

Home To School Transport Policy For Children With Statements Of Special Educational Needs (SEN) April 2013

1. Introduction – Aims and Principles of this Policy

- 1.1 The London Borough of Sutton (LB Sutton) is committed to meeting the assessed needs of children with Special Education Needs (SEN) within its area.
- 1.2 Sutton recognises that children with SEN may require assistance to travel to school. This Policy sets out the transport support that may be offered to enable children to attend school so as to realise their full potential.
- 1.3 This Policy provides the criteria under which Transport will be provided by LB Sutton, as there is no automatic right for support.
- 1.4 LB Sutton wishes to work jointly with parents, pupils and schools to encourage independent travel wherever possible and if appropriate.
- 1.5 LB Sutton aims to provide transport support which is appropriate to their assessed needs.
- 1.6 LB Sutton will seek to promote more sustainable modes of travel in its arrangements for home to school transport.

The use of sustainable modes of travel for children with SEN such as buses, coaches and car sharing compared to an individualised taxi service would bring about social and health benefit to the child, reduce congestion on our roads, reduce journey times and bring about a more efficient and cost effective service.

The provision of a travel training service for young people with SEN will allow the development of the skills and confidence to use public transport and become more independent, while reducing reliance on SEN Transport.

2. Those to Whom the Policy Applies

This policy applies to children with SEN who live in the Borough and who are owed a statutory duty (as in paragraph 3 below) and who meet the criteria for entitlement (as in paragraph 7 below).

3. The Statutory Duty

- 3.1 Section 509(1) of the Education Act 1996 requires a Local Authority to decide whether or not it needs to make arrangements for provision of transport for each pupil with a statement of need. If a Local Authority decides that transport is necessary, then it must decide what form of transport is suitable and organise it free of charge.
- 3.2 LB Sutton has a duty to assist parents in the Borough by providing free transport in the

following cases:

- a) if a child is under 8 years of age and lives over 2 miles from school;
- b) if a child is aged 8 years or over and lives over 3 miles from school.

In both of the above cases, the child must be attending the nearest suitable school (one which LB Sutton deems to be suitable for the aptitude and ability of the pupil) and must be of statutory school age.

- 3.3 Children with SENs may be provided with transport if they live within this distance, but it is not an automatic right.
- 3.4 For children from low income families (who are eligible for free school meals or who are from a family who is on the highest rate of Working Families Tax Credit) free transport will be provided if the child is of secondary school age and is attending one of three nearest schools between 2 and 6 miles away or is of primary school age and is attending one of three nearest schools over 2 miles away.
- 3.5 Assistance will also be provided to children who are attending the nearest suitable school which was chosen on the grounds of religion or belief; this school can be up to 15 miles away. Children who attend faith schools will be deemed to have chosen the school on the grounds of religion or belief for the purposes of this policy.
- 3.6 The above statutory criteria apply to children attending both mainstream and SEN schools or units.

4. General Home to School Transport Policy

- 4.1 Free transport is available to all pupils in London until the end of the academic year in which they are 18, if they are in full time education. LB Sutton expects pupils to make use of the free travel available through this scheme. Additional support is provided in some cases and is set out in the Home to School Transport Policy.
- 4.2 The above policy applies to all pupils, whether or not they have SEN. However, in recognition that pupils with SEN may need some additional assistance, LB Sutton may be able to offer further support.

5. Additional Home to School Transport for Children with SEN

- 5.1 The law provides that if you are a parent of, or responsible for, a child who is registered at school (between ages 5-16), you will need to ensure he or she attends school regularly.
- 5.2 Even though parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school, LB Sutton may be able to offer assistance to parents of children with SEN to enable them to get to and from school. However, LB Sutton will not provide transport, just because there are attendance difficulties for any child. Attendance at school for any child remains the responsibility of the parent.

6. Applying for School Transport

- 6.1 All parents requesting transport assistance for their child should submit an application for such assistance. Children with Statements of SEN, including those who are attending a

Special School, will not automatically be entitled to home to school transport provision. Only upon receipt of an application will transport assistance be considered. There are cases where children have Statements of SEN and attend Special Schools but do not receive home to school transport. Equally, there are cases where children have no Statement of SEN and do not attend Special Schools, but do receive home to school transport (in these cases, transport is usually approved on the basis of the child's physical and medical requirements).

