



Government of **Western Australia**  
Public Transport Authority



# **STUDENT TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE POLICY AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

The information contained in this document is subject to change.

Readers should note that because this document is subject to change, any printed versions may be outdated.

The current approved version (V1.0) of the Student Transport Assistance Policy and Operational Guidelines can be obtained from the School Bus Services website at ([www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)).

Specific questions about the information contained in this document should be directed to the School Bus Services (SBS) branch at the Public Transport Authority (PTA).

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Descriptions of SBS districts, along with contact details for the SBS Contract Officers (COs) responsible for each district, can be found on the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)).

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## 1. FOREWORD

The Government of Western Australia has been providing transport assistance to Western Australian families for over 100 years. The responsibility for the administration of the Government's Student Transport Assistance Policy is vested with the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia (PTA). The PTA manages the Student Transport Assistance Policy through School Bus Services (SBS) Branch.

The state of Western Australia covers more than 2.5 million square kilometres and has well over 400 cities, towns and remote Aboriginal Communities. The enormous size of our state dictates that many thousands of families live great distances from their local school. SBS provides an 'Orange' School Bus network that relieves the burden on these families by providing free transport to Eligible Students to and from their Nearest Appropriate School. In many areas, the school bus is important to the health of a town or remote community and is in many cases intrinsic to the education of students.

SBS also provides an 'Orange' School Bus network for parents and caregivers of students with special needs. This network aims to relieve the pressure on families by providing free transport to and from the students nearest appropriate education support facility within metropolitan and regional areas.

Over the last 100 years, the 'Orange' School Bus fleet has grown from modest beginnings to more than 967 buses transporting more than 25,000 students over a distance exceeding 169,000 kilometres each school day.

In some areas, where it is neither practical nor cost effective to provide a dedicated school bus service, SBS may offer an Eligible Student's family a Conveyance Allowance. Over 1,200 families currently receive a Conveyance Allowance as a contribution towards the costs of transporting children to and from school.

The strategic management and administration of the Government's Student Transport Assistance Policy is both complex and costly. The Government's intention is to provide a reasonable level of transport assistance to all Eligible Students throughout Western Australia. SBS is specifically tasked to deliver these services to Western Australian families equitably and efficiently. To achieve this, SBS has developed these policies and operational guidelines taking into consideration: family and student demographics, the distribution of schools, Education Support Centres and Education Support Schools, and a variety of safety issues relating to buses and route design.

This document provides a comprehensive and practical description of the Student Transport Assistance Policy by consolidating policy and operational guidelines.

I hope readers find this document informative and useful. It will be updated regularly, and I invite all readers to provide feedback to SBS about any aspect they think can be improved.

John Bailly  
**MANAGER, SCHOOL BUS SERVICES**

## 2. OVERVIEW

This document provides an explanation of how the Mainstream Student Transport Assistance Policy operates in Western Australia; it describes the eligibility criteria for students and the types of transport assistance Eligible Students are entitled to. It also provides an overview of how parents/carers can apply for Transport Assistance, how applications are assessed, and how Transport Assistance is delivered.

Policies and guidelines in this document are intended to provide information about a complex, state-wide system in a logical and relevant way. Readers should be aware that whilst this document is intended to provide a comprehensive description of transport assistance for students, it is not possible to contemplate the circumstances of every student who lives in or travels through regional Western Australia or those attending an Education Support School or Centre.

It is important readers understand that there are significant differences between the types of Transport Assistance made available to rural and education support students relative to students residing in major metropolitan areas attending mainstream schools.

### 2.1. Rural and Education Support Students

The Government has established a comprehensive network of contracted school buses for Eligible Students living in regional and remote areas and for those students attending an Education Support School or Centre.

Where it is neither practical nor cost effective to provide a dedicated school bus service, SBS may offer an Eligible Student's family a Conveyance Allowance. A Conveyance Allowance is not designed to reimburse a family for the full cost of owning and operating a vehicle, a Conveyance Allowance is a contribution towards the costs incurred by parents/carers who transport their children to school by private vehicle.

### 2.2. Students in Metropolitan Areas

In major metropolitan centres (e.g. Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, Perth), the Government maintains subsidised public transport systems which provide a range of general community bus services, as well as some services which specifically transport students to and from school.

In planning the public transport networks, which service major metropolitan centres, the PTA endeavours to achieve, amongst other objectives, the provision of the best service possible to key school locations. Conversely, school authorities are expected to locate schools on major corridors that are well serviced or can be practically serviced by the public transport system and are also suitable for pedestrian and cycle traffic.

Given the Government's investment in these bus and train networks, there is no specific entitlement to school bus services in these major centres. To delineate between these metropolitan areas from the rural areas where an 'Orange' School Bus services operate, the PTA designates 'Public Transport Areas'. These are areas shown on maps with a boundary and, essentially, the core part of a metropolitan centre forms the focus of a designated Public Transport Area.

Within designated Public Transport Areas, students attending mainstream schools are not entitled to any 'Orange' School Bus services; their entitlement is to travel at a concession fare rate on the Government subsidised and controlled public transport network.

Parents/carers and others who have specific questions about Transport Assistance for individual students should contact SBS or the Contract Officer (CO) responsible for the relevant area.



For the purpose of administering school bus services within the State, SBS has divided the State into a number of portfolios. These portfolios and the contact details for the CO responsible for the specific area can be found on the SBS website at ([www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)).

### **3. POLICY BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1. The Government's Strategic Policy**

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges that if students are to gain maximum benefit from their education and optimise their life opportunities, they need to attend school regularly.

The Government also acknowledges that students can be encouraged to attend school regularly if some form of transport assistance is made available to students and their parents/carers.

To assist mainstream students who attend schools in major metropolitan centres within designated Public Transport Areas, students may travel on the regular public transport network at concession fare rates.

Within these Public Transport Area boundaries, mainstream students have no special entitlement beyond their right to access the Government subsidised public transport network. Education support students travelling within metropolitan areas are however, entitled to apply for assistance for their travel to Education Support Facilities.

For Eligible Students travelling to school in rural areas, and for those students attending Education Support Facilities, the Government has elected to provide the following types of transport assistance:

- A network of contracted 'Orange' School Bus services, and/or
- The payment of a Conveyance Allowance that contributes towards the costs incurred by parents/carers who transport their children to school by private vehicle.

#### **3.2. The Government's Policy Objectives**

The Government's policy objectives in providing Transport Assistance to Rural Students and students attending Education Support Facilities are:

- To ensure Eligible Students have reasonable access to school.
- To provide Transport Assistance for Eligible Students enabling them to attend their nearest government or non-government school offering an appropriate year or level of study, and which is of an appropriate religious denomination or ethos to the student (with special consideration being given to the needs and capacities of students attending Education Support Facilities)
- To ensure the Transport Assistance provided to students is appropriate, safe, cost-effective and fair, and
- To ensure school bus contractors provide safe and high-quality services to Eligible Students.

#### **3.3. Operational Principles**

In achieving the Government's policy objectives, the following principles will guide how Transport Assistance is provided:

- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school and, where relevant, for confirming their children's capacity to travel on public transport or the 'Orange' School Bus services
- Parents/carers should be prepared to travel to transport their children to and from school or a bus/transport service

- The Student Transport Assistance Policy will be applied in a manner that is reasonable, equitable and aims to meet the needs of individual students and communities, and
- Transport Assistance will be provided according to published eligibility criteria.

### **3.4. Types and Availability of Transport Assistance may change**

The policies and principles relating to the delivery of the Student Transport Assistance Policy reflect policies of the State Government and are subject to change.

As with all services provided or subsidised by the Government, the level of Transport Assistance that can be offered must be matched by an equivalent Government budget allocation. Consequently, there are finite levels of service and support that can be offered, and School Bus Services will always attempt to ensure equity prevails in terms of the way services are administered across the State.

It should be expected that the Student Transport Assistance Policy will be reviewed by the Government periodically. Such reviews may result in changes to Government and/or departmental policies, which may lead to changes in the way eligibility is determined or may change the types of Transport Assistance made available to Eligible Students.

There is, accordingly, no guarantee when approval for Transport Assistance is given that the particular type of Transport Assistance provided to a student will continue to be provided or that the types of Transport Assistance currently available will not change.

If Government policy does change the way in which Transport Assistance is provided, SBS will attempt to contact those directly affected as soon as possible, with a view of minimising any disruption to students, their families, schools, school bus contractors and others involved in transporting Eligible Students to and from school.

## 4. GLOSSARY

The following glossary contains simple definitions of terms, abbreviations and acronyms relevant to Transport Assistance and the 'Orange' School Bus services.

Expanded definitions and explanations of how the terms are relevant to the evaluation of a student's eligibility and entitlement are contained in the main part of this document.

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Appropriate School</b>	<p>In the case of government schools, one that provides the relevant year of study for the student concerned i.e. K – Year 12.</p> <p>In the case of non-government schools, one that provides the relevant year of study for the student concerned and is of a religious denomination or an ethos appropriate to that student.</p> <p>Please note that for the purposes of determining an Appropriate School there is no distinction between schools of the same religious faith in terms of a school's ethos, charter, or culture. For example, a student enrolled in a Catholic Education school are assumed to be undertaking the same relevant year of study irrespective of whether one catholic school has a different catholic ethos, culture, programmes, or religious order over another. The intent of the policy is to determine eligibility based on an Appropriate School and to avoid school of choice outcomes.</p> <p>In addition, for non-government schools not linked to a religious faith, eligibility will be treated no differently to other non-government religious schools when determining eligibility. That is, where the closest non-government school is in relation to the residence.</p> <p>The application of ethos applies where mainstream teaching/schooling does not fit certain teaching practices. For the purposes of eligibility only Montessori and Steiner Schools are officially recognised.</p> <p><u>Additional Notes</u></p> <p>Note 1. Students completing their education under the Notice of Arrangement may be entitled to Students Transport Assistance.</p> <p>Note 2. Students attending specialist programs such as Gifted and Talented (including PE) and any other Approved Specialist Programs may be entitled to Student Transport Assistance to their school or educational facility.</p> <p>Note 3. Parents should note that special courses/programs (e.g. music, language or sports programs) which are not Approved Specialist Programs (see Department of Education website for the list) do not form part of the eligibility criteria to determine an Appropriate School.</p> <p>Note 4. Appropriate School does not include private home care arrangements, or before and after school care outside of school core hours.</p>
<b>Approved Route</b>	A route approved by SBS along which an 'Orange' School Bus travels to pick up and drop off Approved Students.
<b>Approved Students</b>	Students who have been approved by SBS as eligible for and entitled to Transport Assistance by either an 'Orange' School Bus or a Conveyance Allowance.
<b>Complimentary Student</b>	A student who is not eligible for Transport Assistance but who has been granted conditional approval by SBS to use a vacant seat or

TERM	DEFINITION
	<p>wheelchair space on an 'Orange' School Bus or who would be eligible for transport assistance but is travelling to a school which is not their Nearest Appropriate School.</p> <p>Complimentary Students are required to meet the bus on route and will be required to vacate their seat if an Eligible Student requires it.</p>
<b>Contracted Service</b>	A service to transport Eligible Students using buses that are either contracted or PTA owned and administered by SBS.
<b>Conveyance Allowance</b>	<p>A Conveyance Allowance is a contribution towards the costs incurred by parents/carers who transport their children to school by a personally owned private vehicle. Conveyance Allowances is not designed to reimburse a family for the full cost of owning and operating their personally owned private vehicle.</p> <p>Conveyance Allowance cannot be used to offset the cost of school fees, which includes the provision of charter bus, or school bus transport costs to the school where the child is enrolled.</p>
<b>DoE</b>	The Department of Education (WA).
<b>Early Intervention Program</b>	The Early Intervention Program is a program provided by DoE to help identify students who may need additional support prior to commencing primary school. Students who attend these programs may be aged between 0 and 3 years of age.
<b>Education Support Centre</b>	<p>Education support centres are usually located on the same campus as a mainstream school but usually operate independently and under separate administration. Students attending centres may be integrated into the mainstream school for some programs.</p> <p>Education Support Programs within mainstream school may be referred to as 'inclusive' schooling as an alternative to 'education support centre'</p>
<b>Education Support Program</b>	Education support students attending inclusive mainstream schooling are not specifically entitled to Transport Assistance, however, where the student has high needs/high dependency their eligibility to Transport Assistance will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
<b>Education Support School</b>	Education support schools are primarily focused on students with intellectual disabilities, and generally cater for students with the greatest level of disability and support requirements.
<b>Education Support Student</b>	A student enrolled at an Education Support School or Centre.
<b>Education Support Vehicle</b>	A vehicle approved by SBS for use under contract to transport Eligible Students to Education Support Schools or Centres.
<b>Eligible Student</b>	A student who meets the eligibility criteria for Transport Assistance.
<b>Language Development Centre</b>	Language Development Centres are specialist early intervention programs for children in the early years of schooling who have a speech and language impairment.
<b>Minister</b>	The Minister to whom the administration of the Public Transport Authority Act 2003 (WA) has been committed by the Governor of the State of Western Australia.
<b>Nearest Appropriate School</b>	A student's Nearest Appropriate School is the Appropriate School closest to a student's normal place of residence as measured by the shortest practical road route.

TERM	DEFINITION
	Where relevant, the measurement of distance from a student's residence is taken from the gate or point of entrance/exit on the property on which the residence stands that is nearest to the school or bus route.
<b>Non-Public Transport Areas</b>	Those areas of the State of Western Australia not classified by the PTA as Public Transport Areas – essentially: regional and remote areas.
<b>'Orange' School Bus</b>	A bus approved by SBS that is either contracted or PTA owned which is used to transport Approved Students to and from school.
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	<p>The term 'parent/carers' is used to refer to a person who is responsible for the welfare and development of a child, and where relevant, managing that child's behaviour.</p> <p>Depending on a student's circumstances, this may include parents, grandparents, guardians or carers.</p>
<b>Physical Mobility Disability</b>	<p>A permanent physical impairment that substantially reduces functional capacity or ability to move around independently from one place to another without some form of physical assistance or the use of equipment (e.g. a wheelchair).</p> <p>A student will only be considered to have a physical mobility disability for the purpose of assessing their eligibility if their disability is likely to persist for more than six months.</p>
<b>PTA</b>	The Public Transport Authority of Western Australia.
<b>Public Transport Areas</b>	The areas surrounding major metropolitan centres (such as those around metropolitan Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and Perth) in which the Government has established, operates, controls and subsidises a developed public transport system.
<b>Reasonable Level of Transport</b>	A reasonable level of transport is defined as access to public transport, 'Orange' School Bus, conveyance allowance or a combination as provided for within the Student Transport Assistance Policy.
<b>Regular Travel</b>	<p>To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a student must intend to travel to and from their school or Education Support Facility every day on which the school requires student attendance, and travel on at least 60% of those days (minimum six trips per week).</p> <p>What constitutes acceptable regular travel for a student attending an Education Support School or Centre may vary according to the circumstances of the student.</p>
<b>Residence</b>	<p>A Student's permanent residence or home whilst they are attending school full-time.</p> <p>Note where a student has shared living arrangements eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<b>Rural Student</b>	A Student who lives outside designated Public Transport Areas i.e. regional and remote Western Australia.
<b>SBAC</b>	<p>School Bus Advisory Committees.</p> <p>SBACs act in an advisory role to SBS and provide recommendations relating to the delivery of Transport Assistance to Rural Students.</p> <p>SBACs provide advice and recommendations relating to student transport assistances to their school(s), specifically concerning route alterations, spurs, and route extensions.</p>

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>SBS</b>	The School Bus Services branch of the PTA.
<b>School</b>	An educational facility as defined and approved by DoE.
<b>Spur</b>	A section of an Approved Route that branches from a main route and along which a contract school bus travels and returns in order to pick up and drop off students.
<b>Student</b>	A child or young person enrolled in an educational program at a school in a pre-compulsory, compulsory or post-compulsory education period as defined in the <i>School Education Act 1999</i> (WA).
<b>Terminus</b>	On the approved morning route of a contract service, the first pick-up point for an Eligible Student; on the approved afternoon route of a contract service, the last drop-off point for an Eligible Student.
<b>CO</b>	Contract Officer.
<b>Transport Assistance</b>	There are two types of transport assistance for students, managed by SBS: network of contracted 'Orange' School Bus services; and/or payment of a Conveyance Allowance that contributes towards the costs incurred by parents/carers who transport their children to school by private vehicle.

## 5. RURAL STUDENTS ATTENDING MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

### 5.1. Eligibility

To be eligible for the Transport Assistance a Rural Student attending a mainstream school under normal circumstances must meet all the below criteria:

- Be enrolled at their Nearest Appropriate School
- Be enrolled in a pre-compulsory or compulsory education period
- Regularly, attend their school and use the 'Orange' School Bus approved for that student
- Reside more than 4.5 km from their school, and
- Reside outside a designated Public Transport Area.

Explanations of the terms relevant to eligibility and the above criteria can be found below and on the following pages.

#### 5.1.1. Enrolment at Nearest Appropriate School

To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a student must be enrolled at their Nearest Appropriate School. A student's Nearest Appropriate School (whether government or non-government) is the Appropriate School closest to the student's normal place of residence as measured by the shortest practical road route. Where relevant, the measurement of distance from a student's residence is taken from the gate or point of entrance/exit on the property on which the residence stands that is nearest to the school.

Where a student's Nearest Appropriate School is unable to enrol students due to capacity issues within a specific year(s) of study, which must be confirmed in writing, from either the respective Government Education Region Office or the non-government equivalent, SBS may provide eligibility status to the student's next Nearest Appropriate School.

