relation to the introduction of a contribution charge for Post 16 pupils accessing support with travel to their place of education.</p> <p>After review of the feedback, the potential mitigations, and benefits available to the Council it was decided introduction of a contribution charge at this time was not necessary and should be delayed pending a further review and development of key mitigation to ensure access to education is maintained for those it is necessary to support.</p> <p>Implementing this proposal would have been a significant change to the Council existing policy, by not implementing the proposal there is no change to existing service/support available.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Armed Forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Areas of deprivation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Other Council Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Providers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA
Social Value ¹	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No impact from proposed changes	NA	NA	NA

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	30 April 2025
Person Responsible for Review	Stephen Good
Authorised By	

Divisions Affected - ALL

**EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25 February 2025**

EOTAS POLICY (Education other than at School)

Report by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is recommended to consider the attached draft policy and draft parents' guide and provide comments in readiness for presentation at Cabinet.
2. The Committee is recommended to request an annual review of the policy and that the findings of that review are presented to this committee in April 2026.

Executive Summary

3. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is required to implement a policy for the delivery of Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) as highlighted by the SEND inspection in 2023. This policy is crucial to ensure that all children and young people, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive a suitable and effective education, even if they are unable to attend 'traditional' school settings.
4. The EOTAS policy is designed to provide a structured framework for delivering personalised educational plans tailored to the unique needs of each child or young person.
5. A policy has been drafted and is attached to this report as Annex A for the consideration of the Committee for feedback and prior to presentation at full cabinet on 15 July 2025.

Background

6. The number of children and young people in receipt of EOTAS is increasing, with a 64% increase from 2022-23 to 2023-24. As stated above, EOTAS aims

to ensure that all children, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive an efficient and effective education, even if they cannot attend traditional schools. The SEND inspection of 2023 noted the absence of a policy and recommended that the Council put one in place for the delivery of EOTAS. Given the increase of the number of children and young people in receipt of EOTAS, the introduction of a policy is also necessary to formalise the Council's approach in this area and ensure we are working collaboratively with children and young people, and their parents, considering their views, wishes and feelings.

7. To facilitate collaborative working, a number of meetings have taken place since May 2024 between the Deputy Director Education and Inclusion, Education Inclusion Manager, health professionals, SEND Head of Operations, SENDIASS and Parent/Carer Forum Chairs, Assistant Director SEND and the Eotas support group including a listening event with parents/carers in September 2024 and the C&YP Scrutiny committee on 22 November 2024. As part of the follow up to the Scrutiny meeting a further four meetings have been held with the representatives of the parent carer forum and the EOTAS support group. At one of these meetings an external legal expert was in attendance. All the views from these meetings have been taken into account in developing this draft policy.
8. The policy is shaped by several Acts, including the Children and Families Act 2014, the Education Act 1996, and the Equality Act 2010. These laws mandate that local authorities ensure the provision of special educational needs as outlined in Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs)
9. Local authorities are responsible for arranging EOTAS. This provision is typically short-term, with the goal of reintegrating the child or young person into a mainstream education setting as soon as possible however, for a small group of children or young people with complex needs they may require an EOTAS package for an extended period.
10. EOTAS is funded by local authorities through the high needs block. The current spend on EOTAS as of May 2025 is roughly £2.6m per annum. The cost of EOTAS contributes to the overall High Needs Deficit.
11. The EOTAS policy lays out Oxfordshire County Council's position and commitment to those children and families in receipt of EOTAS. It sets out aims and objectives of the policy.
12. EOTAS is funded using Direct Payments to parent/carers or the young person, or using Oxfordshire County Council to pay the provider directly.
13. In order that effective use is made of public funds, the policy states that Oxfordshire County Council will seek to carry out due diligence on all direct payments made as part of an EOTAS package.
14. Any planning and/or amendments to the agreed package will be completed as part of the annual review of the child or young person's EHCP.

15. Safeguarding arrangements will comply with DfE statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
16. A draft parents/carers' guide is attached as Annex B. This guide is for information only and has not yet had input from the parent/carer forum and other key stakeholders. It is intended that further work to co-produce the guide is completed as a matter of priority so that a guide is available for the start of the academic year in September 2025.
17. Given the importance of the policy and the contribution it makes to enabling the local authority to support its most vulnerable children and young people. It is proposed that a full review of the workings of the policy, including proposed amendments, is brought to Scrutiny in summer 2026.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

18. The policy will support the Vision, Values, Objectives and Strategic Priorities of the County Council, as having a clear EOTAS policy in place will specifically help to support and create opportunities for certain individual children and young people with SEND to enable them to reach their full potential. Having a transparent policy in place will also enable a more joined up approach to this work with partner agencies across the Local Area.