- 6.2 Parents should note that the LEA (Local Education Authority) will expect pupils to make their way to and from school where they can be reasonably expected to travel independently. This is likely to be particularly relevant in the secondary phase.

7. Criteria for Assessing Entitlement

- 7.1 LB Sutton will consider the individual needs of children and take professional advice (e.g. from the Educational Psychologist, Medical Officers) and consult with parents and teachers in arriving at a final decision. Consideration will also be given to the child's physical and medical requirements (including any disabilities they may have). Assessment may include face-to-face contact with the pupil in assessing eligibility.
- 7.2 Requests for transport should be accompanied by evidence of what alternatives have been considered by the family and school to facilitate the pupil's attendance at school; e.g. support from parents or carers, siblings, escorts from within the school, the use of public transport, etc.
- 7.3 The following criteria will be used to determine whether provision of transport is appropriate:
- a) the age of the pupil;
 - b) the distance between the pupil's home and the nearest suitable school;
 - c) the Special Educational Needs of the pupil;
 - d) the type of school provision being made for the pupil;
 - e) whether the pupil has physical, medical, or communication difficulties that would prevent them from safely using public transport;
 - f) whether suitable public transport is available (e.g. for wheelchairs, specialist seating etc);
 - g) whether the pupil may be vulnerable and at risk of danger, or would be a danger to other passengers, drivers or the vehicle, if they use public or other transport;
 - h) whether the Principal Physician for Child Health confirms that transport is required on medical grounds;
 - i) whether the pupil's needs prevent the parents from providing transport;
 - j) if the Attendance Officer or Head Teacher can provide evidence that transport is necessary to ensure regular attendance;
 - k) the efficient use of LB Sutton's resources;
 - l) any other individual circumstance.

- 7.4 The above list is for guidance only, and satisfaction of one or more of the criteria does not automatically allow entitlement to transport assistance. Each case will be reviewed on its individual merits.
- 7.5 Attendance at a Special School does not automatically entitle a pupil to transport assistance. Any transport assistance must be authorised by LB Sutton.
- 7.6 Schools, parents and transport providers cannot use LB Sutton's pre-arranged transport without authorisation. Places (on bus, taxi or any other transport assistance) will not normally be available to anyone who does not qualify for transport assistance, and has not been authorised as such by LB Sutton.

8. Nearest Suitable School / Parental Preference

- 8.1 The nearest suitable school is one that LB Sutton deems to be suitable for the specific needs of the pupil.
- 8.2 Schedule 27 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents may express a preference for the maintained school they wish their child to attend, and LB Sutton must consider the parents' requests and arrange any relevant meetings before the final statement is issued, naming a school.
- 8.3 However, if parents do express a preference for their child to attend a school which is further away than the nearest suitable school, LB Sutton will consider whether it should be the parents' responsibility to arrange attendance at that school.

9. Family Circumstances

- 9.1 The entitlement to home to school transport is determined by the needs of the child.
- 9.2 SEN Transport assistance is awarded to children with SEN and should not be considered a service which facilitates parents or carers working or looking after other children who are not yet of school age.
- 9.3 In most situations the circumstances of the family will not be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances which place the family under severe and unexpected duress. Many families, regardless of the special needs of their children, experience difficulty and inconvenience getting children to and from school. LB Sutton's policy is not intended to address this.
- 9.4 Routes and timings will be based on the most efficient route available. The individual needs of the child and efficient utilisation of LA resources will always take priority.
- 9.5 Parents' responsibilities are set out in Schedule 1 to this Policy.

10. Pre-School Travel (Nursery Provision)

- 10.1 Generally parents will be expected to take their own children to preschool provision.
- 10.2 Sutton will consider whether to offer assistance with travel to children for whom:
- a) parents or professionals provide evidence that the pupil's special educational needs are such that the parents/ guardians are prevented from taking him or her to school; or

- b) the Principal Physician for Child Health confirms that the transport is required on health grounds; or
- c) where LB Sutton recommends that the child is sent to a specialist pre-school centre for assessment.

10.3 In determining entitlement to transport in all cases above, LB Sutton will apply its standard criteria for determining eligibility for SEN transport (see paragraph 8 above).

11. Post 16 Travel

11.1 LB Sutton may continue to offer assistance with travel for students between the age of 16 and who are under nineteen years of age at the start of an academic year.