#### 5.1.2. Nearest Appropriate School

The Student Transport Assistance Policy provides for a reasonable level of transport assistance to the nearest appropriate government school, or non-government<sup>1</sup> school of religious denomination or ethos, that offers the year of study for the student.

Nearest Appropriate School is defined as the school closest to the student's normal place of residence, measured by the shortest practical driving route.

##### **Students Commencing Primary School (K – Year 6)**

A student is eligible to transport assistance to attend the nearest government or non-government school closest to the student's normal place of residence as measured by the shortest practical road route to undertake the relevant year of education.

##### **Students Commencing Secondary School (Year 7 – 12)**

A student is eligible to transport assistance to attend the nearest government or non-government school closest to the student's normal place of residence as measured by the shortest practical road route to undertake the relevant year of education.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Glossary for definition of Appropriate School for non-government schools.



## Secondary School Election Rule – Applicable from 2024

Where a student completes Year 6 at a primary school (not part of a school offering secondary year levels) they are eligible for transport assistance to either their nearest appropriate senior high school or nearest appropriate district high school for Year 7.

If the student was not eligible for transport assistance at that primary school because they were previously assessed as not attending their nearest appropriate school, then the election rule is not applicable.

Where a student completes Year 6 at a non-government school and were eligible for transport assistance to that same school and enrol in a government school, they are eligible for transport assistance to either their nearest appropriate senior high school or nearest appropriate district high school for Year 7.

This rule does not apply where students transition from primary to high school in non-government schools.

### Complimentary Status

Where a student does not meet the eligibility criteria, they are not entitled to transport assistance but may apply for 'complimentary status' on the school bus. If granted their status will be confirmed as Complimentary Student.

'Complimentary status' may be provided on the basis of spare seat capacity and provided no additional cost is incurred by the government. This includes meeting the bus on route coinciding at a bus stop where an eligible child is picked up from and dropped off.

The decision to withdraw a Complimentary Student from a school bus is usually made when an Eligible Student requires a seat on a bus that has reached full capacity, or if the bus is re-routed to transport Eligible Students to their nearest appropriate school and no longer operates in the area a Complimentary Student resides.

For more information see Section 5.7.

### 5.1.3. Education Periods and Student Age

Under the *School Education Act 1999* (WA), a student's enrolment is described in terms of 'education periods' that are defined as: pre-compulsory, compulsory and post-compulsory education periods. In addition to education periods, the *School Education Act 1999* (WA) establishes the following minimum and maximum ages for pre-compulsory and compulsory education periods.

- From the beginning of the year in which they reach 4 years and 6 months of age, and
- Until the end of the year in which they reach 17 years and 6 months of age; or the child reaches age of 18.

The Government may amend the *School Education Act 1999* (WA) or DoE may grant exceptions to these age limits with respect to students generally or according to the needs and capacities of individual students; however, in terms of eligibility for Transport Assistance the current policy is that a student must be enrolled in an education period at the student's Nearest Appropriate School, which effectively places age limits on who is eligible for Transport Assistance.

Transport Assistance is not provided to students enrolled in a post-compulsory education period.

#### **5.1.4.Regular Attendance**

To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a student must attend their Nearest Appropriate School and regularly use the 'Orange' School Bus approved for that student.

Regular Travel, in relation to an Eligible Student, means the student intends to travel to and from school every day on which the school requires the student to attend, and actually travels on average at least 60% of those days (at least six trips in a five-day school week).

In some unique cases, what constitutes acceptably regular travel may vary according to the individual circumstances of the student or their school.

SBS has the right to grant approval in those cases, after individual assessment.

#### **5.1.5.Distance to School**

To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a student must reside more than 4.5 km from their school.

The distance between a student's residence and their school is measured by the shortest practical road route. Where relevant, the measurement of distance from a student's residence is taken from the gate or point of entrance/exit on the property on which the residence stands that is nearest to the school.

#### **5.1.6.School Local Intake Areas**

Many public schools have a 'local-intake area'. This is a boundary set around a school that may have more applications for enrolment than places available for students. Families residing in a local-intake area will be offered enrolment priority over a family residing outside of the area.

From time to time there will be a conflict between nearest appropriate school under the Student Transport Assistance Policy and the Department of Education's local-intake area rules.

In consultation with the Department of Education, students attending a government school where they reside within the local intake will be assessed as Eligible. Transport Assistance may be by way of an 'Orange' School Bus or conveyance allowance.

Further detail about Local Intake Areas is available at the 'Western Australia School Local Intake Area (Catchment) Map' on ([www.schoolcatchment.com.au](http://www.schoolcatchment.com.au)).

#### **5.1.7.Public Transport Areas**

To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a student attending a mainstream school must reside outside designated Public Transport Areas.

To define metropolitan areas which operate Government subsidised and controlled public transport networks from the rural areas where the 'Orange' School Bus services operate, the PTA designates 'Public Transport Areas'. Residents living within these Public Transport Areas are considered to have reasonable access to a public transport network.

Students residing within these designated Public Transport Areas and attending mainstream schools are not eligible to the 'Orange' School Bus services; their entitlements are limited to travel at a concession fare rate on the Government subsidised and controlled public transport network.

Public Transport Areas are shown on maps with a boundary and, essentially, the core area of a metropolitan centre forms part of the designated Public Transport Area (Public Transport Area maps can be viewed at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)).

### **Regional Town Transport Boundaries**

Where an application for student transport assistance is to a school located within a Regional City or Town, where there is a designated Public Transport Area, eligibility will be determined by distance to the requested school being greater than 4.5km from their student's residence.

Eligibility will be based on the student attending their nearest appropriate school inside the transport boundary, or where there are multiple schools of the same denomination inside the boundary, transport assistance will be provided access to those schools further away from their nearest appropriate school.

Transport Assistance to a school within a Regional Public Transport Area will either be by 'Orange' School Bus, conveyance, Regional Town Services or a combination as determined by School Bus Services.

Where the transport solution includes the Regional Town Service, the transfer will be at a designated location and the student will be required to pay the student concession fare.

This rule does not apply to the Perth Public Transport Area boundary due to the difficulty of coordinating the many different school options available and the difficulty coordinating a transport solution for the different school closing times for students to meet the school bus for the afternoon trip out of Perth.

Students wishing to access a school inside a regional town boundary that is not their nearest appropriate school will still be assessed as complimentary students.

### **5.1.8.Approved School Bus Stops**

When a parent/carer applies for transport assistance the PTA will allocate an approved bus stop which is the designated pick up or drop off point for the student to access the school bus. No other location should be used without the specific approval of the authority.

Bus stops, where possible, will be off the road on the left-hand side. Requests for a child to be dropped off along any road that is not an approved bus stop will not be approved.

The approved bus stop will usually be a:

- Farm gate of the rural property for rural students
- Residential address for education support students
- A pre-determined school bus stop where several families will access the bus, or
- The side of the road at the end of a spur.

### **Drop Offs/Pick Ups**

Once transport assistance is approved and a designated approved bus stop identified, parents/carers must be present at the bus stop and responsible for their child until the bus departs and must be there when the bus arrives for drop off. This is mandatory for all school aged pre-primary and primary school students.

In the event the parent/carer is not present at the approved stop for drop off, the school bus will wait a few minutes and then depart. The school bus operator will not allow the child to alight the vehicle and will use the contact details on the passenger list to make arrangements with the parent/carer to collect the child on completion of the bus run.

In the event that a parent fails to apply for transport assistance and leaves their child at a bus stop, the child will not be left behind and will be transported to school. If this does occur the

operator will attempt to contact of the parent/carer with the assistance of the PTA to ensure that transportation does not continue until an application has been lodged and eligibility has been assessed.

For secondary school aged students' parents are not required to be present at bus stops, however for students in Year 7, parents/carers must give consent in writing to the PTA for their children to be unaccompanied. The PTA has the right to refuse such requests if it determines the child's safety is at risk when the approved bus stop is a considerable distance to the residential home.

Parents/carers failure to be present and supervise students under the age of 12 at the bus stop each morning and afternoon without good reason, as determined on a case-by-case basis by SBS, may have their Transport Assistance withdrawn.

Also see section 7.4.2 Roles and Responsibilities – Parents/Carers.

## **5.2. Entitlement**

The Government's policy is that eligible Rural Students are entitled to Transport Assistance in respect of travel to their nearest appropriate school.

### **5.2.1.Types of Transport Assistance**

A student entitled to Transport Assistance may receive:

- Transport by an 'Orange' School Bus, which may be free or, in cases where a contract school bus picks up the student inside a Public Transport Area, may require the student to pay a student concession fare
- A Conveyance Allowance, paid to their parents/carers, and/or
- Metropolitan or Regional Town Service (student concession fare).

### **5.2.2.Social, Economic, Financial and Community Factors**

In rural and regional areas, a nearest appropriate school for transport assistance purposes might not be the same town or centre where a family has well established social, working, health care and community recreational networks, where this town also has a school.

Where a family resides a similar distance (up to 5 kms) from two or more schools consideration will be given to social, economic, financial and community factors, when determining nearest appropriate school when families apply under this rule.

As part of the evaluation process families may have to provide written evidence to support their claim.

Evidence could include a letter confirming employment by employer, membership to a sporting/social club etc.

All transport determinations are bound by the defining principle of no adverse impacts on the broader cohort of travelling students in the region attending their nearest appropriate school. This means where families reside outside the traditional catchment area for a school bus, transport assistance may be in the form of a conveyance allowance to meet the bus on route or the payment of a conveyance to drive a student to school where no service exists.

### 5.2.3.Special Cases

Specific circumstances where nearest appropriate school does not apply are described below.

#### Year 11 and 12 Students

Transport assistance is provided to all rural secondary students in Years 11 and 12 who:

- Enrol at an alternative school, not their closest public secondary school, to access curriculum pathways and programs to suit their specific needs (e.g. to attend senior colleges such as Manea College), or
- Engage in an alternative education program under a **Notices of Arrangement (NOA)** that includes full-time TAFE/RTO, or a part-time school/part-time TAFE/RTO requirement. This includes students from both government and non-government schools but excludes any students also undertaking full-time employment.

The application must include the letter of approval for the NOA that was issued by the Department of Education.

- Formal Exemption from enrolment re-engaging a student with education in an approved education or training program.

The application must include the letter of approval for the exemption that was issued by the Department of Education.

Complimentary status will be granted where possible, for students undertaking traineeships/apprentices attending TAFE/RTO up to the end of the year they turn 17 years and six months or until they turn 18. This excludes school leavers undertaking full-time employment.<sup>2</sup>

#### Year 7 to 10 Students

**Approved Specialist Programs (ASPs).** Rural students who have been selected into an ASP are eligible for Transport Assistance and must meet the other eligibility criteria.

This only applies to the ASP registered by the Department of Education and published on the DoE website.

Transport Assistance for approved ASPs applies **only** to the following schools:

- Australind Senior High School
- Eastern Hills Senior High School
- Bunbury Senior High School
- Busselton Senior High School
- Dalyellup College
- Denmark High School
- Hedland Senior High School
- Margaret River Senior High School
- Newman Senior High School

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that for the avoidance of doubt, the intent of this policy is to cover full time trainees/apprentices attending some formal educational requirements. It does not cover work experience placement within the WACE framework due to its complexity i.e. there are too many variations and permutations based on individual needs, type of work undertaken and period of work placement.

- Newton Moore Senior High School

The application must include a signed letter of acceptance from the School Principal for the student enrolled in an ASP.

**Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program.** Rural students who have been selected into a GATE program are eligible for Transport Assistance and must meet the other eligibility criteria.

Transport Assistance for approved GATE programs applies only to the following schools:

- Bunbury Senior High School
- Albany Senior High School

The application for Transport Assistance must include a signed letter of acceptance to enrol in a nominated GATE program from the Department of Education.

#### 5.2.4. Kindergarten Students

Subject to meeting eligibility criteria that apply to all Rural Students, students enrolled in kindergarten may be entitled to Transport Assistance.

Kindergarten students often attend for short days or variable hours, particularly at the start of school terms. Accordingly, what constitutes acceptable 'regular' travel for kindergarten students may vary according to the circumstances of their school (see also section Conveyance Allowance: Kindergarten Students, page 27).

To cater for eligible kindergarten students to travel on an existing school bus service, SBS will extend the route (based on the spur rule of up to 5kms for one child or 7.5kms for two or more children) to enable families of kindergarten students to receive a closer bus service. Families of kindergarten students can elect to receive a conveyance allowance between home and school in preference to a bus service, however if a family elects to receive a conveyance allowance the bus will not be re-routed to stop closer to their property for the duration of that school year.

Parents/carers should note that approval of a student's entitlement to travel on an 'Orange' School Bus does not imply that it would be appropriate for the student to travel unaccompanied, especially in the case of young children.

If a student is entitled to Transport Assistance in the form of travel on an 'Orange' School Bus, it is the responsibility of the student's parent/carer to decide whether their child is capable of travel and, as part of the Transport Assistance application process, they must acknowledge that responsibility.

#### 5.2.5. High School Students Attending Vocational Study

The SBS Student Transport Assistance policy is designed to cater for primary and secondary students.

Students who have chosen a full time or part time vocational training option under a NOA issued by the Department of Education may be eligible for Transport Assistance. Parents/carers of students, who are engaged in these vocational training options, will need to provide a letter of approval for the NOA that was issued by the Department of Education to support their application for Transport Assistance. Additional information can be found in the 'Schools' section of the SBS website [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au) or by contacting SBS.

### 5.2.6. Students with Physical Mobility Disabilities

In accordance with the commitments and policies of the Commonwealth and State Governments relating to equity and anti-discrimination, SBS endeavours to provide the same types of Transport Assistance to eligible Rural Students with disabilities attending mainstream schools as are provided to other eligible Rural Students.

Where an Eligible Student with a Physical Mobility Disability cannot access an existing 'Orange' School Bus, SBS will seek to provide an alternative transport solution, which may include:

- Payment of a Conveyance Allowance, paid to their parents/carers,
- Modifying an 'Orange' School Bus to accommodate the student.

Students and parents/carers should note that matters relating to accessibility which do not pertain to the 'Orange' School Bus services are not within the control of SBS. Accessibility issues related to school or community infrastructure (e.g. layout of schools or classrooms, door widths, wheelchair-suitable footpaths, ramp slopes) should be directed to DoE, the school or the local shire authority or council.

### 5.2.7. Boarding Students

A student who boards (e.g. lives away from home in order to attend school and returns home only on weekends or at other times) or who resides at a country-based residential college would not normally be eligible for Transport Assistance, but may be approved to travel on an 'Orange' School Bus as a complimentary passenger (see [section Complimentary Passengers](#), page 29).

### 5.2.8. New Schools

New schools are generally opened only after extended planning by DoE or, in the case of non-government schools, the relevant independent school controlling body.

When a new school is opened, it is presumed that most of the students who will attend that school will reside relatively close by. The introduction of a new school may accordingly affect the eligibility and/or entitlements of existing students who live near the new school but who in the past have attended schools that are more distant. When DoE advises SBS that a new school is to be established in an area, SBS will evaluate whether existing routes can be altered to service the new school and to accommodate any changes in the distribution of student enrolments.

Students who have already commenced their schooling (primary or secondary) at an existing school when a new Appropriate School opens closer to their residence, will continue to be transported to their current school under 'grandfather' arrangements (a child completing primary schooling should then be transported to their nearest appropriate secondary school).

In evaluating the influence a new school has on services and routes, the presence of complimentary passengers on any existing school bus service will not be taken into account in justifying the ongoing need for the service or in determining the route design or the size of the vehicle to be used on it. If a new service is not implemented and existing service routes are not re-configured to transport students to a new school, students eligible for Transport Assistance to the new school will normally be entitled to a Conveyance Allowance.

### 5.2.9. School Closures

Schools are usually closed by DoE because of a decline in student numbers. Remaining students may be enrolled in one of the remaining schools in that district. Students affected by a school closure will be reassessed to establish their entitlement to Transport Assistance.

If a school is closed, it can mean that some 'Orange' School Bus services may not have sufficient passengers to continue operating; in which case, SBS may, depending on the circumstances:

- Reconfigure the routes in the area to ensure best possible service delivery to families, or
- Terminate those contracts that SBS is unable to reconfigure and become inefficient.

In considering what arrangements are most appropriate for students affected by the closure of a school, SBS will take into account the age and residential distribution of students in relation to eligibility and entitlements.

As a result, there can be situations where geographical distance from a student's residence is not a determining factor in establishing a student's Nearest Appropriate School (the following section, 'equidistant appropriate schools', contains more information about how situations like this are managed – (see example 5 on page 26)).

Re-assessment of student's eligibility and entitlements and the re-configuration of school bus routes resulting from a school closure may not conform to current policy. Transport solutions in these circumstances will not be considered by SBS as establishing a precedent for families or students elsewhere in the state.

### 5.2.10. Equidistant Appropriate Schools

Rare situations can arise where a student lives in a location that is approximately the same distance from two Appropriate Schools that have existing services transporting students. Where this occurs, SBS will only offer Transport Assistance to one school, which will be normally established by the closest bus route to the student's residence. Where this is not practical, in terms of an appropriate transport solution a Conveyance Allowance may be approved to any of the practically Appropriate Schools or to a bus stop.

In most circumstances, SBS treats schools as being equidistant if the distance variance between the two schools, in relation to a student's residence, is less than or equal to 2.5 km (see example 4 on page 22).

In relation to a school closure, SBS treats Appropriate Schools as being equidistant if the distance variance between them in relation to a student's residence is less than or equal to 25 km (see example 5 on page 23).



### 5.3. How the Nearest Appropriate School Policy is Applied

The scenarios described on the following pages are examples only and are not intended to cover all possible configurations of students, schools and contract school bus services.