Financial Implications

20. As at May 2025 70 young people are in receipt of EOTAS packages at a total cost of c£2.7m per annum.
- 19.
20. The cost of these packages of support are met by the local authority via the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. Payments for EOTAS packages can be made direct to the parent, directly by the LA or a combination of both.
21. The proposed EOTAS policy sets out current practice and therefore it is not anticipated that the introduction will have any direct financial implications. This is however an area of spend where there has been growth in both demand and total spend over recent years, and this is unlikely to change as a result of this policy.
22. The implementation of the policy alongside the guidance and information regarding personal budgets will help to ensure better monitoring of the spend, and governance of EOTAS packages, so that these packages are appropriately monitored and audited.

Comments checked by:

Thomas James, Head of Financial Services,
thomas.james@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

23. The main body of this report and the attached policy set out the Council's legal duties and responsibilities in this area of work. The introduction of a policy will mean that the Council have a clear indication of how it should approach this issue and officers will need to apply the policy when making decisions in order that these are robust in the face of any potential legal challenge.

Comments checked by:

Leanne Schrouder, Locum SEN and Education Solicitor,
Leanne.Schrouder@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

24. Currently the number of school aged children and young people in receipt of EOTAS packages is growing within Oxfordshire and many of these packages are complex. As the students are not on roll at a setting there is an increased demand on the EHCP Casework Team to monitor and support the coordination of the provision. This will have an ongoing impact on the team which may mean that additional staff roles need to be created to ensure the packages are set up, managed and monitored effectively and appropriately.

Michelle Higgs, HR Business Partner (Schools and Education),
Michelle.Higgs@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

25. It is considered that there would be no negative implications in relation to equality and diversity in the approval of this policy. EOTAS is part of the Local Authority's offer to support vulnerable children across Oxfordshire. Having a formal policy in place will help to ensure equality and inclusion and that that children's needs are met. Of the 70 children and young people currently receiving an EOTAS package (as at May 2025), 5 are entitled to free school meals, 49 are male, 21 are female and 62 are White British.

Sustainability Implications

26. There are no sustainability matters arising in the proposal.

Risk Management

27. There is a risk currently across the Council in not having a clear policy in place which sets out the Council's position on EOTAS. Having a new policy will present some operational risks in implementation and effective communication with all stakeholders will be vital, but having a policy in place will ensure that there is better consistency of practice and clarity for professionals, parents/carers and children and young people.

Consultations

28. We have consulted with parents and carers, through a listening event in September 2024 which was attended by parents/carers in receipt of EOTAS and those new to EOTAS. More recently we have sought comment from PCF and the EOTAS Support Group and health professionals on the drafted EOTAS policy and made amendments as appropriate.

Lisa Lyons

Annex A: Draft EOTAS policy 2025
Annex B: Draft parents'/carers' guide

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education & Inclusion,
Kate.Reynolds@oxfordshire.gov.uk .

May 2025

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OCC

Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) Policy 2024

Note: EOTAS can be referred to as Education
Otherwise Than In School or college (EOTIS
or EOTiSC)

Document Summary: This policy details the arrangements through which the LA meets the Statutory requirement to ensure that children and young people with an Education Health, Care Plan (EHCP), who are unable to be educated in school receive suitable education.

It is applicable to those seeking EOTAS packages as well as those currently in receipt of EOTAS packages from 1st September 2025. Any potential changes to existing EOTAS packages will only be considered through the next due Annual Review process

A full glossary of terms relating to this policy can be found within Oxfordshire County Council's Local Offer: [Glossary of terms for the SEND Local Offer | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Vision and values

Local Area Partnership

We are committed to taking accountable and purposeful **action** to ensure that children and young people with SEND, along with their families, are **valued, respected, and empowered** to thrive in an inclusive and supportive community.

Our Approach

Together, we embrace a holistic perspective that **celebrates individuals' strengths**, aspirations, and achievements.

Through **partnership, involvement and collaboration**, we support children and young people with SEND, their families and carers to fulfil their wishes and aspirations.

What is Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS)?

1. Sometimes, children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) require education outside of conventional settings such as schools or colleges and Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 enables education outside of traditional settings.
2. EOTAS stands for Education Otherwise Than At School and is education provision to meet specific needs of pupils who have an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) where the Local Authority is satisfied that it would be inappropriate for some, or all, of the assessed provision to be made in any school or post-16 setting.
Under a formal EOTAS arrangement, the child or young person will not be required to be on the roll of, or in attendance at, an educational setting.
3. The child or young person will receive their education and special educational provision either at home, or within an external setting that is not a registered educational setting.