11.2 For children continuing their education in schools, transport provision will be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraph 8 above.

11.3 For children between the ages of 16 and 19 attending a further education college LB Sutton will only provide assistance if the college is more than three miles from the student's home address, Parents must provide the following evidence, which will be considered by LB Sutton in addition to the criteria in paragraph 8 in assessing eligibility for transport:

- a) Confirmation from the Principal Physician for Child Health that transport is required on health grounds; or evidence that the children's SEN are such that he/she cannot use public transport;
- b)_ Evidence that the student is attending a full time course and that there was not a suitable alternative school or college course nearer to home.

11.4 LB Sutton will not normally provide assistance for students aged nineteen and over, except where a student attains the age of nineteen during an academic year in which case the provision will continue until the end of the academic year, subject to the student otherwise remaining eligible for transport assistance.

12. Decision and Transport Arrangement

12.1 LB Sutton will allocate transport in the most cost-effective and sustainable manner. Where transport assistance is provided it may take one of the following forms:

- a) use of the free travel provided by transport for London by the Oyster Photocard;
- b) provision of an appropriate Travelcard for journeys that end out of the Oyster card area or where the most appropriate route is on a method of transport not covered by the Oyster Photocard;
- c) reimbursing mileage costs for parents and carers who transport children to school;
- d) provision of an escort to accompany the child to walk to school;
- e) provision of a private bus service; bus stops will be used where possible to cut down on the number of stops a bus has to make.
- f) in exceptional circumstances, transport may be provided by individual taxis or licensed

private car hire.

- 12.2 After a decision is made to provide assistance with transport, transport may take up to 10 working days to arrange, and in some special cases may take longer (e.g. where there is a need for a specialist vehicle). Parents will also be informed of any decision that their child is not eligible for transport.
- 12.3 Parents will be informed of the transport arrangements in writing, in advance of travel. Parents will be provided with a Parent Guide booklet which sets out the arrangements and the duties of LB Sutton and the transport provider, along with responsibilities of the parents.
- 12.4 Availability of transport is not guaranteed. Sole transport will not be provided and children/parents must expect to travel with other children unless there are exceptional circumstances.

13. Bus Services and Pick Up/Drop Off Arrangements

- 13.1 Transport providers are authorised to make pick-ups and drop-offs at authorised pick-up points only.
- 13.2 The authorised points will usually be those specified on the Statement (normally the home and school address), or in the case of bus journeys, an allocated bus stop.
- 13.3 Parents should provide at least one alternative address, to be used in the event they are unable to meet their child. Any changes to these addresses, whether permanent or temporary, must be communicated in writing to LB Sutton's SEN transport team who will make the necessary arrangements. Until such communication is received, the only other authorised place will be the nearest place of safety.
- 13.4 It should be noted that a change of address is a change in circumstances, which may also affect eligibility for transport assistance.

14. Pick Up / Drop Off Points and Risk Assessment

- 14.1 Where a decision is made to provide transport assistance in the form of bus services and pick up / drop off points, risk assessment will be undertaken to ensure suitability for the child and safety of the route.
- 14.2 The risk assessment will need to consider any danger in walking to a pick up point, including the age of the child, the width of the street, the volume and speed of traffic travelling along the road, the existence of street lighting and the condition of the route at different times of the day that a child and accompanying adult would be expected to walk along the route. Each route will need to be separately assessed before a pick up point can be agreed, to ensure safety for each child. Staff will need to be hired and clear guidance given to ensure that the council has had due regard to the safety of children.

15. Timings

- 15.1 The timing for pick-up/drop-off will be specified by LB Sutton.
- 15.2 Parents must ensure they are aware of their allotted times. As a practical measure parents should consider synchronising their clocks with those used by the transport provider.