The diagrams used in the examples are not to scale.

The following terms are used in the examples:

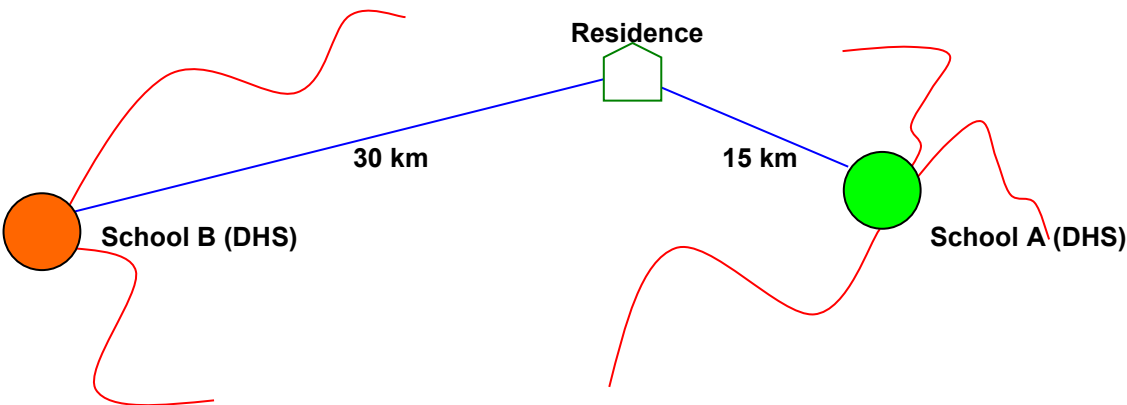
DHS	District High School:	A school that provides educational programs for students for years 7 to 10 inclusive.
SHS	Senior High School:	A school that provides educational programs for students for years 7 to 12 inclusive.
PS	Primary School:	A school that provides educational programs for students for years 1 to 6 inclusive.

#### Example 1

##### Student's Situation

- An Eligible Student in year 8 resides closer to School A than School B
- School A is a District High School appropriate to the student
- School B is a District High School also appropriate to the student
- Schools A and B are both served by 'Orange' School Buses and the student has access to both bus networks.

##### Diagram 1



Red lines (✓) indicate routes followed by existing contract school bus services.

##### Student's Entitlement

Under the definition of a Nearest Appropriate School, the student would be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School A.

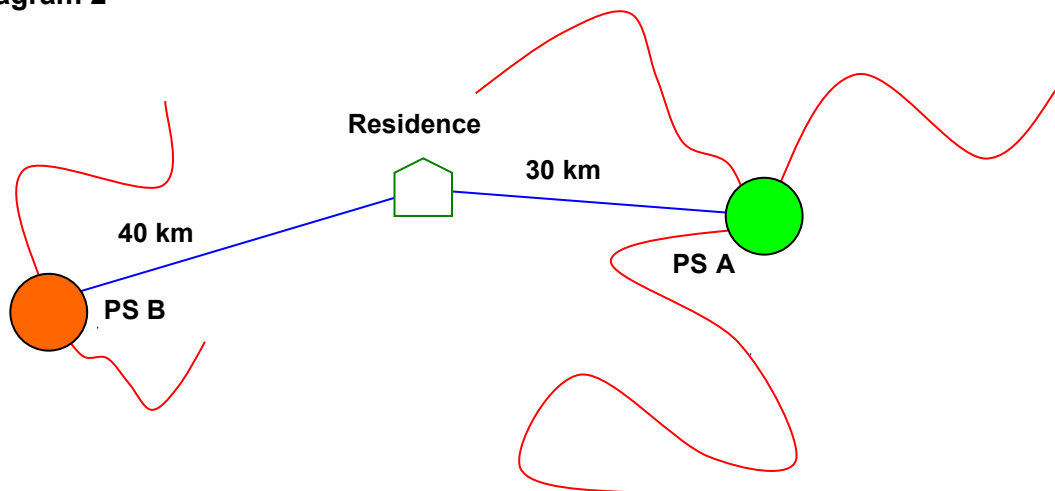
The student would not be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School B; however, the student may request to travel to School B, which may be approved by SBS if there is adequate seating capacity. Should approval be given, the student will travel as a Complimentary Passenger (see [section Complimentary Passengers](#), page 29).

## Example 2

### Student's Situation

- An eligible primary school student resides closer to School A than School B
- School A is a Primary School appropriate to the student
- School B is a Primary School also appropriate to the student
- School A is served by 'Orange' School Buses which are in close proximity to the student's residence
- School B is served by 'Orange' School Buses, but none follow routes as close to the student's residence as those which serve School A.

Diagram 2



### Student's Entitlement

Under the definition of Nearest Appropriate School, the student would be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School A.

The student would not be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School B.

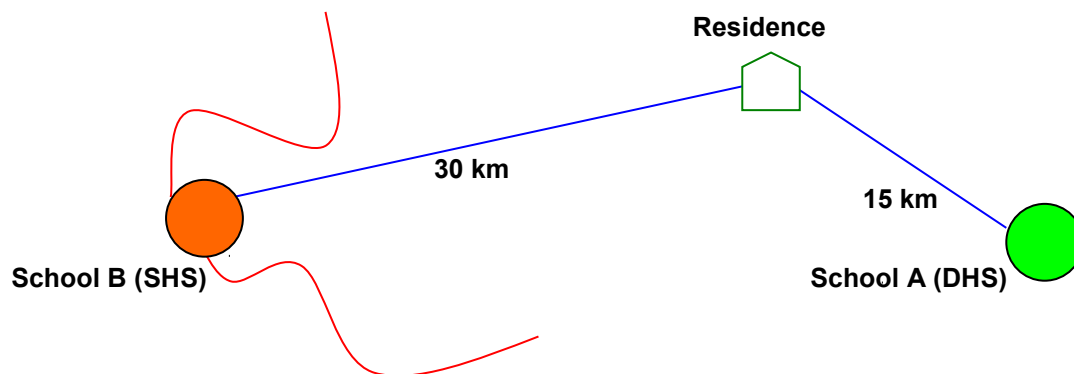
The student may, if the relevant 'Orange' School Bus has adequate seating capacity, apply to travel to School B as a Complimentary Passenger (see [section Complimentary Passengers](#), page 29).

### Example 3

#### Student's Situation

- An Eligible Student in year 9 resides closer to School A than School B
- School A is a District High School appropriate to the student
- School B is a Senior High School also appropriate to the student
- School A is *not* serviced by any 'Orange' School Buses
- School B is serviced by 'Orange' School Buses.

Diagram 3



#### Student's Entitlement

Under the definition of Nearest Appropriate School, the student would be entitled to a Conveyance Allowance for travel to School A (because there are no 'Orange' School Buses servicing that school).

The student would not be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School B whilst he/she is in years 9 and 10.

The student may, if the relevant 'Orange' School Bus has adequate seating capacity, apply to travel to School B as a Complimentary Passenger until year 10 (see [Complimentary Passengers](#), page 29).

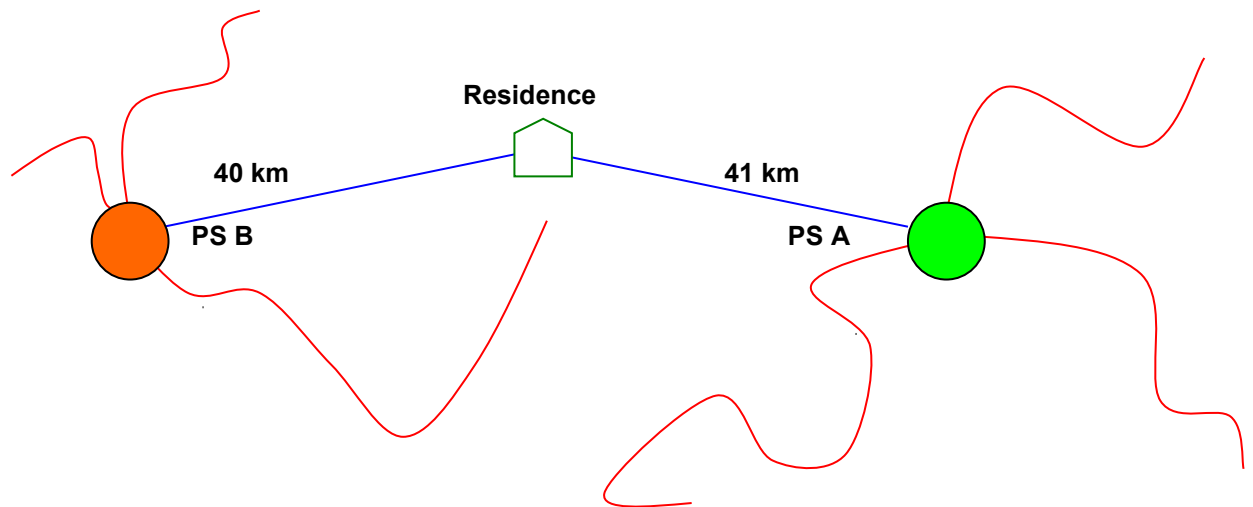
If the student is still living in the same location when he/she enters years 11, he/she would be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School B on a 'Orange' School Bus (because for years 11 and 12, School B would be the student's Nearest Appropriate School).

### Example 4 – Equidistance Appropriate School

#### Student's Situation

- An eligible primary school student residence is equidistant with respect to School A and School B
- School A is a Primary school appropriate to the student
- School B is a Primary School also appropriate to the student
- School A is serviced by a range of 'Orange' School Buses
- School B is serviced by a range of 'Orange' School Buses, one of which is in *closer* proximity to the student's residence than any of those serving School A.

Diagram 4



#### Student's Entitlement

Under the definition of Nearest Appropriate School, the student would be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School B.

The student would *not* be entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School A.

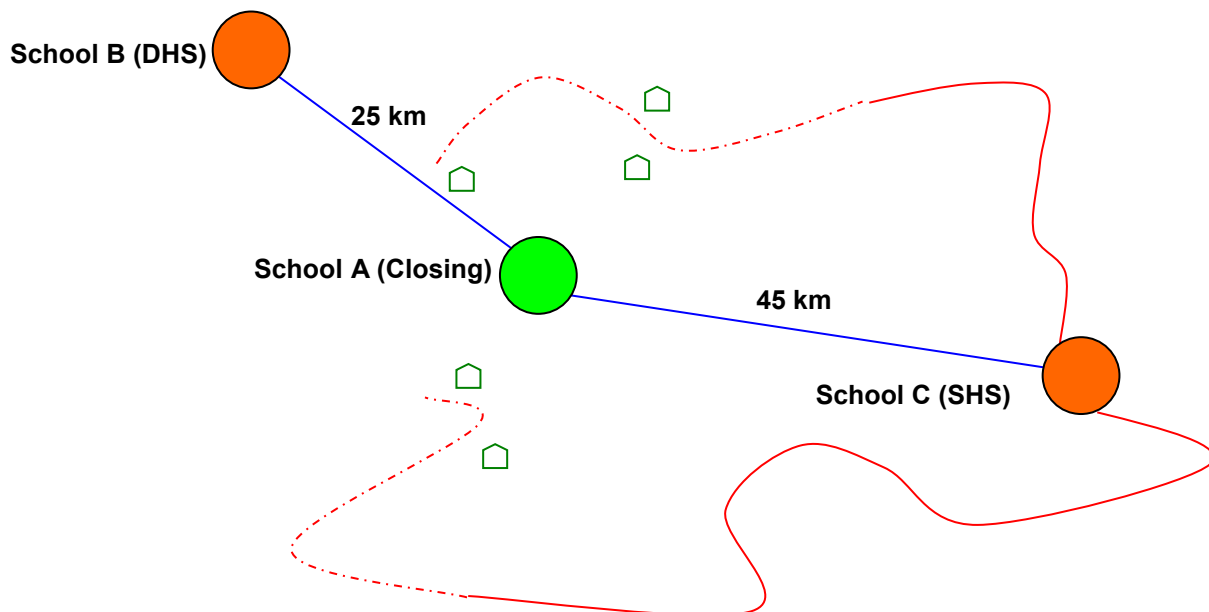
The student may, if the relevant 'Orange' School Bus has adequate seating capacity, apply to travel to School A as a Complimentary Passenger (see [Complimentary Passengers](#), page 29).

### Example 5 – School Closure

#### Students' Situation

- A group of Eligible Students enrolled in years 8 and 9 at School A (which is a DHS) are notified that their school will be closing at the end of the year
- The next closest school is School B (a DHS appropriate to all the students)
- School C is an SHS also appropriate to the students
- School B is (on average) 20 km closer to the group of students than School C is
- School B is *not* serviced by any 'Orange' School Buses
- School C is served by two 'Orange' School Buses, both of which have the capacity to have their journeys extended to pick up the students who will be affected by the closure of School A
- There are not enough students affected by School A's closure to justify instituting a new service to take the students to School B.

**Diagram 5**



Dashed lines (---) indicate possible extensions to the existing routes.

#### Students' Entitlement

Because existing bus routes from School C can be modified to pick the students affected by the closure of School A, they are entitled to Transport Assistance for travel to School C.

The students would not be entitled to Transport Assistance in the form of an 'Orange' School Bus service for travel to School B.

Note that this is a simple example, which considers the group of affected students as a whole. A student who lived closer to School B than School C and who wished to attend School B would be entitled to a Conveyance Allowance.

## 5.4. Applying for Transport Assistance

### 5.4.1. Application Form

To be considered for Transport Assistance to a rural mainstream school, a person responsible for the student must complete an online Application Form for Transport Assistance and submit it to SBS via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

A parent/carer who does not have access to the internet is encouraged to approach their local school for assistance or SBS via the contact details provided on the Website for further assistance.

### 5.4.2. Who may apply: Parents/Carers

Amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and related changes to the *Family Court Act 1997* (WA) have seen the concepts of custody and guardianship replaced by a broader concept of 'parental responsibility'. This concept of parental responsibility applies equally to all people legally responsible for the care of a child, regardless of their biological relationship to that child or their marital status.

In the School Education Act, 'parent' is defined as meaning a person who at law has responsibility for:

- The long-term care, welfare and development of a child, or
- The day-to-day care, welfare and development of a child.

SBS can only consider applications for Transport Assistance from persons legally authorised to care for the student for whom Transport Assistance is being sought. Depending on a student's circumstances, this may include parents, grandparents, guardians or carers.

A school may, for administrative purposes, submit an application on behalf of a parent/carer where that parent/carer is unable to submit an application for transport assistance. Where a school submits an application, it is the responsibility of that school to ensure the parent/carer is fully aware of their responsibilities under the Student Transport Assistance Policy.

### 5.4.3. Assessment and Approval of Applications for Transport Assistance

The assessment of a student's eligibility for Transport Assistance is done by comparing the eligibility criteria at section 5.1 against the information provided by parents/carers in their application form. While establishing a student's eligibility and entitlement to Transport Assistance, SBS may request clarification or additional information from parents/carers. In addition to the information provided in the application form, SBS also uses specific information in relation to the future demography of the district in which the student resides and a number of other factors, including:

- Numbers and residential distribution of existing Eligible Students
- DoE advice and community planning regarding schools and education facilities
- The presence and relevance of existing public transport services
- The adequacy of existing 'Orange' School Bus services, the routes of those services and the current journey times of those routes
- How long existing school bus services are expected to be needed
- The most efficient arrangement of existing school bus services now and in coming years.

Parents/carers should be aware that if they knowingly submit false information or fail to provide relevant information in relation to an application for Transport Assistance or make a

fraudulent claim in respect of a Conveyance Allowance, their child's entitlement to Transport Assistance might be suspended or withdrawn.

Fraudulent claims in respect of a Conveyance Allowance will be treated most seriously and SBS will seek reimbursement of any overpaid monies. Dependent on the circumstances of the fraudulent claim SBS reserves the right to report any fraudulent activity to the Western Australian Police Force for further action.

#### **5.4.4. Out of Policy Requests**

In some exceptional circumstances, schools and/or parents may be able to justify 'out-of-policy' arrangements because of compelling circumstances.

Compelling reasons to justify an out of policy decision may include issues, such as medical conditions (e.g. cancer treatment), family circumstances (e.g. court orders) etc. which prevent the student from attending their nearest appropriate school

Due to these arrangements being finite in nature out-of-policy considerations will not be granted for more than 12 months. Any further extension of current 'out-of-policy' arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should include new information where possible.

All out of policy approvals for student transport arrangements will be reviewed at least annually, to ensure transport assistance is delivered equitably to all Eligible Students. In the event SBS identify an arrangement as being incorrectly applied or beyond the scope of the current intent of the policy, then SBS will work towards phasing out those arrangements.

SBS will work with the impacted student's parents/carers and the relevant school to phase out any such arrangement as soon as practical, aiming to do so with minimal disruption to the student's access to school i.e. this will coincide with the end of the school year, or school term depending on circumstances.

#### **5.4.5. Other Sources of Student Transport Assistance**

The PTA is not involved in the administration of the schemes mentioned below. These schemes are managed by the Department of Transport (DoT) and are not related to Student Transport Assistance Policies.

##### **Taxi Users' Subsidy Scheme (TUSS)**

The Taxi Users' Subsidy Scheme (TUSS) provides subsidies for travel by taxi for people who have severe, permanent disabilities that prevent them from using conventional public transport services.

Further information is available at [TUSS](#) on the DoT website.

##### **Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS)**

The Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) provides travel assistance to school and tertiary students who are geographically isolated. The two main types of travel support are:

- Subsidised fares for air, bus and train travel for Eligible Students who live within the defined remote area of Western Australia.
- A road travel subsidy for Eligible Students who live anywhere within Western Australia but who must be driven in a private vehicle more than 56 km from home to the nearest (the road travel subsidy does not include the first or final 56km of a round trip):
  - Appropriate government school with boarding facilities offering classes in the grade or level in which the student is enrolled, or

- Regular passenger transport, or
- A school bus service operating between the student's home and the school they are attending.