The Law relating to EOTAS

4. EOTAS allows for a Local Authority (LA), under Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014, to devise a package of special educational provision to be delivered in a setting such as the home or other appropriate setting, where such provision would be inappropriate to be made in a school, post-16 institution or place at which relevant early years education is provided.
5. There must be appropriate consultation with the child's parents/carers or the young person before the Local Authority can make this decision.
6. National SEND Tribunal case law has clarified the high threshold which must be met for EOTAS to be determined as necessary and laid out the circumstances in which it might. <https://www.gov.uk/administrative-appeals-tribunal-decisions/nn-v-cheshire-east-council-sen-2021-ukut-220-aac>
7. Case law has confirmed that for a child to be no longer enrolled at a school and to have their education delivered entirely via an EOTAS package, the Local Authority (or exceptionally SEND Tribunal) would need to be satisfied that it would be inappropriate to deliver any already identified provision in Section F of the EHC Plan need in any school or post-16 institution, including specialist or independent settings.
8. EOTAS provision in Section F of an EHCP is legally treated the same as provision which is delivered within a school setting. The law relating to specificity applies to EOTAS just as it does to provision delivered within

educational institutions. All provision should be written into the EHCP with such a level of specificity that it leaves no room for doubt regarding exactly what provision should be delivered.

9. EOTAS is not a form of Elective Home Education (EHE), with EHE the parent/carer has full responsibility for the educational provision for the child or young person. Under EHE parents/carers must ensure access to a suitable education in accordance with their legal duty under section 7, Education Act 1996.
10. Neither is EOTAS a form of:
 - Flexi-schooling
 - Alternative education provision
11. Parents/carers can seek advice and support on EOTAS from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Service (SENDIASS) who provide impartial information, advice and support to parents and carers of children with SEND, and children and young people themselves through the CHYPSS (Children and Young People's Partnership Service) element of SENDIASS.

Aims

12. Oxfordshire County Council will ensure that children and young people have appropriate learning opportunities and are effectively safeguarded.
13. EOTAS is not necessarily seen as a long-term solution for most children and young people, but an EOTAS package can last as long as needed and deemed to be appropriate and in line with other statutory obligations.

Process of identifying EOTAS

14. As part of the annual review process, or during the drafting of a new EHCP, if it is identified that the provision necessary to meet a child or young person's needs cannot be delivered in an educational setting, an EOTAS package will be considered under Section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. This process will include the views of the child or young person and their parent/carers.
15. This will also take into account where EOTAS may be being considered when it is not parental preference but an appropriate setting is not currently available.
16. Oxfordshire County Council will consider all proposals for EOTAS on a case-by-case basis at the Complex Case Panel, considering the individual circumstances for each child or young person.
17. In line with case law ([TM v London Borough of Hounslow \[2009\] EWCA Civ 859 \(11 June 2009\)](#)) such factors will include:
 - i. the child's background and medical history;
 - ii. the particular educational needs of the child;
 - iii. the facilities that can be provided by a school;
 - iv. the facilities that could be provided other than in a school;
 - v. the comparative cost of the possible alternatives to the child's educational provisions
 - vi. the child's reaction to educational provision, either at school or elsewhere;
 - vii. the parents' wishes (although they are not generally determinative); and
 - viii. any other particular circumstances that apply to a particular child

18. If there is a setting, which the Local Authority identifies is appropriate, that can offer a placement, meet assessed need and deliver the provision as recorded in an accurate and up to date EHCP, Oxfordshire County Council is unable to consider EOTAS.
19. If, having considered a request for EOTAS, this is not agreed by the Local Authority, a full rationale for this decision will be shared with parents/carers alongside identified next steps.
20. If a parent/carer or child or young person disagrees with the decision, they have the right to appeal to Tribunal (SENDIST)

If EOTAS is agreed the following will apply

22. Oxfordshire County Council will decide how the package is to be delivered in consultation with parents/carers and the child or young person and will secure the provision in the EHCP.
23. From the date the EHCP is finalised, Oxfordshire County Council will arrange all provision set out in the EHCP. Oxfordshire County Council will usually use appropriate providers who are registered as part of the Council's Alternative Education Provision Framework to deliver EOTAS packages.
24. Provision will be either funded directly, or a personal budget will be agreed and paid to the parent/carer or young person in line with the Council's Direct Payment arrangements, or a combination of both.
25. Any personal budget will be sufficient to provide appropriate education and special educational provisions. Oxfordshire County Council will ensure that there is efficient use of resources and therefore, any EOTAS provision set out in an EHCP will be delivered in the most efficient way possible.
26. Agreeing to receive a direct payment comes with responsibilities for families, such as contracting with or employing staff, arranging pre-contracting checks with professional bodies and by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), providing regular financial returns to the Council to demonstrate appropriate spending, and ensuring the quality of the service provided.
27. Advice, guidance and support will be available to support parent/carers and young people around personal budgets by the Direct Payment Advice Team.
28. Oxfordshire County Council will seek to carry out due diligence on all direct payments made as part of an EOTAS package to support the monitoring of public funds.
29. EOTAS will be recorded in the child or young person's EHCP as follows:
 - i. Section F will clearly describe all of the support they need, including the provision which will be delivered under EOTAS
 - ii. Section I will be left intentionally blank if not setting or institution is going to be attended at all
 - iii. Section J will detail the special educational needs and outcomes to be met by any agreed personal budget via direct payments relating to Section F
30. Educational provision will be approved for the equivalent of an academic year. However, the provision can be timetabled and identified funding can be used flexibly, depending on the needs of the child or young person, and it may be that provision will be built up gradually at the individual child or young person's pace.
31. All EOTAS packages would usually include Maths, English and Science as