- 15.3 In order to minimise journey times for all, children must arrive within 3 minutes of the specified pick-up time and parents must arrive within 3 minutes of the specified drop-off time.
- 15.4 If the child/parent is not available within that time, the driver will be instructed to move onto the next pick-up/drop-off. On a journey to school, if the driver has to move on without the child, transport will then become the responsibility of the parent for that journey. If the parent is unavailable for pick-up on school-home journeys, the child will be transported to the nearest place of safety.
- 15.5 Transport assistance may be removed for a period of time or permanently if a child/parent is recurrently late or does not attend the pick up point (see also section 16 “absences” below).
- 15.6 If the children are picked up/dropped-off at home, the parent is responsible for accompanying the child to and from the door to the vehicle. The parent should keep a lookout for the vehicle’s arrival since the vehicle will not sound its horn. (It is against the law to sound a horn from a stationary vehicle, see Highway Code point 92).
- 15.7 In exceptional circumstances (e.g. where the child travels alone in a taxi with an escort) the escort may call at the door, although this is at the discretion of the crew.
- 15.8 Any variation to the usual procedure must be agreed with LB Sutton’s SEN Transport Team.
- 15.9 In order to minimise journey times Parents must ensure that children are ready to board vehicles at the allotted time and that they are ready for the return of their child at the end of the return journey.
- 15.10 In some cases, to recognise the needs of the individual pupil, the 3 minute waiting time will need to be flexible. In these cases LB Sutton will advise the transport operator of the pupil’s SEN which may affect the 3 minute timings.

16. Escorts

- 16.1 Escorts are provided for all buses and coaches used to transport children with special educational needs.
- 16.2 Children transported by other vehicles will normally only be provided with an escort in the following circumstances:
 - a) where a pupil is under the age of seven years and is transported to out-borough provision;
 - b) where the Principal Physician for Child Health confirms that an escort is required on medical grounds; or
 - c) where a child has a behaviour, learning or communication difficulty which is such that there is evidence to indicate that their safety or well-being could be compromised without provision of an escort.
- 16.3 An escort will not be provided simply because of the pupil’s age or because he/she does not know the driver.
- 16.4 Provision of an escort at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement and the requirement for an escort will be reviewed in the child’s Annual Review, or in the event of a change in circumstance.

16.5 If you are concerned that your child may find travelling without you upsetting, it may be possible for you to travel with your child for the first few days until he/she gets to know the driver and the journey. You should contact LB Sutton's SEN Transport Team if this applies to you.

16.6 Where a child travels on his/her own, LB Sutton encourages parents or a person known to the pupil to act as the pupil's escort (providing that person is aged 18 or over). Payment is not made in such cases.

17. Absences

17.1 Where a child cannot attend school on any particular day, for example due to illness, it is the parents' responsibility to contact the transport company immediately. For long term absences, parents should contact the Contracts Officer.

17.2 Parents should contact their respective transport company the night before travel if they know that their child will be off ill the following day, or as early as possible on the morning of travel, if their child only shows signs of being ill on the day they are due to travel.

17.3 All transport which is not cancelled in advance of the vehicle arriving at the home address must be paid for by LB Sutton whether or not the child, living at that address, boards the vehicle. Where parents repeatedly fail to cancel the transport provision for their child as a result of the child's illness before it arrives at the home address, or where a child decides not to travel in transport which has arrived on any given day, without any prior notice having been given to the transport company, the child's transport provision will be reviewed.

17.4 If it can be established that public funds are being used inappropriately, as a result of vehicles not being cancelled with enough prior warning, children may be excluded from transport for a period of time. Parents will be responsible for transporting their own children during any period of exclusion from transport.

18. Alternative Arrangements

18.1 Transport providers are instructed to take children to the nearest place of safety in the event that a parent or carer is unable to meet the child at the specified drop-off point/time. Currently, this place of safety is:

Sutton Family Centre,
Sutton West,
Robin Hood Lane,
Sutton,
SM1 2SD

Tel: (020) 8770 5739

18.2 Parents, schools and the Transport providers will receive instructions from LB Sutton on what to do if this happens. Children, Young People & Learning Services may be notified and/or Transport Assistance may be withdrawn if this happens frequently. Parents or schools should contact the Transport Manager or Contracts Officer if there are any emergency changes. Likewise, the Transport Manager will have a duty to advise parents/schools if there are going to be any foreseen major delays to the delivery of the service.

19. Residential and Out of Borough Schools

- 19.1 Pupils in boarding schools for the standard 40 week academic year and who are eligible for transport assistance will be provided with transport assistance between home and school at intervals determined by the nature of the placement. Typically, this will be termly, half-termly, fortnightly or weekly transport.
- 19.2 Transport assistance may be in the form of regional pick-up points for bus services.
- 19.3 Transport assistance will not be provided to parents or family who wish to visit the school for any reason. Any arrangements of this nature will need to be agreed directly with the school. However, parents or carers may be provided with transport assistance to school once per year to attend the Annual Review.
- 19.4 Parents who wish to accompany their child on the first day of school will be expected to make their own arrangements. Where a school stipulates that a parent should attend on the first day, transport must be arranged with the school.