Further information regarding eligibility and entitlement is available at [Student travel Subsidies](#) on the DoT website.

### **More Information about these Schemes**

Information about these schemes and student subsidised travel can be obtained from the DoT Website at ([www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au)) or by contacting the DoT Travel Subsidy Officer (Ph: **1300 660 147**).

## **5.5. Conveyance Allowance**

To be considered for Transport Assistance in the form of a Conveyance Allowance, a person responsible for the student must complete an online Application form for Transport Assistance and submit it to SBS via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

A parent/carer who does not have access to the internet is encouraged to contact their local school for assistance or contact SBS.

A Conveyance Allowance is a contribution towards the costs incurred by parents/carers who transport their children by a personally owned private vehicle to their Nearest Appropriate School or meet their school bus enroute. A Conveyance Allowance is not designed to reimburse a family for the full cost of owning and operating their personal owned private vehicle.

A Conveyance Allowance is not paid if a student's residence is within 2.5 kilometres of the school bus route or within 4.5 kilometres of their Nearest Appropriate School.

Parents/carers should note the following:

- An entitlement to a Conveyance Allowance is subject to SBS determining that a Conveyance Allowance is the appropriate type of Transport Assistance for a student.
- A Conveyance Allowance is normally only paid in respect of travel undertaken for the specific purpose of taking students to and from school (e.g. a Conveyance Allowance would not normally be paid to a parent who drops their child off at school on the way to work).
- Conveyance Allowance can only be claimed for the journeys actually undertaken by family car.
- Conveyance Allowance cannot be used to offset the cost of school fees, which includes the provision of charter bus, or school bus transport costs to the school where the child is enrolled.

### **5.5.1. Entitlement**

After a Conveyance Allowance is approved, the student's parent/carer may make a claim for payment at the end of each school term for the preceding term.

The earliest date for which a Conveyance Allowance can be claimed is the beginning of the term in which the original application was approved by SBS (i.e. SBS will not backdate approvals). If a child is enrolled later in the school term, Conveyance Allowance can only be claimed from the date the child commenced school.

The amount of a Conveyance Allowance entitlement is calculated according to the number of days a student physically attends school and the distance travelled by the parents/carers in getting the student to and from their school or to and from the pick-up/drop-off point on their



approved school bus route. Normally a claim for Conveyance Allowance only allows for two return trips per day i.e. four legs per day.

As journey times on school buses are capped at 90 minutes per one way journey, the Public Transport Authority applies a similar standard for journey times undertaken by private motor vehicle. Therefore, without burdening families with excessive travelling times the payment of Conveyance Allowance is capped at 50 kms per leg.

Families must inform SBS as soon as this travel pattern becomes the norm. For occasional changes, the travel patterns can be listed on the claim for payment in the term they apply.

### **5.5.2. Special Case: Kindergarten Students and Sibling Access**

Parents/carers of students attending kindergarten for half-days and travel by 'Orange' School Bus in the morning may be eligible for a Conveyance Allowance for the return trip home at midday.

An Eligible Student's entitlement to a Conveyance Allowance will not be affected if they have a sibling who attends kindergarten.

Where siblings of a kindergarten student already receive a Conveyance Allowance and the kindergarten student attends for half-days only, a Conveyance Allowance may be provided for a return trip at midday. In this circumstance, a Conveyance Allowance may be paid to a qualifying family for a maximum of three return trips per day.

### **5.5.3. Rate**

The Conveyance Allowance rate is indexed annually and reflects a contribution (i.e. not full cost recovery) to running costs of fuel, tyres, repairs and maintenance, but not elements such as vehicle purchase price, depreciation, interest, registration or insurance.

The rate is expressed in terms of cents per kilometre. Parents/carers should visit the SBS website [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au) to obtain the current rate of payment rate.

### **5.5.4. Payment**

To be paid a Conveyance Allowance, a parent/carer must:

- Provide valid financial institution account details via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au), and
- Submit a claim for Conveyance Allowance and student attendance records (where required) via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

Payment of claims by cheque will not occur.

The earliest date for which a Conveyance Allowance can be claimed is the beginning of the term in which the original application was approved by SBS. SBS will not backdate claims for Conveyance Allowance for periods where Conveyance Allowance was not approved.

Where claims for Conveyance Allowance exceed \$1000.00 per term, parents will have to submit a student school attendance record obtained from the school as part of the claim. Attendance records may also be required for lesser amounts or where there is approval to claim in excess of \$1,000 but the actual submission is less.

Claims for Conveyance Allowance are paid in arrears as a lump sum at the end of each school term. Families may accumulate their conveyance claims and claim up to a maximum period of two terms in arrears provided the student(s) is approved for Conveyance Allowance from the outset.

Normally, only one Conveyance Allowance is paid to a family of Eligible Students; however, there are circumstances where a family, dependent on the age and schools attended may be paid two separate Conveyance Allowances.

Where families have been approved transport assistance via the payment of Conveyance Allowance for the eldest sibling of the family, the transport of other siblings is not an issue. However, if the eldest sibling exits the education system, parents must re-apply for transport assistance eligibility for the other siblings to ensure entitlement exists as continuation of the original approval will be void.

#### **5.5.5. Audit of Claims**

SBS staff routinely audit Conveyance Allowance claims by checking distances between the student's residence and school or approved drop-off/pick-up point.

Parents/carers should be aware that if they knowingly submit false information or fail to provide relevant information in relation to an application for Transport Assistance or make a fraudulent claim in respect of a Conveyance Allowance, their child's entitlement to Transport Assistance might be suspended or withdrawn.

Fraudulent claims in respect of a Conveyance Allowance will be treated most seriously and SBS will seek reimbursement of any overpaid monies. Dependent on the circumstances of the fraudulent claim SBS reserves the right to report any fraudulent activity to the Western Australian Police Service for further action.

### **5.6. Travel by Contract School Bus**

Travel by 'Orange' School Bus is the primary and preferred type of Transport Assistance; however, there are circumstances in which it is not feasible for an 'Orange' School Bus service to be provided or where existing services are at capacity. In such situations, travel to school by 'Orange' School Bus may not be an approved transport option.

If a contract school bus service cannot feasibly be provided Eligible Students are normally entitled to a Conveyance Allowance.

#### **5.6.1. Entitlement**

Approval of a student's entitlement to travel on an 'Orange' School Bus means the student is entitled to be picked up and dropped off at designated locations along routes approved by SBS and transported to and from their Nearest Appropriate School.

#### **5.6.2. Fares**

Typically, students travelling on an 'Orange' School Bus are not charged fares. However, in some unusual circumstances, a student residing within a designated Public Transport Area may be picked up by an 'Orange' School Bus and, if so, the student will generally be charged a fare.

Where this does occur, the fare charged will be equivalent to the concession fare that would be charged for travel on a public transport system. SBS will advise the parents/carers of affected students as early as possible of any changes to services or routes and the date from which fares will be charged.

More information about fares for students travelling in the Perth Public Transport Area can be found on the Transperth website at ([www.transperth.wa.gov.au](http://www.transperth.wa.gov.au)).

### 5.6.3. Behaviour on School Buses

Most students who travel on contract school buses behave appropriately. However, misbehaviour by students whilst travelling on contract school buses can occur, and when it does may have the potential to cause injury, distract drivers from their work and undermine the safety, timeliness and efficiency of the service.

### 5.6.4. Code of Conduct

The PTA has developed a Code of Conduct to clearly explain the standards of behaviour expected from students. This Code applies to all students travelling on 'Orange' School Buses managed by SBS. The following of the Code of Conduct is mandatory on all 'Orange' School Buses. Students that breach the Code of Conduct will be managed in accordance with the Student Behaviour Management Guidelines.

A copy of the Code of Conduct is contained within the Behaviour Management Guidelines which can be found on the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

### 5.6.5. Behaviour Management Guidelines

SBS, in conjunction with DoE, have developed a set of Student *Behaviour Management Guidelines* to provide a framework that aims to ensure student behaviours are managed in an appropriate and consistent manner. These guidelines outline the roles, rights and responsibilities of: SBS, DoE, school bus contractors/drivers, students, parents / carers and others who are involved in the conduct, provision and administration of student behaviour on school buses. The *Behaviour Management Guidelines* for Students Travelling to School by Contract School Bus are published by the PTA on School Bus Services Website and can be found at ([www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)).

## 5.7. Complimentary Passengers

### 5.7.1. Conditions of Travel

A Rural Student who is not eligible for Transport Assistance or who would be eligible but wishes to travel to a school or education facility other than their Nearest Appropriate School may be allowed to travel as a Complimentary Student subject to the following conditions:

- A student may only travel as a Complimentary Student with the approval of SBS
- There must be a seat available on the 'Orange' School Bus the student wishes to travel on (i.e. no Eligible Student who is entitled to travel on the bus will be denied travel because of the presence of a Complimentary Passenger)
- The pick-up and drop-off points for the student must be on an Approved Route and not cause an unacceptable increase in the journey time for the other students on the bus (in practice, this normally means that Complimentary Students are picked up and dropped off at existing bus stops), and
- The presence of the student should not result in additional cost to SBS (i.e. Approved Routes will not be altered to cater for or accommodate Complimentary Students).

#### Example

A student may be given permission to travel as a Complimentary Student if he/she lives in a rural area (i.e. outside the designated Public Transport Areas) but:

- Attends their Nearest Appropriate School but resides within 4.5 km of that school, or
- Attends their Nearest Appropriate School on an irregular basis, or
- Attends a school other than their Nearest Appropriate School.

### 5.7.2. Complimentary Priority Classification

While all student not attending their nearest appropriate school are classified as complimentary students, complimentary status has been further refined from 2024.

Applying a priority classification to complimentary status aims to recognise the continuity of high school education to the end of year 12. Therefore, more focus is applied to student going to complete year 12 understanding the limitations of complimentary students (i.e. not entitled to transport assistance). As underutilised capacity on a school bus may be of a premium a priority access to seats will apply.

The complimentary priority access applies to a seat on an 'Orange' School Bus where a student is not attending the nearest appropriate Secondary School (Non-Government school usually providing education for Yr7-Yr12)) or Senior High School (Government school usually catering for Yr11 and Yr12 students only)).

The classification of priority access is determined by:

- **Complimentary Access Priority 1.** Students not attending the nearest appropriate Secondary School or SHS in Year 10.
- **Complimentary Access Priority 2.** Students not attending the nearest appropriate Secondary School or SHS in Year 7 – 9.
- **Complimentary Access Priority 3.** Students not attending the nearest appropriate Secondary School or SHS in K – Year 6.

**Complimentary Access Priority 3** will also apply in all other cases where a student is not attending their nearest appropriate school.

### 5.7.3. Complimentary Access to School Bus

Access to available seats on an 'Orange' School Bus will apply to students in the following priority order:

- Eligible
- Complimentary Access Priority 1
- Complimentary Access Priority 2
- Complimentary Access Priority 3

Where a school bus is at capacity and new applications are for Eligible Students, approved Priority 3 will be removed on a last on first off basis, followed by Priority 2 and then finally Priority 1.

No preference or consideration will be given for students of lower priority to remain on the service where they travel with an eligible or higher priority sibling(s).

### 5.7.4. Application to Travel as a Complimentary Passenger

To be considered for Transport Assistance (including assistance in the form of a Complimentary Passenger) a person responsible for the student must complete an online Application for Transport Assistance Form and submit it to SBS via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

### 5.7.5. Permission to Travel may be Suspended or Withdrawn

As with all students travelling on contract school buses, Complimentary Passengers must abide by the requirements of the Code of Conduct.

Failure to abide by the requirements of the Code of Conduct, especially in respect of matters of safety, may result in permission to travel being suspended or withdrawn.

Permission for a student to travel as a Complimentary Passenger may be suspended or withdrawn at any time if an Eligible Student who is entitled to travel on the bus requires the seat and the vehicle is at capacity. If permission to travel is suspended or withdrawn, SBS will notify the parent/carer and anyone else affected by the withdrawal of permission as soon as possible.

## 5.8. Contact Details

### General

<b>Address</b>	Public Transport Authority School Bus Services Public Transport Centre West Parade Perth
<b>Mail</b>	PO Box 8125 Perth Business Centre Perth WA 6849
<b>Telephone</b>	(08) 9326 2625
<b>Fax – Operations</b>	(08) 9326 2781
<b>Fax – Business Support</b>	(08) 9326 2767
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:schoolbus@pta.wa.gov.au">schoolbus@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au">www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au</a>

### Rural

Information about transport assistance for rural students can be obtained by contacting the Contract Officer (CO) for the district in which the student resides – see the contact details listed below.

To view a list of towns and obtain the contact details for the CO responsible for the relevant district, visit the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)

### Portfolios

<b>Mainstream North</b>	<a href="mailto:sbsmainstreamnorth@pta.wa.gov.au">sbsmainstreamnorth@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Mainstream South</b>	<a href="mailto:sbsmainstreamsouth@pta.wa.gov.au">sbsmainstreamsouth@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Great South West</b>	<a href="mailto:greatsouthwest@pta.wa.gov.au">greatsouthwest@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Great Southern</b>	<a href="mailto:greatsouthern@pta.wa.gov.au">greatsouthern@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>South West</b>	<a href="mailto:southwest@pta.wa.gov.au">southwest@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>South Central</b>	<a href="mailto:southcentral@pta.wa.gov.au">southcentral@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Great South Central</b>	<a href="mailto:greatsouthcentral@pta.wa.gov.au">greatsouthcentral@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Northern</b>	<a href="mailto:northern@pta.wa.gov.au">northern@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Mid West</b>	<a href="mailto:midwest@pta.wa.gov.au">midwest@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>South East Goldfields</b>	<a href="mailto:southeastgoldfields@pta.wa.gov.au">southeastgoldfields@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Eastern Wheatbelt</b>	<a href="mailto:easternwheatbelt@pta.wa.gov.au">easternwheatbelt@pta.wa.gov.au</a>

## 6. STUDENTS ATTENDING EDUCATION SUPPORT FACILITIES

There is a range of education support programs and facilities provided by Government and non-Government agencies for students with special needs, including those with physical and intellectual disabilities.

As with all students, those who can make their own way to and from Education Support School or Centre are encouraged to do so – whether by way of public transport, by walking or via their parents/carers. However, many students travelling to Education Support Schools and Centres have special needs and restricted mobility, which can preclude them from using some forms of public transport.

To help such students access the programs available at Education Support Schools and Centres, the Government provides Eligible Students with a basic level of Transport Assistance.

This Transport Assistance is usually in the form of transport via 'Orange' School Buses (referred to in this Manual as 'Education Support Vehicles'), many of which are modified to accommodate the needs of students that require; wheelchair access, postural restraints or any other equipment or vehicle modification that can reasonably be achieved; or payment of a Conveyance Allowance as a contribution towards the costs incurred by parents/carers in transporting their child to their Education Support School or Centre.

SBS administers this Transport Assistance policy in line with the Government's Operational Principles and taking into account the needs and capacities of individual students.

### 6.1. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Transport Assistance for travel to an Education Support Centre or School, an education support student must, under normal circumstances:

- Be enrolled at a government or non-government Education Support Centre
- Be enrolled at their nearest Education Support Centre
- Be enrolled at an Education Support School within the transport catchment area<sup>3</sup>;
- Are not able to travel independently or make their own way safely between home and school
- Be regularly attending the school or centre and using their approved school bus service.

Explanations of the terms relevant to eligibility and the above criteria can be found below on the following pages.

#### 6.1.1. Enrolment

To be eligible for Transport Assistance, a student must be enrolled at a government or non-government Education Support Centre or School.

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<sup>3</sup> Current maps of catchment areas can be obtained from the SBS website at ([www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)) or by contacting SBS.

### 6.1.2. Transport Catchment Areas

#### Government Facilities

##### Schools

SBS, in consultation with DoE, defines transport catchment areas for Government education support schools.

Students who attend an education support school or an associated satellite class operated by DoE are eligible for Transport Assistance in respect of travel to the nearest appropriate school within the defined transport catchment area.

##### Centres

Transport assistance may be approved to a student attending their closest education support centre. In some circumstances this may not be practical; in these situations, SBS (acting reasonably) will determine eligibility for transport assistance.

##### Language Development Centres

Students who attend a Language Development Centre operated by DoE are normally eligible for Transport Assistance in respect of travel to the nearest such appropriate school within the transport catchment area<sup>4</sup> defined for that centre.

##### Non-Government Education Support Centres

Students who attend a non-government education support centre may be eligible for Transport Assistance, provided that their residence and school are located in the same transport catchment area (i.e. the same catchment area that would apply to a government education support school in the same location) and, where relevant, if it is the nearest facility of the appropriate religion or ethos to the student (See Appropriate School).

##### Regular Attendance

Regular attendance, in relation to an education support student, means that the student intends to travel to and from school every day on which the school requires the student to attend, and actually attends school on average at least 60% of those days (e.g. at least six trips in a five-day school week).

Students who cannot travel to their school regularly (e.g. because of their disability or medical condition) will only be approved for Transport Assistance in exceptional circumstances, and approval may be limited to permission for the student to travel as a Complimentary Passenger (see [Complimentary Passengers](#) page 29).

If a student is unable to travel at any time or for any period, parents/carers should contact the student's school and the driver of the education support vehicle at the earliest opportunity.

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<sup>4</sup> Current maps of catchment areas can be obtained from the SBS website at ([www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)) or by contacting SBS.