- part of meeting the needs of the child or young person.
32. Post 16 packages may (where appropriate) include English and Maths if the CYP has not yet achieved a grade 4 or equivalent in these subjects and where a young person is studying for GCSEs
 33. Arrangements will be made for children and young people entitled to free school meals via the EOTAS package.

Transport

34. Oxfordshire County Council will consider transport on a case-by-case basis and in line with the home to school transport policy.

Safeguarding

35. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to the safeguarding of all children and young people. For provision delivered via the Alternative Education Provision Framework, appropriate due diligence and safeguarding checks will have been made. In the case of parent/carers or young people with a personal budget, assurances and evidence will need to be given to the Council that appropriate checks have been made.
36. If there are any safeguarding concerns, then these will be reported to the EHCP Casework Officer as the main point of contact, who will escalate as appropriate. All professionals working with the child and young person will be aware of and follow processes if they have any concerns:
[Concerns about a child | Oxfordshire Schools](#)

Monitoring

37. It is Oxfordshire County Council's responsibility to coordinate and monitor EOTAS in collaboration with parents/carers, young people and other professionals. Individual EOTAS packages will be monitored by the child's and young person's allocated EHCP Casework Officer with strategic oversight from the SEND Operations Manager.
38. All staff working with parent/carers and young people around EOTAS will be provided with appropriate training.
39. EOTAS arrangements will be reviewed at least three times per academic year, and as part of the next Annual Review of the EHCP.
40. As part of the Annual Review process and having considered the appropriateness of current provision with the child or young person and parent/carers and all professionals involved, Oxfordshire County Council will consult with appropriate education settings if there is evidence that the legal test for EOTAS may no longer be met.
41. The LA will convene, coordinate and chair the Annual Review meeting. The parent/carer or the child or young person themselves can also request an Annual Review.

Transition planning

42. If, following the Annual Review process, a setting is identified for the child or young person then a transition plan with achievable timescales will be developed with parents/carers, professionals and the setting to ensure that

this placement is successful. This transition plan may include continuation of some of the previous EOTAS provision if appropriate and will be regularly reviewed.

43. If, following the Annual Review process, the LA proposes to cease the child or young person's EHCP then a transition plan will be developed with parents/carers and professionals, including support and signposting to other agencies.

Combining other types of Personal Budgets

44. If a child or young person with EOTAS arrangements is eligible for medical treatment or therapy in section G of their EHCP, and/or social care provisions in section H of their EHCP, they may be eligible for other personal budgets for those parts too. When eligible for more than one personal budget, families may wish combine budgets to arrange the education, health, and social care provisions in their child/young person's EHCP more flexibly. This arrangement gives families the most control and creativity over those arrangements.
45. Oxfordshire County Council may only consider parents/carers requests for personal (education) budgets when a draft EHCP has been issued or as part of an Annual Review of an EHCP. Requests for personal health or social care budgets may be made and considered at other times to the responsible organisations. Parents/carers may not appeal the Council's decisions about whether they award a direct payment or not, but they may ask to review their decisions.

Complaints

46. If there are concerns about aspects of individual EOTAS packages, then parents/carers should raise this with their allocated Casework Officer in the first instance. Parents/carers can also raise complaints under Oxfordshire County Council's complaints processes [Complaints and comments about Oxfordshire County Council | Oxfordshire County Council](#)
47. In exceptional circumstances, the Director of Children's Services along with the Lead member for Children, Education and Families, may agree an alternative arrangement. This arrangement will be reviewed as part of the Annual Review.

Further Information

Local Offer Website

Relevant legislation and guidance

Section 61 of the Children and Families Act

2014 Section 42 of the Children and Families

Act 2014 Section 7, Education Act 1996.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

Alternative Provision: Statutory guidance for local authorities January 2013

Responsible officer: Kate Reynolds, Director Education and Inclusion

Responsible Service Area: Education

Review Date: April 2026/

To be reviewed annually.

Annex B: draft parents/carers' guide – subject to further amendment.

Education Otherwise Than At School/College (EOTAS/EOTAC)

Education in a school or college isn't always the best fit for every child or young person.