20. Transport Routes

- 20.1 The most cost effective route will be used at all times. Bus stops will be used where possible to cut down on the number of stops a bus has to make. However, individual SEN/physical limitations will be taken into account and home stops may be necessary in some cases.
- 20.2 Routes will be reviewed regularly to take into account changes in needs and environmental pressures, for example changes in road layouts.

21. Journey Times

- 21.1 The nature of transport congestion in the Borough means that travelling times can vary greatly. LB Sutton, in accordance with DfE guidelines, expects that children should arrive at school safely and fit to learn, and journey times should reflect this. The maximum journey time for SEN transport has been set at 1 hour 15 minutes, although this may be affected from time-to-time by traffic, road works and other environmental and operational conditions.
- 21.2 These times may not apply to children travelling to out of borough schools, where distances and frequency of journeys vary.
- 21.3 Any ongoing delays due to major road works or weather will be taken into account and where possible alternative routes will be provided. In this situation parents and schools will be notified accordingly.
- 21.4 To cut down on journey times, parents must ensure that their children are ready for pick-up/drop-off on time.

22. Additional Journeys

- 22.1 Transport providers are allowed to make agreed journeys from home to school, and from school to home only, where the home address is that agreed on the Statement or authorised by LB Sutton or, in the case of bus journeys, at the specified stop.
- 22.2 Prior to any LB Sutton agreement to provide home to school transport, all parents are asked to provide at least one emergency address, to which their children can be dropped in

emergencies. In cases when this emergency address is used, this is equivalent to a journey to the home address.

- 22.3 No additional journeys can be made under the terms of SEN Transport policy. This includes school trips, additional journeys to sports facilities, work experience, curriculum appointments or dental or hospital appointments, clinical, psychiatric or therapy appointments, of if a child has to be collected from school because of illness. In these circumstances, it is the parents' responsibility to arrange transport. LB Sutton will not make any payments to transport providers for these journeys, and they must be invoiced directly to the school or parent, depending on who arranged the journey.
- 22.4 Any additional journeys which are deemed to be 'home to school' transport must be authorised by the SEN Team, in advance of the journey taking place. LB Sutton will not guarantee payment to transport providers for any additional unauthorised journeys.

23. Annual Reviews

- 23.1 Each pupil's individual transport needs will be reviewed at least once a year. A review of transport provision will be part of each pupil's Annual Review.
- 23.2 Based upon the outcome of Annual Reviews, LB Sutton will make any changes necessary to transport provision, which may be as a result of changes in need (for example, because an escort may no longer be required). Any interim changes in circumstances may also result in a change in eligibility for transport assistance (for example, a child's SEN may have improved, or parents may have moved house to be closer to the school).
- 23.3 If changes take place at any time of the year (e.g. change of placement or home address), transport provision will be reviewed in accordance with the normal criteria. Transport will not be provided solely because a house move has taken the child beyond distance limits for his or her current school.
- 23.4 It should be noted that once a child is eligible for transport assistance, this is no guarantee that they will continue to be eligible in the future.
- 23.5 LB Sutton reserves the right to review transport requirements outside the annual review in order to safeguard its duty to ensure the efficient use of resources.
- 23.6 Regular assessments of schedules are carried out to ensure that spare capacity is minimised and redundant routes are ceased. This may lead to changes being required to individual routes at any time, though this will be kept to a minimum.
- 23.7 The provision of transport assistance will also be reviewed to reflect any changes in national policy.

24. Home to School Transport Appeals Process

- 24.1 LB Sutton has a two stage home to school transport review/appeals process for parents who wish to challenge a decision about:
- a) The transport arrangements offered
 - b) Their child's eligibility
 - c) The distance measurement

d) The safety of the route

24.2 Stage one:

A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision. The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent's written request a senior officer will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written outcome setting out:

- the nature of the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB);
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- the rationale for the decision reached;
- information about escalation to stage two (if appropriate).

24.3 Stage two:

A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.