### 6.1.3.Approved School Bus Stops

When a parent/carer applies for transport assistance, the PTA will allocate an approved bus stop which is the designated pick up or drop off point for the student to access the school bus, as part of the approval process. No other location should be used without the specific approval of the PTA.

Bus stops, where possible, will be off the road on the left-hand side. Requests for a child to be dropped off along any road that is not an approved bus stop will not be approved.

The approved bus stop will usually be a:

- Residential address for education support students

### Drop Offs/Pick Ups

The PTA requires parents/carers to get approval to travel on the school bus so that the student's details and parents contact details are entered on the passenger list. This ensures the school bus operator has the necessary contact details prior to accessing the service.

Once transport assistance is approved and a designated approved bus stop identified (residential address), parents/carers must be present at the bus stop and responsible for their child until the bus departs and must be there when the bus arrives. This is mandatory for all school aged pre-primary and primary school students.

For secondary school aged students' parents who wish to allow their child some independence (where appropriate) to walk from the bus to the door of the residential home, must seek approval in writing from the PTA so that an assessment based on safety risks can be made.

Also see section 7.4.2 Roles and Responsibilities – Parents/Carers.

## 6.2. Entitlement

Approved education support students are generally entitled to a single type of Transport Assistance. Under exceptional circumstances, may receive a combination of Transport Assistance and Conveyance Allowance.

### 6.2.1.Types of Transport Assistance

An education support student entitled to transport assistance may receive:

- Transport by education support vehicle, generally on a door-to-door basis,
- A conveyance allowance, paid to their parents/carers, or
- Transportation by taxi under exceptional circumstances.

SBS will determine the appropriate form of transport assistance for individual students.

### 6.2.2.Special Cases

In some circumstances, the DoE may determine that it is not in the best interests of an education support student to attend the nearest appropriate school to their residence. A student in such a situation may be granted eligibility (through formal request by DoE District Office) to a school or centre other than their nearest facility.

### Placement for Educational Reasons

Eligible Students attending an education support centre which is not their nearest appropriate school may be entitled to transport assistance on the grounds of 'educational reasons'.

‘Educational reasons’ refers to circumstances relevant to optimising the educational opportunities available to individual students – and is related to the Government’s ‘Students at Educational Risk Policy’, which makes Government education support schools and centres responsible for developing and implementing programs appropriate to individuals (and groups of individuals) who are at risk.

Educational reasons do not include a student’s or parent’s/carer’s preference for a certain school because another school is perceived by a parent/carer as lacking physical or human resources appropriate to their child.

### **Year Level and Student Numbers**

Placement based on balance may be justifiable where the nearest centre has too many education support students in the particular year level in which the student requires placement to allow balanced integration into mainstream classes.

What constitutes ‘too many education support students’ is relative to the host school or education support centre. Generally, education support centres plan to have a spread of students across the year levels, so that a relatively small number of education support students are integrated into each mainstream class.

### **Disability**

Placement based on balance may be justifiable where a student’s disability gives rise to curriculum needs which are significantly different from those of other students in the facility – and where the difference or the handling of the difference is likely to inhibit the development of the student or other students.

### **Early Intensive Intervention Program**

Children attending an Early Intensive Intervention Program (EIIP) approved by DoE (which may include non-Government programs) may be eligible for transport assistance.

A list of schools under EIIP are found [here](#).

Early intervention programs are designed to identify and address potential disabilities as early as possible, with the goal of pre-empting difficulties that may manifest if a disability is not dealt with until later in a child’s development.

Because early intervention programs are aimed at helping children at the earliest possible stage of their development, students attending such programs can be very young (e.g. six months of age noting transport eligibility applies for school age students only). Eligible children are offered a conveyance allowance as the dispersion of the students and a short-term nature of the courses makes the provision of a bus service unviable.

### **Country Students in Major Metropolitan Areas**

Country students (e.g. students who normally reside outside of a Public Transport Area) living temporarily in a metropolitan area so that they can attend education support facilities may be eligible for transport assistance.

Subject to the eligibility criteria applying to all students attending education support facilities, transport assistance may be provided for such students in respect of travel between their temporary residence and their facility. Assistance in this situation would normally be in the form of payment of a conveyance allowance.

## Country Students attending Inclusive Education Programs

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in a mainstream school under an inclusive education program are not normally eligible for transport assistance, unless they are accessing their nearest appropriate school as a 'rural student' (i.e. because they live outside a designated Public Transport Area), in which case, they must meet the eligibility criteria for rural students.

### 6.3. Applying for Transport Assistance

To be considered for transport assistance for travel to an education support facility, a person responsible for the student must complete an application for transport assistance form and submit it to SBS preferably via an online application through the SBS website [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

When determining the appropriate level of transport assistance offered, SBS may seek additional information in order to make an informed decision to best meet the needs of the Eligible Student.

A student who is not eligible for transport assistance may, subject to certain conditions, be allowed to travel on a contract school bus as a complimentary passenger (see [Complimentary Passengers](#) page 29).

Parents/carers, who have questions about their child's eligibility or how to apply for transport assistance, should contact SBS.

#### 6.3.1. Who may apply: Parents/Carers

Amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and related changes to the *Family Court Act 1997* (WA) have seen the concepts of custody and guardianship replaced by a broader concept of 'parental responsibility'. This concept of parental responsibility applies equally to all people legally responsible for the care of a child, regardless of their biological relationship to that child or their marital status.

In the *School Education Act 1999* (WA) 'parent' is defined as meaning a person who at law has responsibility for:

- The long-term care, welfare and development of a child, or
- The day-to-day care, welfare and development of a child.

SBS can only consider applications for transport assistance from persons legally authorised to care for the student for whom transport assistance is being sought. Depending on a student's circumstances, this may include parents, grandparents, guardians or carers.

A school may for administrative purposes submit an application on behalf of a parent/carer where that parent/carer is unable to submit an application for transport assistance. Where a school submits an application, it is the responsibility of that school to ensure the parent/carer is fully aware of their responsibilities contained within this document.

#### 6.3.2. Consideration of Applications for Transport Assistance

Prior to approving an application for transport assistance, SBS may request clarification or additional information from parents/carers about the student and their residential and educational circumstances.

Parents/carers should note that:

- SBS may refuse to approve an application for transport assistance.
- A student's entitlement to transport assistance may be suspended or withdrawn.

Parents/carers should also note that if they knowingly submit false information or fail to provide relevant information in relation to an application for transport assistance or make a fraudulent claim in respect of a conveyance allowance, the student's entitlement to transport assistance may be suspended or withdrawn. SBS will seek repayment in the event of a conveyance allowance being overpaid.

### **6.3.3.Determination of the Appropriate Type of Transport Assistance**

In determining the appropriate type of assistance for a student, SBS will consider of the following factors:

- The location of the student's residence and the education support facility which they attend, and the length of the journey between them
- Whether the student can physically be placed in a contract school bus
- Whether the student's disability is of a type that requires modification of a contract school bus to accommodate them
- The competence of the student to use the type of transport available
- Whether the student's disability is associated with behaviour that is likely to endanger the safety of the student, other students, the driver or bus aide
- The likelihood of the student needing medical attention during the journey, and
- The types of roads and the distribution of the student population.

### **6.3.4.Uniform Application of Policy**

To ensure student transport assistance is delivered fairly to all Eligible Students, if any student transport arrangements managed by SBS are identified as being outside the current policy framework then SBS will work towards phasing out those arrangements.

Typically, this will be achieved through working with the student's parents/carers and the relevant school to phase out any out-of-policy transport arrangements as soon as practical, aiming to do so with minimal disruption to the student's access to school.

### **6.3.5.Out of Policy Requests**

In some exceptional circumstances schools and/or parents/carers may be able to justify 'out of policy' requirements or the extension/retention of current 'out of policy' requirements; these are considered by SBS on a case-by-case basis. Any such requests must be supported by the relevant DoE District Office.

Compelling reasons outside of Reasons of Balance to justify an out of policy decision may include custodial issues, such as medical treatment, family circumstances (e.g. court orders) etc.

### **6.3.6.New Education Support Centres**

New education support centres are generally opened only after extended planning by DoE or, in the case of non-Government facilities, the relevant independent organisation.

When a new centre is opened, it is presumed that most of the students who will attend that facility will reside relatively close by. The introduction of a new school may accordingly affect the transport assistance entitlements of existing students who live near the new facility but who have, in the past, attended more distant facilities. When DoE advises SBS that a new facility is to be established in an area, SBS will evaluate whether existing routes can be altered to service the new facility and to accommodate any changes in the distribution of student enrolments.

Education support students who have already commenced their schooling at an existing facility when a new facility opens closer to their residence, may continue to be transported to their current facility under 'grandfather' arrangements.

In evaluating the influence a new school has on services and routes, the presence of complimentary passengers on any existing contract service will not be taken into account in justifying the ongoing need for the service or in determining the route design or the size of the vehicle to be used on it. If a new service is not instituted and existing service routes are not re-configured to transport students to a new school, students eligible for transport assistance to the new school will normally be entitled to a conveyance allowance.

### **6.3.7. Education Support Centre Closures**

Schools are usually closed by DoE because of a decline in student numbers. When a school is closed, the students who were attending that school usually enrol in one of the remaining schools in the district. For transport assistance purposes, the school designated as a particular student's 'nearest appropriate school' will change accordingly.

If a school is closed, it can mean that some contract school bus services become redundant; in which case SBS may, depending on the circumstances:

- Reconfigure the routes followed by the existing services, or
- Terminate the contracts associated with the redundant routes.

In considering what arrangements are most appropriate for the students affected by the closure of a school, SBS will consider the age and residential distribution of the affected students in relation to the remaining schools and the routes followed by existing services.

As a result, there can be situations where the optimal arrangement of routes requires a school that is not the geographically closest school to a student to be designated as their 'nearest appropriate school' (Refer to '[Equidistant Appropriate Schools](#)' on page 18 and see examples '[How the Nearest Appropriate School Policy is applied](#)' on page 19).

Any re-arrangement of routes that arises because of a school closure will be treated as a solution to the particular circumstances of the affected area and the individual students; it will not be considered by SBS as establishing any precedent.

In the event of a change in a student's circumstances due to the closure of an education support facility, SBS will, having regard to the current transport assistance policy, consider whether to continue to provide transport assistance on a case-by-case basis.

### **6.3.8. Other Source of Student Transport Assistance**

#### **Taxi Users' Subsidy Scheme (TUSS)**

The Taxi Users' Subsidy Scheme (TUSS) provides subsidies for travel by taxi for people who have severe, permanent disabilities that prevent them from using conventional public transport services.

The PTA are not involved in TUSS, which is managed by the Department of Transport (DoT) and is not related to Transport Assistance.

#### **More Information about this Scheme**

Information about this scheme can be obtained from the DoT website ([www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au)) or by contacting the DoT Travel Subsidy Officer (Ph: **1300 660 147**).

## 6.4. Travel by Education Support Vehicle

SBS is committed to ensuring children, including those requiring transport to Education Support Centres and Schools are being transported in the safest possible manner. SBS understands the importance of providing support for all passengers with disabilities and diverse learning needs and staff and bus staff that work with them.

To ensure students travel safely on school buses, guardians and Contractors must provide SBS all relevant information about students' disabilities, medical needs, allergies and behavioural needs when applying for transport assistance or where there is change in student's needs.

SBS and Contractors have a duty of care to all school bus staff and students who use a school bus service. All known risks and incidents must be assessed, mitigated and monitored to ensure a safe service and workplace is provided. Risks may include student behaviours, hazards at pick up/drop off locations, student mobility needs, exiting and entering a school bus, guardians not being present at bus stops, and interactions between all parties on a school bus.

When there is an issue that may adversely affect the health and safety of bus staff the concern must be addressed in accordance with the Western Australia Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

### 6.4.1. Background

Students with disabilities who travel on SBS have similar needs to all students. Students respond well when treated with fairness and consistency.

Students with disabilities can have behaviours that are challenging to manage. In these circumstances it is important that all parties responsible for the care of the student, parent, teachers and others assist in ensuring appropriate strategies are implemented to facilitate access to and the ongoing use of a school bus service. Establishing effective strategies and responses to behaviours will support good communication with students making their journey safe and without incident.

The positive ways in which bus staff interact with students with disabilities will impact on the student's day at school and a student's experience at school will equally impact on the experience bus staff have with the student that afternoon.

### 6.4.2. Travel

A student is only permitted to travel on an education support vehicle after SBS has advised the Contractor of the approval.

Approval of a student's entitlement to travel on an education support vehicle means the student is entitled to be transported to and from their education support facility to their residence.

The vehicles used to transport education support students are often modified to accommodate the needs of students. In addition, because many education support students have mobility issues, they are picked up and dropped off on a door-to-door basis.

**Medical Conditions.** There are circumstances whereby medical conditions and/or special needs of a student which makes it not feasible or safe for the student to be transported by an education support vehicle. This may include where there is a requirement to carry medical equipment such as oxygen bottles, or who have special feeding requirements.

**Wheelchair and Special Equipment.** Students traveling in a wheelchair or those who require special equipment (including postural support harnesses) to travel on an education support vehicle will not be transported until the appropriate /equipment is available for use, including wheelchair restraints.

**Medication.** Drivers and bus aides may not legally dispense medication and accordingly such students can only be transported at times when they do not need medication administered. Where a student requires medication to be administered at set times of the day and that time coincides to when a student requires transport, the student will not be approved for transport by an education support vehicle. This does not include medication that is required in a medical emergency.

**Feeding.** Where a student has special feeding requirements (e.g. feeding via tubes) and cannot be moved after they have eaten, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate such students; however, it can be that the time required for the feeding and related resting period would make a service's journey time excessive. In such cases, it may be that the student cannot be transported on the available services.

### 6.4.3. Care Travel Plans

Contractors transporting students to education support facilities must include information in their safety management plan describing any relevant medical conditions the student may have. This information is contained within a Care Travel Plan which provides information to bus staff in providing a safe and enjoyable transport experience. The plan will contain detail relating to student disabilities and medical conditions.

A Care Travel Plan is specific to an individual student travelling on the vehicle and must cover, at a minimum, the following:

- A basic description of the disability/impairment and/or medical needs
- Actions to take in the event of an emergency
- Emergency contact details of parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Any behaviour management issues and positive behaviour support strategies
- Contingency arrangements if a parent or carer fails to meet the bus or is late (e.g. emergency drop-off addresses)
- Location and contact details of the nearest medical facilities
- Contact details for education support facilities and respite centres.

A collaborative approach to the development of Care Travel Plan is essential to ensure the safety of all transport users. Information provided by parents, teachers and others will assist in formulating a plan that will provide bus staff with necessary information to respond to medical episodes and to support positive behaviours ensuring the health and safety of the students travelling on a service.

### 6.4.4. Access to Transport Assistance

The Integrated Care Plan Request Form is required to be completed when submitting an Application for Transport Assistance. It considers all relevant information pertaining to the safe transport of the student. It gives consideration of medical conditions, physical mobility/impairments and behaviour management. Any changes to relating to the student's care should be submitted to SBS.

The information provided in the Integrated Care Plan Request Form will be used to determine suitability of a student to travel on a school bus vehicle whether it is a mainstream service or education support vehicle.

Contractors and SBS have a duty of care to provide a safe passenger service to all users including students and bus staff. The duty of care responsibility includes determining whether or not a student should be accepted on the bus, managing risk during transport or the continued access to the transport service in consultation with SBS.

A number of risks are considered in determining the suitability for bus travel including, but not limited to:

- The ability of students to board and alight from the bus
- The actual or potential for challenging behaviours during transit
- The actual or potential for conflict between students
- The level of assistance/supervision required
- The actual or potential hazards that exist at bus stops, while taking into account the mobility needs of the students and the proximity of the bus stop to other hazards
- Parents/carers do not present at drop-off points.

Before approving a student's entitlement to travel on an education support vehicle the principal of the student's facility or SBS may request clarification of the information provided by parents/carers or additional information about a student's residential and educational circumstances. This information will assist in ensuring a safe service is provided to all bus users.

A student is not to be forced onto a bus or placed onto a bus without the knowledge or approval of the bus driver.

SBS will endeavour to find transport solutions for all Eligible Students. However, there are circumstances where the medical condition and/or special needs of a student mean it is not feasible or safe for the student to be transported by education support vehicle, or that accommodating such a student would unacceptably extend the journey time of a service.

The level of care provided by a bus aide to special needs students whilst travelling on an education support vehicle is generally pastoral in nature. While a bus aide has an advanced first aid certificate, they are not equipped or trained to provide specialist medical care to students with extreme disabilities.

Where Transport Assistance by contract school bus is not possible or practical the parents/carers of Eligible Student's may be entitled to a Conveyance Allowance.

If a student's circumstances change (e.g. change of carer, residence, school, frequency or regularity of attendance) then a new Application for Transport Assistance should be completed and submitted to SBS at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

#### **6.4.5. Respite Centres**

Permission may be granted for students to travel on education support vehicles to and from respite care facilities. The granting of permission to travel to respite facilities is aimed at extending services so that the educational opportunities available to students are minimally disrupted.

Students may be provided with transport between a specified education support school and a designated respite care facility, subject to the following limitations:

- Students attending education support centres may be provided with transport assistance to a respite facility associated with the nearest education support school if the respite facility is within the relevant transport catchment area.



- Students should only be transported to respite facilities if the journey over the approved route, including pick-ups and drop-offs, does not exceed 90 minutes in duration.
- Should the seat or space used by a student to travel to a respite facility be required by an Eligible Student and should there be no other seat or space available, the student will be required to find alternative transport to the respite facility.