Sometimes, due to specific challenges or circumstances, your child may need to learn in a different way or in a different place. This approach is called EOTAS/EOTAC (Education Otherwise Than At School/College), and it's there to help children who can't thrive in 'traditional' education settings.

To ensure that all children/young people can receive an efficient and effective education, the Children and Families Act 2014 allows for education outside of traditional education settings.

Under s 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014, children and young people may be educated otherwise than at school or college if it is inappropriate for their SEN provision to be delivered in an educational setting.

EOTAS/EOTAC is a provision designed for children and young people who cannot thrive in 'traditional' educational settings due to various challenges. It is provided by Oxfordshire County Council and meets the needs of your child who, for whatever reason, is unable to attend school.

Oxfordshire County Council remains legally responsible for organising and funding your child's special education provision.

Why do some children and young people need EOTAS/EOTAC?

For your child, school/college may not be suitable and they may be unable to receive an appropriate education in any school/college.

- they may have mental health difficulties that affect their ability to attend a school/college.
- they may have medical conditions that affect their ability to attend a school/college.
- the school/college they have attended may not have been able to meet their needs.

An EOTAS/EOTAC package may be considered if your child is undergoing a statutory assessment and Oxfordshire County Council assesses and determines that it may be inappropriate for them to attend an educational institution.

An EOTAS/EOTAC package may be considered if your child is having a review of their EHCP and Oxfordshire County Council assesses and determines that it may be inappropriate for them to attend school or college.

If Oxfordshire County Council considers school or college to be inappropriate for your child, they can arrange for the provision to be delivered somewhere other than in a school, college or early years setting.

What could EOTAS/EOTAC look like?

EOTAS/EOTAC provision could include:

- online schooling
- tuition at home
- tuition or training at a specialist centre
- hospital schooling
- therapeutic interventions
- life skills training, including travel training.

What makes an education setting ‘inappropriate’ for your child?

EOTAS/EOTAC is only possible where Oxfordshire County Council is satisfied that it would be inappropriate for your child’s special educational provision to be made in a school/college. To meet this test, evidence is needed to demonstrate that education in a school/college would be inappropriate.

- Information, evidence and views submitted by you and your child.
- Information collated by the local authority, from the professionals and agencies.

Your child’s circumstances must be looked at including;

- their background and medical history
- their educational needs
- the facilities that can be provided by a school/college
- the facilities that could be provided other than in a school/college
- the comparative cost of the possible alternatives to your child’s educational provision
- the efficient use of public resources
- your child’s views, wishes and feelings
- your views, wishes and feelings
- any other circumstances.

When everyone agrees to the EOTAS/EOTAC package, Oxfordshire County Council have a duty to ensure that your child is receiving education as set out in their EHCP.

What if the EOTAS/EOTAC package is not agreed?

You will have the right of appeal in certain circumstances, such as:

- a final plan is issued after the initial EHC needs assessment
- a final amended EHCP after an annual review has been issued
- a final amended EHCP is issued after reassessment.
- a refusal to reassess
- a refusal to amend an EHCP after annual review
- appealing against a plan being ceased.

EOTAS/EOTAC and EHC Plans

When a full time or part time EOTAS/EOTAC package is agreed. or directed by a tribunal, the package is set out within Section F of the Education Health Care Plan.

Full Time EOTAS/EOTAC

If it is agreed that it would be entirely inappropriate for your child to attend an educational institution, then Section I of the EHCP will be left blank.

Part Time EOTAS/EOTAC

If it is agreed that your child will attend an educational institution for at least part of the time, Section I of the EHCP must name the school or college they will attend.

EOTAS/EOTAC and annual reviews

There is the same duty to conduct an annual review when your child is educated otherwise than at school/college. All timescales and obligations will remain the same throughout the annual review process.

Oxfordshire County Council may want to see ongoing evidence that it is still inappropriate for your child to be educated in an educational setting so you may wish to consider this evidence before the annual review takes place.

Parental/Carer request for a Personal Budget via Direct Payments for EOTAS/EOTAC

You have a right to request for a Personal Budget to have greater control over the delivery of the EOTAS/EOTAC package.

Payments can only be made to an adult, either the young person themselves, their parent/carers, or a nominated person.

Oxfordshire County Council must ensure that the amount requested is sufficient to secure the provision and that it is an efficient use of the authority's resources. Direct Payments will not be agreed if it is more cost effective for Oxfordshire County Council to secure the provision. There is no right of appeal against the decision.

Concerns and complaints about an EOTAS/EOTAC

You and/or your child are entitled to raise any concerns about the EOTAS/EOTAC provision with Oxfordshire County Council. In the first instance, it is helpful to discuss any concerns with the allocated officer who will work to resolve these. If you or your child wishes to escalate the complaint, this can be done by submitting a complaint via Oxfordshire County Council's complaints procedure.