Within 40 working days an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from the parent and officers and give a detailed written outcome setting out:

- the nature of the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB);
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- the rationale for the decision reached;
- information about escalation to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

24.4 The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the process to date and suitably experienced, to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of parents and the local authority, and that road safety requirements are complied with.

24.5 Local Government Ombudsman

There is a right of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if complainants consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled.

25. Risk Assessments

25.1 If LB Sutton agrees to provide transport for a child, it may be necessary to complete a risk assessment of this child's physical and medical needs on board transport.

25.2 Until this risk assessment is completed transport between home and school will be the responsibility of the parent/carer.

- 25.3 Some children with SEN have physical and medical conditions which deteriorate over time. If, at any point, it is felt by the Transport Manager or the parent/carer, that a further risk assessment is required to ensure that a child's physical and medical needs are being met on board transport as well as possible, a further risk assessment will be carried out.
- 25.4 Again, until this assessment is completed, and until recommendations from the assessment are received, the duty to provide transport to ensure that the child is transported from home to school will revert to the parent/carer, unless suitable alternative arrangements can be agreed between the parent/carer and LB Sutton.
- 25.5 As a result of an assessment of this type, it may be necessary to make changes to transport provision (e.g. to safety & support equipment or resources used on board transport).

26. Medication

- 26.1 In certain circumstances Transport staff are permitted to carry and administer medication on board a vehicle. This is usually only in relation to epilepsy medication, and where it is necessary, staff will be trained to administer.
- 26.2 If an emergency were to occur while a child were on board transport, the procedure would be for the escort to call 999 and ask for a paramedic crew to attend the scene. It will be for the parents to decide whether they would like their child to travel on regular transport under these circumstances.

NOTE: These arrangements are currently under review

27. Pupils from Other Local Authorities

- 27.1 Pupils who live outside the Borough are not the responsibility of LB Sutton and will not be provided with transport assistance.
- 27.2 However, some pupils from outside Sutton may be allowed to take up spare places on the LA's transport if it is cost effective and agreed to by the home authority.
- 27.3 Any such arrangement will be subject to transport capacity.
- 27.4 If such an arrangement is agreed between LB Sutton and any other borough, LB Sutton will then make a charge to the other Local Authority responsible for that pupil.
- 27.5 LB Sutton may need to withdraw such places in the event of a Sutton pupil requiring transport assistance.

28. Continuity and Transport Management

- 28.1 Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the same escort and driver continue to transport a child.
- 28.2 However this will not always be possible (for example, when the driver is ill, or on holiday) and changes may need to be made to ensure the most efficient use of available resources.
- 28.3 All parents and schools are advised to expect some journeys not to be carried out by the

same team as normal (due to illness, holiday entitlement, course attendance etc).

- 28.4 In these cases, parents or schools must ensure that they take the name of the new escort and/or driver and ask to see their identification.
- 28.5 LB Sutton has a duty to spend public funds in the most appropriate and cost effective way. As a result, routes will be reviewed regularly and, separate routes taking children to several different schools, may be brought together into one route where appropriate.
- 28.6 Any longer, larger routes will be reviewed periodically with the respective schools to ensure that a pupil's concentration and attentiveness are not compromised by any change to the journey.

29. Transport Standards

- 29.1 Transport provision will be in accordance with contractual standards and national legislation.
- a) It is recognised that the quality of transportation to and from school, and other curricular activities, can often affect the emotional welfare and behavioural pattern of a child.
- b) As a result all drivers, escorts and other contractors' staff undertaking the service will show understanding of, and empathy with, the children, their parents and school staff.
- 29.2 All children using the transport service will be treated with respect and in a dignified manner appropriate to their age.
- 29.3 All drivers and escorts will greet passengers and parents politely and ensure that all passengers travel in comfort and safety.
- 29.4 All drivers and escorts will, before commencing their work, have undergone a training programme and will be in receipt of Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks to alert LB Sutton to any possible criminal convictions.
- 29.5 Husband and wife escort teams are permitted, assuming that the above checks and training have been carried out.
- 29.6 The competency of the driver and crew, the conduct of the vehicle during the journey and at the pick-up points will all be of a contractually prescribed standard.
- 29.7 The vehicles will be properly licensed and roadworthy, and will offer standards of comfort and safety as prescribed by relevant Statutory Law.
- 29.8 Regular checks will be carried out on all vehicles.
- 29.9 Vehicles will have modifications to allow for wheelchair access where necessary.
- 29.10 The vehicle must be at its prescribed point of pick-up within 5 minutes of its allotted time (although traffic conditions and delays at the pick-up points for other passengers may affect these timings).
- 29.11 Any major delays will be communicated, either via the relevant Transport Manager or the Contracts Officer, to the school or parents.