A list of approved respite centres can be found on the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

#### **6.4.6. Casual Home-Based Respite**

Students travelling to and from home-based respite may, subject to seat/space availability, be given permission by SBS to travel on an education support vehicle.

Students may be transported to and from casual home-based respite, subject to the following limitations:

- The travel time on the approved route, including pick-ups and drop-offs, must not exceed 90 minutes in duration
- Should the seat or space used by a student to travel to a respite facility be required by an Eligible Student and should there be no other seat or space available, the student will be required to find alternative transport to the respite facility.

Approval would not normally be given if the travel to or from home-based respite would involve deviation from the approved route.

#### **6.4.7. Student Behaviour**

The PTA has developed a Code of Conduct to clearly explain the standards of behaviour expected from students. This Code applies to all students travelling on Government contracted school buses managed by the PTA. A copy of the Code of Conduct is contained within the Behaviour Management Guidelines which can be found on the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

Students traveling on education support vehicles are expected to behave appropriately and in accordance with the general principles set out in the Code of Conduct and the Conditions of Travel which parents/carers acknowledge when applying for Transport Assistance. Whilst all students are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct, special consideration will be given to students with disabilities. However, the safety of those traveling on education support vehicles is paramount and if a student's behaviour endangers the health or safety of any person on an education support vehicle, their entitlement to travel may be suspended or withdrawn.

#### **6.4.8. Challenging Behaviour(s).**

A student who is assertive or over exuberant about how they express themselves may be associated with negative behaviour or misbehaviour when in fact the student may be communicating a need. Students who sometimes engage in challenging behaviours are actually communicating that something is wrong or missing and need help. The challenge is to understand why the student has a need to engage in challenging behaviour and provide positive support.

Students need to know that their behaviour on a school bus is the same behaviour their teachers and other expect. Care Travel Plans developed in partnership with parents/guardians and teachers will assist in providing a safe and enjoyable journey.

**Behaviour Support.** The behaviour support component of the Care Travel Plan focuses on positive behaviour support approach to focusing on prevention, early intervention and response to challenging behaviours.

- **Prevention.** Includes strategies to improve communication with a student preventing the need to engage in challenging behaviour.
- **Early Intervention.** Early signs of behaviour may be an indication that student's needs are not being met. The aim is to clarify what a student is attempting to communicate through their behaviour and to put supports in place to prevent escalation of the behaviour.
- **Responses.** These are strategies to identify how to effectively respond to the challenging behaviour once it occurs in a positive manner.

Providing accurate information will assist in students being suitably managed and allow all bus staff to complete their duties as safely as possible in their place of work.

#### 6.4.9. Preparation for Travel

Parents/carers and school staff must prepare a student for travel at the commencement/end of the school day, as applicable.

Contractors are not able to facilitate rest stops and are not equipped to provide medical intervention other than basic emergency responses (bus staff are trained in first aid response only). To minimise the risk of choking, allergic reactions or other adverse situations, food and beverages may not be consumed on school bus unless it forms part of an approved Care Travel Plan.

**Refusal of Transport.** The bus driver has a duty of care and responsibility for all passengers on their service. If a student presents to a bus and the bus driver is of the opinion that the student is a heightened risk given the displayed behaviour the student may be refused access on that occasion. In such circumstance the responsibility for the student remains with the parent(s) or teacher(s) and not the bus staff. Where this occurs an incident report is to be completed (see 6.4.10 below).

#### 6.4.10. Unacceptable Behaviour

Bus operators are responsible for managing behaviours of students travelling on government contract school buses. Whilst special consideration is given to students with disabilities they are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct.

**Behaviour Management Guidelines.** SBS in conjunction with the Department of Education have developed a set of Behaviour Management Guidelines to provide a framework that aims to ensure student behaviours are managed in an appropriate and consistent manner. These guidelines outline the roles, rights and responsibilities of: SBS, Department of Education, school bus contractors/drivers, students, parents/carers and others who are involved in the conduct, provision and administration of student behaviour on school buses. The Behaviour Management Guidelines for Students Travelling to School by Contract School Bus can be found on the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

**Reporting Incidents.** Contractors and bus staff are required to report all incidents including breaches of the Code of Conduct in accordance with the Behaviour Management Guidelines. These incident reports are to be lodged through the SBS website.

**Behaviour Management Notices.** Where a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred bus staff are required to issue a Behaviour Management Notice in accordance with Behaviour Management Guidelines.

- A copy of the notice is to be issued to the parent(s), school administration and SBS (a copy remains in the book).
- Where the bus staff are of the opinion that the incident is relatively minor in nature it may be appropriate to record the specifics in a diary as opposed to issuing a Behaviour Management Notice. This is the minimum requirement to ensure documentary evidence is recorded for future reference and subsequent incidents (if they occur).
- Discussions regarding the incident may be held with schools and parents/carers.
- Where appropriate the Care Travel Plan may be reviewed to support a more positive behavioural outcome.

Where an incident has occurred as a result of a student's behaviour additional controls may be put in place to mitigate further incidents. These controls can only be implemented with the approval of SBS. All additional controls are to be reviewed periodically to determine whether or not they are still required/applicable.

## 6.5. Control Devices

The use of any control device to restrict the physical movement of an individual may be considered a restrictive practice. Whilst these devices may restrict physical movement within the bus, they do not restrict the student's access to their body. Control devices include harnesses and lockable seat belt buckle systems.

The use of a device that restricts the movement of an individual can place both the person subject to the restrictive practice and those implementing the practice at risk of harm in the event of an accident.

**Approved Control Devices.** Any control device that restricts the movement of student on a school bus must be approved by SBS. Bus Operators are to ensure bus staff receive instruction of the correct use and associated risk with the use of any control device.

**Postural Support.** Where a control device is used for postural support based on medical necessity parents/carers are to provide documentary evidence of medical necessity from a medical practitioner.

Care Travel Plans and a positive behaviour support approach aim to provide a safe transport environment for all passengers and focuses on early intervention. There are circumstances or incidents that may occur during transport that result in the need to consider the use of control devices to restrict movement within the bus to ensure the safety of all passengers. Circumstances may include:

- Refusing to remain seated
- Not wearing a seat belt whilst the vehicle is moving
- Repeated self-injurious behaviour such as head banging that may cause harm to self or others repeated difficulty in managing a physical behaviour that may harm others (bitting, kicking etc).

Control devices will only be approved by SBS in consultation with parents/carers, bus staff, school administrators and other relevant persons (where applicable).

The use of these devices should be last resort and where they are approved for use the reasons are to be documented on the Control Device Request Form and reviewed no less than every three (3) months for the continued use.

The student is at the centre of any decision and their health and safety is paramount. The use of control device should not have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing. Where any party in the decision process considers that the use of a control device may be detrimental to the wellbeing of the student the device is not to be used. In such circumstances it may not be possible to provide transport assistance via a bus service and a Conveyance Allowance may be paid as an alternative and transport arrangements will need to be arranged by the parent/guardian.

## **6.6. Removing a Student from a Bus during a Service**

Removing a student from a bus during a service will only be considered as a last resort. Bus staff must speak with SBS before removing a student from a service to make sure plans are in place to ensure it is completed safely. When deciding if a student should be removed all risks are to be considered and the student's guardian(s) will need to be informed of the incident and where to collect the student. The bus driver will not remove the student from the bus until the guardian is present to pick up the student.

**Immediate Removal from Bus.** Where it is determined that a student's behaviour presents an immediate or potential ongoing increased risk to the health and safety of bus users as defined as a major incident, suspension or removal from service may be considered. In the event that an immediate removal of transport assistance is deemed appropriate, an Interim Suspension Notice will be issued. This will remain in place until such time as an investigation is conducted, and an outcome is reached. Once an outcome is reached either a formal suspension notice will be issued, or transport assistance will be reinstated.

### **6.6.1. Appealing a Suspension**

If a student(s) parent/carer does not agree with the decision to suspend or withdraw a student's school bus travel, they can contact SBS via email or in writing and ask for the decision to be reviewed.

## **6.7. Conveyance Allowance**

To be considered for Transport Assistance in the form of a Conveyance Allowance, a person responsible for an eligible education support student must complete an online application form for Transport Assistance and submit it to SBS via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

A parent/carer who does not have access to the internet are encouraged to contact their local school for assistance or contact SBS.

### **6.7.1. Background**

A conveyance allowance is an amount paid to parents/carers to contribute towards off setting the costs incurred by them in conveying Eligible Students to their nearest appropriate school (e.g. by private vehicle).

Parents/carers should note the following:

- The conveyance allowance is not intended to cover the full costs of owning and operating a vehicle
- An entitlement to a conveyance allowance is subject to SBS determining that a conveyance allowance is the appropriate form of transport assistance for the particular student
- Conveyance allowances are normally only paid in respect of travel undertaken for the specific purpose of taking students to school (e.g. a conveyance allowance would not normally be paid to a parent who drops their child off at a facility on their way to work).

### 6.7.2. Approval of Entitlement

A student's entitlement to transport assistance (including approval of an entitlement to a conveyance allowance) is subject to approval by SBS.

Before approving a student's entitlement to a conveyance allowance, the CO for the relevant district may request clarification of the information provided by parents/carers or additional information about a student's residential and educational circumstances.

Parents/carers should be aware that if they knowingly submit false information or fail to provide relevant information in relation to an application for Transport Assistance or make a fraudulent claim in respect of a Conveyance Allowance, their child's entitlement to Transport Assistance may be suspended or withdrawn.

### 6.7.3. Entitlement

Once a student's entitlement to a Conveyance Allowance is approved, the student's parent/carer may claim for payment at the end of each school term in arrears via [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

The amount of a conveyance allowance entitlement is calculated according to the number of days a student actually attends school and the distance travelled by the parents/carers in getting the student to and from their school – normally on the basis of two return trips per day.

### 6.7.4. Rate

The conveyance allowance rate is indexed annually and reflects a contribution to running costs of fuel, tyres, repairs and maintenance, but not elements such as vehicle purchase price, depreciation, interest, registration or insurance.

The rate is expressed in terms of cents per kilometre. Parents/carers should visit the SBS website [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au) to obtain the current rate of payment rate.

### 6.7.5. Payment

To be paid a Conveyance Allowance, a parent/carer must:

- Provide valid financial institution account details via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au), and
- Submit a claim for Conveyance Allowance and student attendance records (where required) via the SBS website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au).

Payment of claims by cheque will not occur.

The earliest date for which a Conveyance Allowance can be claimed is the beginning of the term in which the original application was approved by SBS. SBS will not backdate claims for Conveyance Allowance for periods where Conveyance Allowance was not approved.

Where claims for Conveyance Allowance exceed \$1000.00 per term, parents will have to submit a student school attendance record obtained from the school as part of the claim. Attendance records may also be required for lesser amounts or where there is approval to claim in excess of \$1,000 but the actual submission is less.

Claims for Conveyance Allowance are paid in arrears as a lump sum at the end of each school term. Families may accumulate their conveyance claims and claim up to a maximum period of two terms in arrears provided the student(s) is approved for Conveyance Allowance from the outset.

Normally, only one Conveyance Allowance is paid to a family of Eligible Students; however, there are circumstances where a family, dependent on the age and schools attended may be paid two separate Conveyance Allowances.

Where families have been approved transport assistance via the payment of Conveyance Allowance for the eldest sibling of the family, the transport of other siblings is not an issue. However, if the eldest sibling exits the education system, parents must re-apply for transport assistance eligibility for the other siblings to ensure entitlement exists as continuation of the original approval will be void.

#### **6.7.6. Audit of Claims**

SBS staff will routinely audit conveyance allowance claims by checking distances between the student's residence and school or approved drop-off/pick-up point as reported in the *Conveyance Allowance Claim* form.

Where appropriate, SBS may also seek confirmation of a student's attendance at school.

If a parent/carer knowingly submits false information to SBS in relation to an application for transport assistance or fails to provide relevant information or makes a fraudulent claim in respect of a conveyance allowance, the student's entitlement to transport assistance may be withdrawn.

SBS will seek repayment in the event of a conveyance allowance being overpaid.

### **6.8. Complimentary Passengers**

A student who is *not* eligible for transport assistance may be allowed to travel on an education support vehicle as a complimentary passenger, subject to the following conditions:

- A student may only travel as a complimentary passenger with the approval of SBS
- There must be a seat available on the education support vehicle the student wishes to travel on (i.e. no Eligible Student who is entitled to travel on the bus will be denied travel because of the presence of a complimentary passenger)
- The pick-up and drop-off points for the student must be on an approved route and not cause an unacceptable increase in the journey time for the other students on the bus (in practice, this normally means that complimentary passengers are picked up and dropped off at existing bus stops), and
- The presence of the student should not result in extra cost to the PTA (i.e. approved routes will not be altered to cater for or accommodate complimentary passengers).

In most circumstances, a student approved to travel as a complimentary passenger on an education support vehicle is the sibling of an Eligible Student who is travelling on the education support vehicle to the same school or education facility.

#### **6.8.1. Applying to travel as a Complimentary Passenger**

To apply for permission to travel as a complimentary passenger, parents/carers must complete Transport Assistance application form.

## 6.9. Contact Details

### General

<b>Address</b>	Public Transport Authority School Bus Services Public Transport Centre West Parade Perth
<b>Mail</b>	PO Box 8125 Perth Business Centre Perth WA 6849
<b>Telephone</b>	(08) 9326 2625
<b>Fax – Operations</b>	(08) 9326 2781
<b>Fax – Business Support</b>	(08) 9326 2767
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:schoolbus@pta.wa.gov.au">schoolbus@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au">www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au</a>

### Education Support

Information about transport assistance for students attending education support facilities can be obtained by contacting the Contract Officer (CO) for the area in which the student resides – see contact details listed below.

### Portfolios

<b>Metro South</b>	Covers the metropolitan area south of the Swan River to Dawesville and east to Langford, Canning Vale and Banjup. Includes the Peel Language Development Centre.  <a href="mailto:metrosouth@pta.wa.gov.au">metrosouth@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Metro North</b>	Covers the metropolitan area north of the Swan River to Yanchep and east to Ballajura, Malaga, Dianella and Inglewood. Includes the North East Metropolitan Language Development Centre  <a href="mailto:metronorth@pta.wa.gov.au">metronorth@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
<b>Metro East</b>	Covers the metropolitan area east including Ellenbrook, Noranda, Bedford, Maylands, and areas east of the Swan River (i.e. Redcliffe, Rivervale, South Perth, Salters Point, Wilson, Cannington, Thornlie) and south to Armadale, Byford and Serpentine. Includes the South East Metropolitan Language Development Centre.  <a href="mailto:metroeast@pta.wa.gov.au">metroeast@pta.wa.gov.au</a>

### Regional Locations

Education Support Southwest – Bunbury, Albany	<a href="mailto:SBSEdSupportSouthern@pta.wa.gov.au">SBSEdSupportSouthern@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
Education Support - Geraldton, Karratha and Port Hedland	<a href="mailto:northern@pta.wa.gov.au">northern@pta.wa.gov.au</a>
Education Support - Kalgoorlie	<a href="mailto:southeastgoldfields@pta.wa.gov.au">southeastgoldfields@pta.wa.gov.au</a>

## 7. BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

### 7.1. Purpose

The Public Transport Authority (PTA) is committed to providing safe, comfortable transport for all students using our regional and Education Support school bus services.

### 7.2. Introduction

The Behaviour Management Guidelines have been developed to provide a framework that aims to ensure student behaviours are managed in an appropriate and consistent manner. The document outlines the roles, rights and responsibilities of students, parents and carers and others who are involved in the conduct, provision and administration of school bus services. The overwhelming majority of students behave appropriately whilst travelling on school buses. However, on occasions a small percentage of students will misbehave for one reason or another. These guidelines set out the expected standards of student behaviour and provide guidance for the management of the varying degrees of student misbehaviour. It is reasonable for students to expect that they will travel in safety and comfort, and where a reasonable set of rules apply for the benefit of all users. The overarching aim of these guidelines is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, bus drivers, bus aides and general road users.

Every person involved in the process of transporting students to and from schools owes a duty of care to those potentially affected by their actions, and must take reasonable care to avoid doing things, or omitting to do things, that would place a student or any other person at risk of injury or harm. The specific objective of this document is to:

- Provide a framework for the observance of the Code of Conduct through the implementation of Behaviour Management Guidelines
- Define the specific roles, rights and responsibilities of drivers, bus aides, bus wardens, students, parents/carers, bus operators and the PTA in contributing to safe and enjoyable travel
- Communicate to students the appropriate ways in which they must conduct themselves whilst travelling on a school bus and during the periods that they are waiting at bus transfer locations or pick-up and drop-off locations
- Outline the categories of misbehaviour and establish the context and consequences for breaches to the Code of Conduct
- Establish the periods of suspension that can be applied in response to breaches of the Code of Conduct
- Provide drivers and bus wardens with a mechanism to respond to situations where students act in an unacceptable manner and breach the Code of Conduct, and
- Explain the rights that bus operators and drivers have to refuse travel, in response to specific breaches.

These guidelines have been developed by the PTA through consultation with:

- Department of Education
- Catholic Education Office
- Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
- Western Australian Secondary School Executives Association
- Western Australian Education Support Principals and Administrators Association, and
- Western Australian Primary Principals Association.



### 7.3. Code of Conduct

The PTA has developed a Code of Conduct to clearly explain the standards of behaviour expected from students. This Code applies to all students travelling on Government contracted school buses managed by the PTA. A copy of the Code of Conduct is at Annex A. The consequences of breaches to the Code of Conduct are addressed in 'Breaches of the Code of Conduct' later in this document.