Safeguarding

Oxfordshire County Council has a duty of care to children and young people who are receiving education other than at school or college. If concerns are raised that a child or young person's safety or wellbeing is compromised, or it is felt that the child or young person may be at significant risk, Oxfordshire County Council will respond without delay and, if appropriate, refer to the Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). MASH is equipped to identify the level of risk and needs of children and where necessary, rely on multi agency information sharing processes to make an informed decision about the most appropriate response that needs to be taken.

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Divisions Affected -

EDUCATION & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 June 2025 Woodeaton Manor School Update

Report by Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to **NOTE** progress on resolving the outstanding issues at Woodeaton Manor School.

Executive Summary

2. This report updates Scrutiny on the position at Woodeaton Manor School (a foundation school). The report covers the period Autumn 2023 to 30 May 2025. It highlights the significant concerns and complexities that led to the resignation of the school governing body and the permanent headteacher and gives details of the steps the local authority took to stabilise leadership and management in the school and to tackle those concerns. The report has been structured sequentially in order to give a timeline and structure.

Exempt Information

3. The report will make reference to a number of unnamed individuals who are no longer in the employ of the County Council. Some of these individuals left during 2024 and therefore access to some files and information has not been available during the collation of this report.

Background (prior to 2023)

4. Woodeaton Manor School is a foundation special school catering for roughly 80 pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). It is located near Islip in a Grade II* listed building.
5. As a foundation special school, the governing body was responsible for the leadership and management of the school including all aspects of safeguarding,

property repairs and maintenance, teaching and learning and financial management.

6. When the Foundation was established, full legal responsibility for the freehold should have been transferred to the governing body by the County Council. This was only partially finalised, and the land registration was not completed and therefore the land is showing as still belonging to the County Council.
7. Prior to November 2023, the school was a successful school, educating around 80 pupils. The school had received the following Ofsted inspection outcomes:

January 2011	outstanding
November 2013	good
May 2019	good

2023 Onwards

8. As a result of the local authority's regular improvement support for schools, our School Improvement Partner raised significant concerns about the leadership and management of the school – in particular safeguarding and building concerns – in the summer of 2023. The headteacher was suspended in July 2023 and later resigned. In October and November 2023, the school was inspected by Ofsted and given a rating of 'inadequate', leading to a 'forced' academisation. The report stated:

Pupils do not receive an acceptable standard of education at Woodeaton Manor. The school is often chaotic and staff are not supported well enough to provide the nurture, care and professionally informed approach that pupils need.

Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to stem the decline in standards in the school since the last inspection. Pupils' safety is sometimes put at risk because the school's policies and procedures are not embedded or followed consistently by staff.

9. After the inspection in November 2023, the governing body resigned.
10. Due to the 'inadequate' rating, a forced academisation process was commenced under the DfE's academisation framework. As part of that process an 'Interim Executive Board' (IEB) was established to replace the school's governing body. An interim headteacher was appointed in the Autumn of 2023, who left in mid-January 2024. Since then the school has had a series of interim headteachers, however, a permanent appointment was made in late 2024 and remains in post.
11. In conjunction with the DfE, in early 2024, a brokering exercise was conducted to seek to find an appropriate Multi Academy Trust for Woodeaton Manor. The date for academisation was set as 1 February 2025.

12. The County Council did not express a preference for any specific academy trust during the brokering exercise. The DfE named Propeller Academy Trust (PAT) as the successful Trust to run the school once it became an academy.
13. The County Council used its strategy group meetings to determine progress at the school. As a result, over the course of 2024, it became increasingly clear that the IEB was finding it difficult to fulfil its obligations with regard to safeguarding staff and pupils at the site and where this was largely due to the state of the building and wider safety issues at the school site, in addition to difficulty in securing the necessary therapeutic support for pupils. Alongside significant investment by the County Council in repairs and maintenance, from March 2025 the County Council put in place a service level agreement with PAT to support the leadership and management of the school. The County Council further decided to re-evaluate the IEB at the end of its term of office on 28 February 2025 and put in place an Interim Transition Board (ITB) with effect from 1 March 2025 to oversee the period to academisation, with the ITB being formally approved as a new IEB by the DfE in April 2025.
14. The residential element of the school's provision was paused in Autumn 2023 due to the safeguarding concerns. In Spring 2025, acting on behalf of the IEB, the County Council undertook a public consultation on the proposal to close the residential provision with effect from 1 April 2025. None of the current pupils at the school had the requirement for residential provision as part of their EHCP. Following the consultation, the decision was made to close the residential provision.
15. Due to challenges around ownership of the land and assets (see below) and complications surrounding the funding for Woodeaton, the date for academisation has been moved and is subject to further discussion with the agreement of PAT and the DfE.