30. General Standards of Behaviour

- 30.1 Pupils are expected at all times to behave in an acceptable manner whilst travelling on school transport
- 30.2 No eating, drinking or smoking will be allowed on any vehicle at any time. In exceptional circumstances, a pupil may be allowed water on board (e.g. during extreme temperatures).
- 30.3 Pupils are expected not to behave in a manner which may endanger the safety of those travelling on the vehicle.
- 30.4 For reasons of health and safety, seat belts must be worn.
- 30.5 LB Sutton will hold parents responsible for any damage caused to the vehicle by the child and will expect them to reimburse the operator accordingly.

31. Difficult Behaviour & Exclusion from Transport

- 31.1 Any pupil may experience behavioural difficulties as a result of their SEN and LB Sutton will work with schools, parents and transport operators to manage instances where the pupil exhibits extreme behaviour characteristics.
- 31.2 However, it is recognised that poor behaviour may affect the concentration of the driver, or the overall safety of the other pupils or any escort (if one is allocated) and in some cases it will be necessary to make alternative arrangements.
- 31.3 In consultation with schools, LB Sutton may find it necessary to issue periods of fixed or permanent exclusion from transport in the event of unacceptable behaviour.
- 31.4 In the event of exclusion from transport for bad behaviour, parents/carers will be responsible for transporting their own children during the period of exclusion from transport.
- 31.5 DfE guidance states that non-provision of transport during these periods does not mean that the LA is not fulfilling its duty, merely that transport arrangements were made, but as a result of unacceptable behaviour, had to be removed.
- 31.6 When considering whether to exclude any pupil from transport, LB Sutton will require written statements from the driver and escort in support of alleged unacceptable behaviour.
- 31.7 LB Sutton will also consult the Head Teacher of the school which the pupil attends, and a reference will be made to the SEN Panel to ensure that the decision is given full consideration.
- 31.8 Any decision to exclude from transport will depend on the SEN of the pupil, the circumstances of the behavioural problem and consultation with the school and other parties.

32. Sanctions & Incidents of Physical Abuse

- 32.1 LB Sutton may consider taking action in the event of unacceptable behaviour from pupils who are provided with transport.
- 32.2 Health and Safety legislation provides that it shall be the duty of every employer to ensure so far as reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.
- 32.3 LB Sutton therefore has a responsibility to provide a healthy and safe environment for both

staff and pupils who are either working on or using the School Transport service.

- 32.4 When particular problems arise, LB Sutton will need to balance its duties towards a child against its duties towards employees.
- 32.5 LB Sutton will take all reasonable steps to seek to avoid such problems arising and will deal with situations sensitively when they arise, acknowledging its duty towards such children.

33. Comments, Queries and Complaints

- 33.1 LB Sutton is constantly looking at ways to improve its service and invites comments from parents, children and school staff on any issue relating to the SEN Transport Service.
- 33.2 Queries on any part of this policy, for example, regarding the standard of service or operational issues, should in the first instance be sent to the Transport Manager who is responsible for the bus or taxi provider.
- 33.3 In the event that the Transport Manager cannot resolve a query, the query will be directed to the SEN Team.
- 33.4 Any formal complaints should be directed to the Transport Manager who will liaise if necessary with the Corporate Complaints Team.

Schedule 1

1. Parents' Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for:

- a) escorting their child to and from the vehicle;
- b) informing LB Sutton's SEN Transport Team of any changes of address or other circumstances which affect transport;
- c) informing the person identified in the initial letter from LB Sutton setting out transport arrangements (usually the transport provider or escort) as soon as possible if their child is not travelling for any reason or if their child is returning to school after absence;
- d) providing LB Sutton's SEN Transport Team with a telephone number and/or address where they can be contacted in an emergency;
- e) providing LB Sutton's SEN Transport Team, the transport provider and escort as appropriate with information about safe operation of wheelchairs or other specialist equipment;
- f) making sure that LB Sutton's SEN Transport Team are aware of the child's difficulties and what to do in a medical emergency.