### 7.4. Roles and Responsibilities

#### 7.4.1. Students

Students have an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner that ensures both their comfort and safety and the comfort and safety of others. To assist students in understanding their obligations the PTA has developed a Code of Conduct. By its nature, the Code of Conduct is the instrument that defines a minimum standard for behaviours. It provides examples of both acceptable and unacceptable behaviours but is not intended to be an exhaustive list of either. Compliance with the Code of Conduct is a condition of travel, any breaches may result in suspension or jeopardise the continuation of future entitlement to Transport Assistance. Students are responsible for:

- Following the Code of Conduct
- Following the direction or instructions of the Bus Driver, Bus Aide or Bus Warden at bus loading / transfer locations, and
- Reporting any unsafe behaviour to the Bus Driver, Bus Aide or Bus Warden at bus loading/transfer locations.

Students can expect:

- To enjoy a safe and comfortable journey
- To be respected and treated fairly by the Bus Driver, Bus Aide or Bus Warden at bus loading / transfer locations and other passengers
- That their property will be respected, and
- To be free from bullying and harassment.

#### 7.4.2. Parents/Carers

In accepting the conditions of travel, parents and carers acknowledge that they are responsible for their children's ongoing behaviour. They have a responsibility to ensure that their children understand and uphold the Code of Conduct. They also have the right to expect that their children are transported to school and home again safely.

Parents/carers play a significant role in the overall behaviour management strategy. They should expect to be communicated with following any breach to the Code of Conduct. This may be by direct communication by the Bus Driver, Bus Aide, Bus Operator or officers from the PTA. It is important that parents/carers cooperate with bus staff, school principals and the PTA in discussing reported incidents and in implementing agreed actions to facilitate continue access to the school bus service. The initial communication may be in the form of a Behaviour Management Notice.

Parents/carers are required to:

- To ensure that their children are capable of travelling independently on the bus
- To provide adequate supervision for your child at the bus stop for pick up and drop off
- To ensure your child's safety that a responsible adult is present at the bus stop or home location (Education Support)

- To communicate with the bus operator and the school about their children's bus transport and respond to phone and written communication
- Understand that they are responsible for their children's behaviour and must ensure that their children understand and conform with the Code of Conduct
- Whilst unacceptable behaviour may occur with or between other children it is not appropriate for parents/carers to become involved, and these matters should be raised with the bus staff or PTA
- Ensure that their children are transported safely to and from the bus services
- Communicate respectfully with Bus Wardens, Drivers and other officers from both the Bus Operator (Contractor) or the PTA, including instances where they are required to discuss their child's behaviour
  - Abusive language, raising your voice, insulting or violent behaviour to any bus staff or PTA staff is not appropriate and will not be tolerated. This behaviour will result in transport assistance for your child being suspended and possibly withdrawn.
- Be available to meet and discuss their children's behaviour and support decisions arising out of such discussions, and
- Make their children available to attend, and accompany them to, an interview with officers from the PTA as a result of Category 4 breaches to the Code of Conduct.

Parents/carers can expect to:

- Be treated fairly and with respect by bus staff, Bus Wardens, Bus Operators and PTA officers
- Receive accurate and timely information regarding their children's behaviour
- Be advised of the outcome of any investigations
- Have their concerns listened to and considered in a fair manner, and
- Have the PTA review the decision to withdraw Transport Assistance, based on extenuating circumstances or in the event that the child was treated unfairly.

Parents should be aware that in the event their child causes malicious damage to a bus or property they are likely to be required to pay for the replacement or cost of any repairs.

### **7.4.3. Bus Operators (Contractors)**

Whilst specific responsibilities in relation to the management of student behaviour are outlined in all contract agreements, Bus Operators are also committed to providing safe and comfortable transport for students.

Bus Operators are responsible for managing behaviours of students travelling on government contract school buses. Bus Operators are required to implement student behaviour management strategies and use a variety of methods to encourage appropriate behaviour. Some of these strategies are outlined at Annex B.

Bus Operators are responsible for informing the PTA of outcomes as a result of breaches to the Code of Conduct and any subsequent action that's taken, including the withdrawal of Transport Assistance. Where an incident is serious or significant in nature i.e. a Category 4 breach, Bus Operators will inform the PTA to gain assistance in managing the process.

Bus Operators are generally the main point of contact for drivers, Bus Wardens, parents/carers and other stakeholders when incidents of misbehaviour occur.

Bus Operators are responsible for:

- Taking action as a result of an incident, and in accordance with the Behaviour Management Guidelines, determining an appropriate penalty
- Reviewing Behaviour Management Notices and taking the appropriate action
- Determining and enforcing the penalties in line with the Behaviour Management Guidelines and issuing Suspension Notices and Interim Suspension Notices
- Working in partnership with bus staff, parents/carers and the PTA to resolve issues relating to the management of student behaviours
- Discussing individual breaches to the Code of Conduct with the school principal (where the school chooses to provide assistance), to gain a better understanding of the student's circumstances
- Communicating with parents as a result of student misbehaviours
- Lodging incident reports on-line through the SBS website
- The management of bus transfer/loading locations where there is a direct bus to bus transfer and no Bus Warden is present to provide supervision
- Providing bus staff and students with a safe working and travelling environment
- Implementing an appropriate Incident & Investigation Management Procedure
- With the assistance of the PTA, provide bus staff with instruction, information and training relating to appropriate student behaviour management principles
- Making bus staff available for training provided by the PTA in behaviour management
- Making bus staff available for interview as part of an investigation relating to behaviour management
- Taking the appropriate action in accordance with these guidelines where schools report misconduct by students at a bus transfer/loading locations but only to the extent there is a DoE staff member providing supervising of the students registered to travel, and
- Informing the school that a suspension notice has been issued as a consequence of a student's behaviour, which may affect the student's attendance at school.

Bus Operators can expect to:

- Be treated with courtesy and respect by students and parents/carers at bus loading/transfer locations and officers from the PTA
- Receive accurate reports from bus staff regarding the behaviour of students
- Receive support from the PTA in response to actions taken whilst following the Behaviour Management Guidelines
- Be advised of the outcome of any investigations conducted by the PTA, and
- Receive support and open communication from parents/carers regarding students travelling on bus services that they are contracted to provide.

#### 7.4.4. Bus Staff

##### Bus Drivers

Bus Drivers of school buses have the important role of driving the bus in a safe manner as well as ensuring the safety and security of all passengers. Drivers are also required to issue reasonable directions to ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct. They are also required to respond to emergency situations in an appropriate and timely manner. Drivers are required to:

- Operate the bus in a safe manner, taking into consideration the conditions and circumstances on a day-to-day basis
- Hold appropriate Driver's licenses, permits and qualifications
- Conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner to students, Bus Aides, Bus Wardens, parents/carers and others who are affected by the conduct of bus services
- Uphold the responsibilities of the role, as prescribed by the contract under which the service is provided and in conjunction with the Driver's Operating Guide
- Implement effective strategies that encourage appropriate behaviours and discourage/prevent misbehaviours
- Remind students of the Code of Conduct and Bus Rules and the consequences
- Enforce the Code of Conduct, and take the appropriate steps as outlined in the Behaviour Management Guidelines, and
- To record and report incidents in accordance with the instructions provided by the Bus Operator.

Bus Drivers can expect:

- To be provided with a safe working environment
- To be trained in behaviour management strategies and incident reporting procedures
- To feel safe and treated with respect, courtesy and be free from abuse
- To receive support from the Bus Operators, Bus Aides parent/carers, Bus Wardens at bus loading / transfer locations and the PTA when managing student behaviours in accordance with these Guidelines, and
- To receive a timely response to the issuance of Behaviour Management Notices.

##### Bus Aides

Some school bus services require the presence of Bus Aides for the safety of students. Bus Aides play vital roles in the provision of school bus services, particularly those services providing Transport Assistance for students attending Education Support facilities and travelling to Respite Centres.

Bus Aides are responsible for:

- Creating and maintaining a safe environment for all students on the bus
- Hold appropriate licenses, permits and qualifications
- Conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner to students, Drivers, parents / carers and others who are affected by the conduct of bus services
- Uphold the responsibilities of the role, as prescribed by the contract under which the service is provided and also in conjunction with the Driver's Operating Guide – Instructions for Bus Aides

- Inform and discuss with the Driver any behavioural problems that may relate to self-harm, be dangerous or invasive to other students or which may pose a safety risk to other passengers
- In conjunction with the Driver, and in so far as is practicable, devise and employ behaviour management strategies appropriate to the needs and capacities of individual students, particularly those with intellectual or emotional disabilities
- Ensure that, considering the intellectual and emotional capacities of individual students, all students abide by the principles set out in the Code of Conduct
- In the event of an accident or emergency, follow the instructions of the Driver, and
- Ensure harnesses are, where required, worn and correctly fastened.

Bus Aides can expect:

- To be provided with a safe working environment
- To be trained in behaviour management strategies and incident reporting procedures
- To feel safe and treated with respect, courtesy and be free from abuse, and
- To receive support from the Bus Operators, bus Drivers, Bus Wardens, parent/carers, and the PTA when managing student behaviours in accordance with these Guidelines.

### **Bus Wardens**

Bus Wardens are employed by the Bus Operator to supervise bus loading/unloading locations. As part of these duties they are required to ensure student behaviour is managed in line with these guidelines.

Bus Wardens are required to:

- Provide direction and instruction to students
- Conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner when interacting with students, parents/carers, bus staff, Bus Operators, school staff and others who are involved in the conduct of school bus services
- Implement effective strategies that encourage appropriate behaviours and discourage/prevent misbehaviours and
- Record and report incidents to the Bus Operator.

Bus Wardens can expect to:

- Be provided with a safe working environment
- Receive cooperation from students
- Be trained in basic incident reporting procedures
- Feel safe and treated with respect, courtesy and be free from abuse
- Receive support from bus staff, Bus Operators, parent/carers and the PTA when managing student behaviours.

### **7.4.5. Department of Education**

The Department of Education (DoE) has no formal responsibility for the management of behaviours of students travelling on government contract school buses.

However, there is often a requirement for the PTA and the DoE to provide information between departments that may influence student behaviour management.

To achieve this schools may, where they choose to assist:

- Provide assistance in managing breaches of the Code of Conduct by offering further solutions through their personal knowledge of a situation or the student/s themselves
- Advise their students of the Code of Conduct and the consequences of breaching the Code
- Provide an appropriate venue for conducting student interviews, conducted by the PTA where necessary.

Schools have the right to expect:

- To be informed of any issue which has occurred on the school bus that may have direct consequences in relation to a student's behaviour or safety whilst attending school
- To be informed of any behavioural management strategies implemented to address a student's behaviour where a suspension from travel is issued and is likely to impact on their attendance at school.

#### **7.4.6.Public Transport Authority**

The PTA has the overall administrative responsibility for the implementation of the Student Behaviour Management Guidelines and has responsibility for the management of Category 4 breaches to the Code of Conduct.

The PTA is responsible for:

- The development of, implementation and reviewing the Code of Conduct and Behaviour Management Guidelines, in consultation with relevant stakeholders
- Ensuring that a safe environment is established and maintained for all passengers and bus staff
- Providing advice to drivers, Bus Aides, Bus Wardens, Bus Operators, parents/carers and other stakeholders on issues of policy relating to behaviour management
- Advising parents/carers of the Code of Conduct and the consequences of breaching the Code
- Providing information, advice and training on behaviour management to bus staff, who have a role in managing student behaviours, and
- Investigating complaints where breaches of the Code of Conduct have not been managed in accordance with these guidelines.

The PTA has the right to expect:

- Bus Operators manage the behaviours of students travelling on their buses
- Bus Operators and bus staff implement and fully adopt the requirements of the Behaviour Management Guidelines and to employ appropriate strategies to ensure that the Code of Conduct is upheld
- That students will uphold the Code of Conduct and behave themselves in an appropriate manner
- Cooperation between all parties to resolve issues of Bus Operator misconduct, and
- Bus Operators/bus staff to provide safe and comfortable travel for students.

## 7.5. Breaches of the Code of Conduct

The Behaviour Management Guidelines provide a framework for responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct.

There is an expectation that Drivers, Bus Aides and Bus Wardens will adopt appropriate strategies aimed at providing a positive environment that focuses on prevention. At any time that an incident is reportable, the Driver or Bus Warden at bus loading/transfer locations is required to complete and issue a Behaviour Management Notice to the student.

The processes for dealing with individual categories are outlined in the Process Flowcharts.

Depending on the nature and severity of the misbehaviour, the Driver may take immediate action to remove the child from the bus and may be required to make arrangements for alternate transport. In situations where alternate transport is considered necessary, parents/carers will be contacted and are expected to make arrangements to transport the child/ren by their own arrangement. I

There are often complex issues associated with child misbehaviour. In deciding the appropriate response in cases of reportable misbehaviour, consideration must be given to the circumstances surrounding the event, and in particular, the extent to which the safety, security and wellbeing of other passengers, Drivers, Bus Aides or Bus Wardens are threatened by that behaviour. Whilst these guidelines are applicable to all school bus services, special consideration must be given to students with special needs as frequently poor behaviour responses are a symptom of their disability and can be anticipated by experienced bus staff. In these cases, individual strategies should be developed for ongoing management of behaviour related issues.

## 7.6. Categories of Breaches of the Code of Conduct

To promote consistency and fairness in responding to breaches to the Code of Conduct, specific misbehaviours have been categorised. The categories are:

Category 1:	Nuisance & Non-Compliant Behaviour
Category 2:	Threatening & Improper Behaviour
Category 3:	Dangerous & Highly Offensive Behaviour
Category 4:	Extremely: Dangerous, Destructive & Offensive Behaviour

### 7.6.1. Category 1: Non-Compliant & Nuisance Behaviour

This includes behaviours, which may be irritating, unpleasant but not physically dangerous.

Examples:

- Failing to follow the reasonable directions of bus staff or Bus Wardens at bus loading/transfer locations and other passengers, e.g. failing to reposition a school bag/equipment which is in a location where it may cause others to trip
- Failing/refusing to wear a seatbelt were fitted
- Distracting the Driver by persistent noise
- Stopping others from disembarking at their stop
- Eating on the bus (unless for medical reasons or with the permission of bus staff)
- Refusing to show a bus pass where required.

### **7.6.2. Category 2: Threatening & Improper Behaviour**

This category includes behaviours where the actions of the student may cause discomfort or distress to others:

- Harassing and bullying other passengers
- Verbally threatening bus staff or Bus Wardens at bus loading/transfer locations and other passengers
- Using a device to obtain images or audio recordings of others
- Using offensive language
- Stopping others from disembarking at their stop
- Antisocial behaviour, e.g. discussing topics of an inappropriate nature with other passengers, including possessing and/or displaying mildly explicit and/or offensive material
- Failing to observe a socially acceptable hygiene standard, e.g. spitting.

### **7.6.3. Category 3: Dangerous & Offensive Behaviour**

This category includes behaviours where there is the likelihood of significant injury and actual minor injury is caused to individuals:

Examples:

- Interfering with other passenger's seat belts/harnesses
- Tripping or pushing other passengers
- Fighting
- Allowing any part of their body to protrude from the bus
- Deliberately making contact with the school bus, whilst the bus is approaching or departing a pickup location
- Antisocial behaviour, e.g. discussing topics of an explicit or alarming nature, inappropriate or unwanted physical contact with other passengers
- Interfering with emergency equipment, e.g. emergency hammers, fire extinguishers
- Throwing objects that have the potential to cause harm or damage.

### **7.6.4. Category 4: Extremely: Dangerous, Destructive & Offensive Behaviour**

This category includes behaviours that are very dangerous, offensive to individuals, or destructive to property. In some incidences, substantial physical injury or extreme distress is caused.

Examples:

- Possessing, consuming, or be under the influence of alcohol or a prohibited substance
- Inappropriate, sexually explicit behaviour
- Deliberate destruction of property, including to the vehicle, personal or Government property
- Physically attacking the Driver or other passengers
- Pushing students out through the doors or windows
- Lighting a fire on the bus



- Interfering with the safe mechanical operation of the bus
- Bringing an object or implement on the bus that is designed or has an intended use as a weapon.

Please note that the lists of examples above are not intended to be exhaustive but used as a guide only.

Specific factors to consider as part of determining the appropriate response to the breach of the Code of Conduct include:

- The threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident
- The age and maturity of the student, and/or
- Whether the breach was a first or one of a series of repeat incidents for which the student has previously been cautioned or suspended.

Please note that all incidents of student misbehaviour are recorded against the student's personal record. Where a student re-offends within a prescribed period as outlined below, the previous incidents will be considered when determining a subsequent penalty. It should also be noted, that where a student has been suspended from a bus service the retention period will start when transport assistance is reinstated.

#### **7.6.5.Retention Periods**

Category 1:	3 months
Category 2:	4 months
Category 3:	6 months
Category 4:	12 months

Students will always be given the opportunity to reform inappropriate behaviours and in-line with this, once the retention period is exhausted, previous incidents and suspensions will no longer be used to determine penalties.

#### **7.6.6.Suspension Periods**

In the event that a period of suspension falls over a school holiday period, the period of suspension will continue after that holiday period.

The following diagram shows the prescribed responses to breaches of the Code of Conduct. You will note that for the lesser categories of misbehaviour i.e. Category 1 and 2 the initial response is to award cautions, in contrast to this, initial responses to Category 3 and 4 offences are suspensions from the bus.

## PENALTY MATRIX

	Caution	Caution	Suspension Up to 1 week	Suspension 2 to 4 weeks	Suspension 5 + weeks
Category 1 – Nuisance & Non - compliant Behaviour					
Category 2 – Threatening & Improper Behaviour					
Category 3 – Dangerous & Highly Offensive Behaviour					
Category 4 – Extremely: Dangerous, Destructive & Offensive Behaviour					

**Example: 1<sup>st</sup> Offence - Category 3 or 4**  
Where a student breaches the Code of Conduct as a 1<sup>st</sup> offence in Category 3 or 4 it is also considered as the student's first offence for all lesser categories.

