

Parent / Carer guide to :

School Travel for students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities)



This guide for parents / carers of students with SEND will outline your responsibilities regarding your child's school travel and answer our most frequently asked questions.

All transport arrangements are made by Suffolk County Council, Passenger Transport.

We will contact parents by email with details of their child's transport once the arrangements have been finalised.

Our contact details

Customer Services: **0345 606 6173**

Email: **Transport.ServiceSpecialised@suffolk.gov.uk**

Your Responsibilities:

- **How long will the vehicle wait?**

The vehicle will wait for 5 minutes after the agreed / usual pick-up time, so please ensure your child is ready in good time.

Please be aware, vehicle staff will not sound their horn or knock on your door to make you aware they have arrived. Drivers and passenger assistants are not allowed to leave their vehicle unattended therefore, you are responsible for ensuring you are ready and looking out for the vehicle to arrive.

- **Who is responsible for taking my child to the vehicle?**

A responsible adult (usually parent / carer) is responsible for taking your child out to the vehicle. A responsible adult (usually parent / carer) is also responsible for collecting the student from the vehicle in the afternoon.

Failure to ensure that a responsible adult is at the student's home address to accept them may result in the child being taken to a suitable safe place (e.g. back to school, social care offices or a local police station). It would then be the parent / carer's responsibility to arrange for their travel home and would be liable for any costs incurred.

- **Who is responsible for making sure my child is safely secured in the vehicle?**

Drivers and passenger assistants cannot lift children in and out of vehicles. Therefore parents/carers should ensure the student is safely in their seat and fasten their seatbelt (if the student is unable to do it themselves). It is the driver's responsibility to ensure all passengers are wearing their seatbelts before they begin driving.

It is the responsibility of the driver to secure wheelchairs / buggies into the vehicle.

- **Do I have to provide my own car seat?**

Suffolk County Council will provide a car seat for your child if they require one. There are two types of car seat we can supply:

- Car seat with an integral 5-point harness - we are currently supplying Britax Evolva 1-2-3 seats
- High-backed Booster Seat – we are currently supplying Britax Adventure seats

Due to the short turnaround in which we often have to arrange transport, the required car seat may not be available when transport begins. In these cases, the transport supplier may ask to borrow your personal car seat during the interim period. If this is not possible, we will not be able to commence your child's transport until the appropriate car seat is available.

- **What if my child requires specialised equipment whilst travelling?**

If your child requires specialised equipment while travelling, you should discuss this with our team, and we can advise what support we are able to provide.

Please be aware that if your child has a medical condition where medical intervention is likely to be required during transport, our vehicle staff will not be able to provide medical intervention.

If there is a medical emergency during transport, our vehicle staff will stop the vehicle in a safe place and call 999.

- **What should I do if my child is unwell and unable to attend school?**

As well as informing the school that your child will not be attending, you should contact your transport supplier directly to advise that transport is not required.

Please contact them again when you require transport to restart.

If your child is likely to be absent from school on a long-term basis, please contact our Customer Services team on 0345 606 6173 to inform us.

- **What should I do if any of my child's transport needs change?**

If any aspect of your child's transport needs change, please contact our Customer Services team on 0345 606 6173. We can work with the transport supplier if we are able to arrange this for you.

General questions about school transport:

- **Do drivers and passenger assistants have DBS checks?**

All drivers must be properly licensed by the district authority. In order to be licensed they must have cleared the DBS process. For passenger assistants, the DBS check is carried out by our safeguarding team. No-one is allowed to work on our school transport contracts until all the checks have been completed.

- **Can I choose who my child travels with?**

We have to make the best use of vehicles and organise the most efficient transport possible, so we cannot give parents / carers the option to choose who their child travels with. Careful planning, in consultation with schools where required, will be given to children who share a vehicle. Changes will be made if difficulties occur which cannot be resolved in other ways.

- **Will my child be able to travel alone?**

Students are normally expected to share a vehicle if there is one already travelling to their school from an area close to the student's home address / passes close to the student's home address.

In exceptional cases, individual transport may be provided for children with complex needs, or if circumstances mean there is no alternative. To request individual transport, parents / carers must follow our appeals/review process and provide evidence from qualified professionals to show why individual transport is required. Further details can be found here: www.suffolkonboard.com/appeals

- **Will my child have a passenger assistant (PA)?**

We don't automatically provide a passenger assistant on all vehicles. If there is evidence that it is needed, a passenger assistant will be provided.

The need for a passenger assistant will be marked against the student that we have received evidence to show requires one. If a student does not have the need for a passenger assistant on their record but they have travelled on a route which has a passenger assistant, if their transport changes, a passenger assistant will not automatically be allocated to their new transport.

- **If my child's circumstances change, can they keep the same driver, passenger assistant or transport supplier?**

We realise that students and parents/carers prefer the least number of changes to occur, therefore we ask our transport suppliers to keep their vehicle staff as consistent as possible. However, sickness, annual leave and operational issues sometimes mean that a different driver or passenger assistant may be used on your child's route for a short time.

We encourage our transport suppliers to give you as much notice of these changes as they can, however this is not always possible.

As a local authority, we must abide by the procurement regulations in law to have a fair and transparent tendering process and to ensure the most effective use of resources. Therefore, we cannot guarantee that a company will retain a school transport contract.

If there is going to be a change in my child's transport, how much notice will I receive?

We aim to give as much notice as possible of any changes. At the end of the academic year, if there is due to be a change when the student returns to school in September, we aim to give at least 10 working days' notice of changes. During the academic year, changes may occur more quickly, and we are unable to give much notice. We always aim to notify parents / carers of changes as soon as we are made aware of them.

What should I do if there is a problem with my child's transport?

If a problem occurs with your child's school transport, please report it to us straight away. You can do this by calling our Customer Services team on 0345 606 6173 or emailing us here: Transport.ServiceSpecialised@suffolk.gov.uk

You should report problems to us as soon as they happen so that we can work with the transport supplier and, where appropriate, your child's school to resolve them.