Land Issues (Freehold and Leasehold)

16. The school is located in a Grade II* listed building (a designation only pertaining to 1% of listed buildings) and the buildings are not suitable for a 21st century curriculum nor appropriate to ensure the safety of staff and pupils. The original governing body did not invest in the premises and the site is dilapidated and not fit for purpose. Despite significant investment from the County Council, this site and building cannot be improved to deliver quality education and the long-term plan is to relocate the school into more appropriate premises.
17. As stated earlier, when the school became a foundation school, the freehold (including the land and buildings) should have been transferred to the school governing body. However, although this process was started, the final step (the registering of ownership with the Land Registry) was not completed.

18. During 2024, the IEB raised their concerns that the freehold had not been vested in the governing body of the school. In the autumn of 2024, the IEB contacted the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to formally request the vesting of the freehold.
19. During 2024, the County Council held discussions with PAT about the status of the freehold when the school became an Academy. Both parties were in agreement that once Woodeaton Manor became an Academy, the freehold should be transferred to the County Council and where this would place Woodeaton Manor on the same legal basis as other academies across the county under a 125 year leasehold agreement.
20. The Office of Schools Adjudicator responded to the IEB's request in late 2024, requiring the County Council to register the freehold and title with the IEB by 31 December 2024. Unfortunately, there were delays from solicitors which meant that the deadline was missed.
21. Following the establishment of the ITB in March 2025, and in collaboration with PAT, it was decided that all three parties (the County Council, PAT and ITB) would write to the OSA rescinding the prior request to transfer the freehold to the IEB (at that time the ITB), since the ITB acknowledged that the County Council and PAT had reached an agreement whereby following academisation the freehold would revert to the County Council and where setting aside the direction from the OSA would save public funds resulting from unnecessary land transfers. A response from the OSA has been received requesting that the freehold be vested in the IEB and all parties have undertaken to take any necessary and appropriate action to complete that process.

Financial Implications

22. There have been significant financial implications for the County Council as a result of the previous failure of the governing body to appropriately invest in the land and building at the school. Significant amounts have been committed to ensuring the safety of the site and buildings and protecting the safety of pupils and staff in the order of £1.6m. In addition, due to lack of historic robust financial management and other leadership and management at the school, the revenue budget has been significantly overspent. The deficit (which sits with the Council rather than the school after academisation) was in the order of £1.5m as at 31 March 2025 and is likely to continue to increase.
23. In order to secure the support of Propeller Academy Trust (PAT) for the period between March 2025 until academisation, a service level agreement was put in place with a cost of £101k for 3 months. A funding agreement to support the school through the next couple of financial years will be agreed prior to conversion, funded from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Comments checked by:

Thomas James, Head of Financial Services,
thomas.james@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Legal Implications

24. The County Council has acted in accordance with the legislation and guidance for academisation and the appropriate land and property framework. The academisation process has been completed in line with the legal requirements and throughout the process discussions have been held with PAT and the IEB/ITB as appropriate.

Comments checked by:

Leanne Schrouder, Locum SEN and Education Solicitor,
Leanne.Schrouder@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

25. The process of academisation involves the transfer of the employment of staff from the local authority to the multi academy trust – in this case PAT – under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. All due diligence checks were completed before 1 June 2025 in line with guidance and good practice. Due to the closure of the residential provision, one member of staff was identified as being at risk of redundancy.

Comments checked by:

Michelle Higgs, HRBP Schools and Education,
Michelle.Higgs@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Equality & Inclusion Implications

26. Woodeaton Manor School is a special school serving a pupil population, all of whom have Education Health and Care plans. Ensuring the school is effectively led and managed is of central importance to delivering the very best outcomes for one of our most vulnerable communities.

Lisa Lyons

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Kate Reynolds, Deputy Director of Education & Inclusion,
Kate.Reynolds@oxfordshire.gov.uk .

May 2025

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Work Programme 2024/2025

Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Report Leads
13 June 2025				
Home to School Transport Policy	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential; tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire; invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network.	To consider the recommendations to Cabinet related to the proposed revised Home to School Transport Policy	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Stephen Good
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, Kate Reynolds
Draft EOTAS Policy	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, Kate Reynolds
Woodeaton Manor Update	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure accountability and improvement	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Kate Reynolds

11 July 2025				
Work-planning				
26 September 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
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To consider the annual report; to ensure accountability and improvement.	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Senay Nidai
26 November 2025				
To be confirmed during work planning session				
27 February 2026				
s.19 Monitoring Report	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To ensure accountability and improvement	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Kate Reynolds
27 March 2026				
EOTAS Policy Review	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.	To review progress of policy implementation	Overview and Scrutiny	Lisa Lyons, Kate Reynolds

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
Inclusive Schools Finance	Create Opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	To understand and analyse pressures within schools.	To identify any areas that need to be referred to the Committee	Members of the Committee

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Recommendation Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, 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	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Recommendations:

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
28-Feb-25	Local Area Partnership SEND Update	1. The Council will publish the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as well as the RAG Rated Priority Action Plan Tracker and ensure they are accessible to the public.	Lisa Lyons; Kate Reynolds; Matthew Tait	<i>Draft response from Cabinet:</i> Partially Accepted We are revising our priority action plan and the associated KPIs and RAG ratings. A white paper on SEND is due imminently and we may need to reflect that in our approach. Therefore, we will be in a position to publish information in early autumn.
		2. The Council will set out how the views of the SEND Youth Forum, and its members, will be taken into account and how they will be		<i>Draft response from Cabinet:</i> Partially Accepted

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
Page 164		presented, including any consultation prior to the publication of any reports about the Forum.		<p>The views of the Forum are taken into account as part of service developments. Representatives from the Forum attend SiAB and other activities on a regular basis so that they can inform our improvement journey and service development. Young people are also represented on our Preparation for Adulthood work – specifically supported internships.</p> <p>The local Area Partnership reserves the right to use information about the Forum and any reporting about the forum in the line of operational work without direct consultation prior to publication. In practice the forum understands its work will be used in a range of areas and the mechanism follows a well-established process that is used in participation and engagement practice such as in Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Councils.</p>
	Report of the Virtual School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Council should continue to highlight the work of the virtual school with governing boards and social workers to ensure they are well-informed and engaged in supporting the education of children in care. 2. That the Council, in subsequent annual reports of the Virtual School, should report in more detail on exclusions including informal internal processes. 	Lisa Lyons; Kate Reynolds; Clare Pike	<p>Sent to Cabinet for 17th June</p> <p>Sent to Cabinet for 17th June</p>

KEY	Due to Cabinet	With Cabinet	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update/response
28-Mar-25	Update of Children's Homes	1. That the Council should encourage Ofsted to ensure the registration period for children's homes is as short as possible and thereby expedite the process of placing children in registered settings.	Lisa Lyons; Jean Kelly; Charlotte Davey	Sent to Cabinet for 17 th June

Action Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse, Chair | Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer, richard.doney@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete
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Actions:

Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
28-Feb-25	Local Area Partnership SEND Update	The Director of Children's Services would share with the Committee the KPIs reported to the SIAB and the RAG rated Priority Action Plan tracker	Lisa Lyons	Distributed 28 March 2025
		The Scrutiny Officer was requested to work with the Director of Children's Services to ensure an answer was provided to the Committee's question about inclusive schools and potential financial disadvantage.	Lisa Lyons; Richard Doney	Question with Notice from Members of the Council on 1 April 2025 raised by Cllr Waive and responded to by Cllr Howson. https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/g7463/Decisions%20Tuesday%2001-Apr-2025%2010.30%20County%20Council.pdf?T=2

KEY	Delayed	In progress	Complete
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Meeting date	Item	Action	Lead	Update/response
28-Feb-25	Revised Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policies for Consultation	Officers would discover what happened to the Cabinet Advisory Group and initiative for special schools to manage their own transport and report their findings back to the Committee.	Richard Doney	In Progress
		The Home to School Transport programme Manager committed to checking which specific Youth Parliaments were involved in the consultation and how they would be engaged.	Stephen Good	In Progress

Recommendation Update Tracker

Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE, 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

Cabinet Response Date	Item	Recommendation	Lead	Update
25-Mar-25	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	Superseded by agreement to extend timeframe
		2. That the Council, in tandem with rewriting its draft EOTAS policy, should also write a co-produced Alternative Provision policy.		Superseded by agreement to extend timeframe

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Local Area Partnership SEND Update

Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr John Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education, and Young People's Services; Cllr Kate Gregory, Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement

Date response requested:² 25 March 2025

Response to report:

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council will publish the most recent Key Performance Indicators reported to the SIAB as well as the RAG Rated Priority Action Plan tracker.	Partially accepted	We are revising our priority action plan and the associated KPIs and RAG ratings. A white paper on SEND is due imminently and we may need to reflect that in our approach. Therefore, we will be in a position to publish information in early autumn.

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>2. That the Council should set out how the views of the SEND Youth Forum, and its members, will be taken into account and how they will be presented, including any consultation prior to the publication of any reports about the Forum.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>The views of the Forum are taken into account as part of service developments. Representatives from the Forum attend SiAB and other activities on a regular basis so that they can inform our improvement journey and service development. Young people are also represented on our Preparation for Adulthood work – specifically supported internships.</p> <p>The local Area Partnership reserves the right to use information about the Forum and any reporting about the forum in the line of operational work without direct consultation prior to publication. In practice the forum understands its work will be used in a range of areas and the mechanism follows a well-established process that is used in participation and engagement practice such as in Corporate Parenting and Children in Care Councils.</p>
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