The dotted lines are provided to show the relationship between Offences and Categories.

**Example: 2<sup>nd</sup> Offence**  
Where a student breaches the Code of Conduct within the retention period as a 2<sup>nd</sup> offence in Category 3, on return to the bus, should that student commit a subsequent offence in Category 2, then the penalty awarded will be a suspension of 2 – 4 weeks.

It should be noted that where there are extenuating circumstances responses to misbehaviour may be varied to suit the situation.

## 7.7. Refused Travel

The decision to refuse travel to students is given to Drivers through contractual conditions with bus contractors and only under extreme circumstances.

Where a bus contractor holds the reasonable belief that a student on the contract school bus constitutes, or is likely to constitute, a danger to the health, wellbeing or safety to the Driver, Bus Aide, the student himself or herself or any other person on the school bus, the contractor may:

- Stop the school bus and arrange for the student to be removed from the school bus and placed in the care of a responsible adult, or
- Convey the student to either the school attended by that student or the student's home and thereafter refuse to carry the student on the school bus until otherwise directed to do so in writing by the PTA.

In these circumstances, it is reasonable to expect that the PTA and the Bus Operator will be supported by the parent/carer in providing private transport for their child. In the event that an immediate removal of transport assistance is deemed appropriate, an Interim Suspension Notice will be issued. This will remain in place until such time as an investigation is conducted, and an outcome is reached. Once an outcome is reached either a formal suspension notice will be issued, or transport assistance will be reinstated.

## 7.8. Behaviour Management Strategies

The most effective way of dealing with poor student behaviour is to attempt to reduce the likelihood in the first instance. To this end, the PTA in conjunction with Department of Education has developed a range of behaviour management strategies which may provide an environment and level of communication that encourages better behaviour. These strategies can be found at Annex B.

## 8. Withdrawal of Transport Assistance

In circumstances where Transport Assistance is withdrawn from a student it must be understood that travel on all Government contracted school buses and any Conveyance Allowance payments are withdrawn for the period of suspension.

Where a student transfers from one contract school bus service to another, the details of misbehaviours are maintained and may be made available to Bus Operators as a means to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all passengers.

Additional information regarding entitlement and the application of Transport Assistance can website at [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)

## 9. Appeals

If you have been notified of a decision and are not satisfied with the decision-making process, you may be eligible to lodge an appeal. The appeals process provides the opportunity for a decision to be reviewed.

You may consider submitting an appeal against a decision where:

- You believe an error in the original decision because the information provided was not correctly considered
- There is new information and/or additional extenuating and compelling circumstances that have not previously been considered
- There was a bias or conflict of interest on part of the original decision maker
- Where a case is particularly complex in nature and involves a genuine concern for personal safety or the safety of other students

These grounds are **not** eligible for appeal:

- Simply being dissatisfied with the decision made in applying the Student Transport Assistance Policy and Operational Guidelines
- Misunderstanding or not being aware of the Student Transport Assistance Policy and Operational Guidelines
- A correction of an administration process applied by SBS.

Incomplete or ineligible applications will not be processed.

### 9.1.1. Submitting an Appeal

Appeals must be submitted in writing within 10 days business days of the initial decision being received and emailed to [schoolbus\\_appeals@pta.wa.gov.au](mailto:schoolbus_appeals@pta.wa.gov.au).

To assist in the timely processing of a submission the email should have the subject line containing the date, brief subject and Family ID, *YYYYMMDD-Title\_Family ID* e.g: 20230701-Appeal of Suspension-34657.

#### Appeal Submission

The appeal submission should clearly detail:

- The decision being appealed
- Where you believe an error in the original decision
  - Clearly detail which part(s) of the Student Transport Assistance Policy and Operational Guideline have not been considered or applied correctly.
- Where new information and/or additional extenuating and compelling circumstances
  - This is where material would not have been available at the time for you to present to the original decision maker– not that you did not supply to the decision maker. The new material also must be significant enough to suggest that had the original decision maker had access to this information then the decision would have been different. New evidence may include compassionate and compelling circumstances and must be supported with appropriate evidence.

- Where there is a bias or conflict of interest in the original decision
  - Evidence needs to show that the person making the decision had previous involvement in your case leading to the decision or that there was a lack of impartiality in deciding your case. You need to present a case that this earlier involvement or previous knowledge would have had some influence on the final decision.

### 9.1.2. Appeals Process

When an appeal is submitted it will be reviewed by a Team Leader who was not involved in the original decision-making process. At this stage the Team Leader will determine whether there are sufficient grounds for considering the appeal and either accept or reject the submission. If the appeal is rejected at this stage, you will be informed to consider whether a further submission should be made.

Where an appeal is accepted the Team Leader, giving consideration to the complexity and nature of the appeal may:

- Make a decision; or
- Refer it to the Manager or Operations Manager for consideration for a decision.

The Manager or Operations Manager may review a decision giving consideration to the complexity and nature of the appeal may:

- Make a decision; or
- The Manager and Operations Manager made the decision it will be considered by the Department's Executive Director, Transperth Regional School Bus Services.

At any stage of the appeals process additional information may be requested to inform the decision-making process. This information may be requested, as appropriate, from relevant individuals including:

- The applicant
- From the school/s or Department of Education representative(s)
- School bus operators.

SBS aim to process your appeal as quickly and informally as possible. However, some appeals are more complex and may take more than 20 working days to finalise.

## Code of Conduct

Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code
Respect other people and property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect other people and their possessions</li> <li>• Follow the bus Driver's directions without argument, and</li> <li>• Do not interfere with bus property, equipment, shelters and signs by marking or damaging them.</li> </ul>
Wait for the bus in an orderly manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the supervising teachers or other DoE representatives at bus loading/transfer locations</li> <li>• Wait well back from the bus until it stops and allow other passengers to leave the bus first</li> <li>• Stand quietly without calling out or shouting, and</li> <li>• Do not push other people in the line.</li> </ul>
While on the bus, behave yourself.	<p><b>Students must:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always follow instructions from bus staff</li> <li>• Sit properly on a seat (in an allocated seat if directed by the Driver)</li> <li>• Wear a seatbelt (if fitted), at all times and in the correct manner</li> <li>• Store school bags/equipment under the seat or in appropriate luggage areas, and</li> <li>• Speak quietly and do not create unnecessary noise.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students must not:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bully other passengers</li> <li>• Place feet on the seats</li> <li>• Fight, spit or use offensive language</li> <li>• Throw any article around or from the bus</li> <li>• Consume food or drink, or play music without the permission of the Driver</li> <li>• Use a recording device, of any description, to obtain images/audio of other passengers or the Driver</li> <li>• Smoke (prohibited on all buses)</li> <li>• Possess, consume or be under the influence of alcohol or a prohibited substance</li> <li>• Possess, discuss or distribute any material that may be considered inappropriate or offensive, i.e. material of a violent or sexually explicit nature</li> <li>• Allow any part of your body to protrude out of the bus windows</li> <li>• Stand whilst the bus is in motion</li> <li>• Bring an object on the bus that is considered dangerous, or any object that may be considered as intended as a weapon, or</li> <li>• Act in a manner that would be considered an offence under any legislation.</li> </ul>
Use approved bus stops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will only be allowed to get on or off the bus at an approved bus stop.</li> </ul>

Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code
When leaving the bus, do so in an orderly manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait until the bus stops before standing to get off</li> <li>• Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly manner</li> <li>• Never cross the road in front of the bus</li> <li>• Wait until the bus has moved away and it is safe to cross, and</li> <li>• Use crossing or traffic lights if available.</li> </ul>
In case of an emergency or a breakdown, follow the Driver's instructions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait until the bus stops before standing to get off</li> <li>• Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly manner, and</li> <li>• Wait in the area indicated by the Driver.</li> </ul> <p><b>Students must not:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interfere with emergency equipment, unless instructed to do so by the Driver.</li> </ul>

## **Behaviour Management Strategies for Bus Guidelines**

To affect a successful outcome, when managing student behaviours on school buses, it is imperative that the student's age, capacity and intellectual ability is considered. Personal issues may also have an effect on a student that would ordinarily be well behaved. In these circumstances it would be prudent to liaise with the student's parent or carer to seek understanding and cooperation in identifying a workable solution.

Students travelling on education support vehicles are expected to behave appropriately when travelling in accordance with the general principles set out in the Code of Conduct and the particular Conditions of Travel which parents/carers acknowledge when they apply for Transport Assistance. However, special consideration will be given to students with intellectual disabilities. In addition, individual management plans may be implemented for students travelling on Education Support buses.

The following pages contain constructive advice on managing student behaviours. There are numerous practical ideas for dealing with students' behaviour in school and associated settings. They transfer well to situations involving school buses and are worth considering as strategies that may be adopted to assist drivers in managing student behaviours.

### **The 80/15/5 rule**

Any one technique/strategy for managing behaviour works great with 80 per cent of students.

- Somewhat with 15 per cent of students
- And not at all with 5 per cent of the students.

Therefore, you need many behaviour management tools, not just one. Avoid doing anything you wouldn't want done to yourself.

### **Giving information**

Often in giving information to students we tell them what we want but not the why. Most of us like to know why we have to do things or be given a purpose to what's been asked.

- Make statements short and non-judgmental
- Use statements as gentle reminders before being more direct.

For example:

'Folks, lots of paper strewn around the bus. We need a clean-up and I'd appreciate your help, thank you.'

### **Brief talk**

Quite often when talking to students about their behaviour, adults have a tendency to lecture at them and from the student's point of view go on and on and on. Students invariably tune out and so your message/s to them is lost. It is no different to us who tend to tune out when somebody goes on in a lecturing or nagging way. We don't like it and nor do students.

### **Keep corrective messages short and simple.**

Instead of: 'Fiona, you're leaving the bus and chatting to your friend, and you haven't even bothered to pick up your bag which is in the middle of the aisle, where you know it should not be. How many times have I told you about that and how many more times will I need to tell you? Somebody will fall over it and injure themselves. Please pick it up before that happens.'



Try: 'Fiona, your school bag.'

This technique avoids:

- Nagging
- Causing
- Embarrassment
- Negative self-image
- Retaliation from students
- Tuning out and not listening to the message.

Short statements motivate students to:

- Think about the limited information
- Identify the problem
- Devise a solution
- Exercise their own initiative and resolve the problem.

### **The 'What' questioning idea**

Questioning students about their behaviour opens up the opportunity for communication between yourself and the student/s, and opens up a more positive opportunity for students to learn from the situation rather than telling them what to do.

'What' questions encourage students to be more precise about what has occurred and avoids making personal, judgmental statements. For example, questions such as the following place the responsibility onto the student to realise what they have done inappropriately, and to reflect upon how they may react to future incidents:

- What is your understanding of what happened?
- What are/could be the consequences?
- What would you do?
- What other possibilities exist?
- What are some other ways you could approach this issue?

The above questions also:

- Encourage looking at positive ways of doing something about an issue
- Develops a more positive relationship between yourself and the student/s
- Supports students (and yourself) in recognising that there is often more than one way to solve a problem
- Allows the student to take responsibility to solve the current and future problems, and
- Removes the onus from you believing that you have to 'solve all of the problems' on your bus.

## **Avoid getting into power struggles**

Do you have issues with students where they refuse to stop their behaviour when you have picked them up on it and in fact once you have, they increase the level of their misbehaviour?

It's then very tempting for you to show your annoyance, often through the raising of your voice, then the student raises the ante, and before too long you find yourself in a power struggle between yourself and the student. Also, at this stage you may even have other students entering the fray and before you know it a 'verbal hell' breaks loose. What can you do?

The easiest piece of advice to give is to avoid putting yourself in the above situation as no one wins. Seek another solution by:

- Recognising that student's need to feel powerful (as we all do)
- Involve them in making decisions about what has to occur (use your 'what' questions)
- Provide responsibilities for the student/s
- Use an 'I message', for example, 'I'm hearing offensive language. Would you be considerate enough to restate your opinion in more polite terms, thank you?'

## **Some more on the 'I' messages**

If we want students to be less confrontational and more cooperative, then the way you use language can help you. For instance, if you were to say, 'You weren't listening. You're going to get into trouble.' The chances are you will then have the student challenging what you meant by that and before too long you will get into a slanging match with each other.

To avoid such an episode saying something like: 'On the bus I want my students to listen closely so that they can learn important things which will enable them to enjoy their ride to school/home.' You have got your message across which is inclusive of all students on the bus but have made it clear that the student you are talking to realises that they have a responsibility to listen. You are not necessarily accusing or finger pointing the student, nor will you be forcing the student to be defensive and making excuses, but rather focuses in on what you want them to learn.

An 'I' statement states what you would like to see done, or how you feel or what you need.

Don't despair if the above doesn't work straight away as it takes practice, as well as educating the students on how you prefer to deal with them on your bus. Your modelling of how you speak to them and indicate to them what is acceptable and not acceptable to you, starts to be taken on board by the students, over time.

Some suggestions for dealing with provocative or agitating behaviour are:

- Where possible speak privately to the student
- Speak calmly and respectfully (you model what you're asking of the student)
- Identify the problem
- Ask the student to take care of the problem
- Present options and expected behaviour as a choice or decision to be made by the student, in consultation with you
- Ask the student to select an option
- Acknowledge their cooperation

- If the problem escalates, withdraw informing the student you'll return to the issues when calmness prevails – and don't forget to do so, or the student will see that you are not serious about resolving the issue
- To deal with the initial behaviour is a powerful way of preventing the problem escalating, and
- Remember your response to a problem behaviour plays a significant role in controlling the situation.

To be proactive try:

- Continual supervision so that students are aware that you are observing them
- Use visual scanning to create 'with-it-ness' -
- Scan students as they get on and off the bus
- Anticipate and think ahead
- Use your past experiences to anticipate potential problems, for example, students at particular stops, last day of term/semester, sports days, rainy/windy weather
- Solving persistent problems
- Gather information
- Establish quick and timely responses
- Manage low-level problems by catching them early.

### **Effective Partnerships –**

Working together on managing student behaviour on school buses there are many benefits to establishing partnerships between parents and Bus Operators.

Collaboration provides a united front to both parents and students about what student behaviour is expected when travelling on school buses. By working together inappropriate behaviour on buses can be 'nipped in the bud'.

### **Keeping parents in the know –**

Parents may not know what expected appropriate student's behaviour on buses is. It is up to you to inform them regularly (once a term/semester). Also encourage the students to tell their parents what is expected.

Some of the following are used by school bus companies and may be useful to you:

- Display the PTA's flyer outlining the rules for travelling on buses
- If you believe the student's behaviour is of concern, contact the parents/guardians. Inform them of your concerns and seek their support in resolving the situation
- Use a positive approach to inform parents of problems with their child's behaviour. Explain that the situation requires the parents, the student and driver to work together towards a mutually agreed upon solution.
- Log in your diary every occasion a student has required a talk from you regarding their behaviour. You may need this later to include in a letter to parents or to use at a meeting with parents and the student.
- On occasions you may experience aggressive and persistent parents who believe their child has been wrongly accused of inappropriate behaviour on the bus. It is crucial that you inform them of the facts as you know them. Use any notes you've taken on the behaviour, your response to the behaviour and actions taken.

- Avoid the discussion ending up in a 'shouting match'. If this does occur, suggest another meeting time and consider inviting other parties whose attendance may be beneficial, in order to work through the issues to a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.
- Be prepared to listen to parents' point of view, avoid dismissing their position as being wrong or biased in favour of their child. A useful strategy is to write down each of the issues or points they dispute and then address each in turn with the facts as you understand them.

### **Praise positive behaviour**

The students are misbehaving, and it seems as though it's hopeless for you to do anything. All too often we raise issues of poor behaviour with students and focus on the negatives.

Reverse the focus and make mention of positive behaviour.

You notice one student who was not misbehaving. You say to that student, 'I appreciate the fact that way you are behaving so well Jane.'

It may just cause a chain reaction where misbehaving students stop what they are doing and behave the way you expect them to.

Praise often, not just the once.

### **The 10 Commandments of behaviour management**

1. Always treat students with respect and preserve their dignity
2. Always do what is in the student's best interests
3. Seek solutions, not blame
4. Model tolerant, patient, dignified and respectable behaviour
5. Use the least intrusive intervention possible
6. Connect with the students
7. Instil hope for a successful solution
8. Never do anything disrespectful, illegal, immoral, and ineffective, that you wouldn't want done to you
9. Never give up on a student – believe in them changing for the better
10. Catch students being good ... a lot

## Quick Reference Guide

1. Prevent Inappropriate Behaviour
  - Build a positive relationship with the students by:
    - Being Polite
    - Be interested in the students
    - Where possible learn and use their names
    - Smile
    - Use appropriate humour
    - Provide positive reinforcement/incentives for appropriate behaviour
  - Be prepared for misbehaviour by:
    - Planning for movements – e.g. single file onto and off bus
    - Demonstrating appropriate behaviour
    - Scanning frequently
    - Displaying and explaining the Code of Conduct
2. Respond to Inappropriate Behaviour
  - Use Low Key Responses:
    - Eye contact
    - Talk to the student privately
    - Model appropriate behaviour
    - Stay calm
    - Deal with the problem not the student
    - Give appropriate choices e.g. please either sit next to --- or to ---- (not an ultimatum)
    - Rebuild the relationship with the student after the incident
    - Thank the student for complying

If the inappropriate behaviour continues or a serious incident occurs move to the described flowchart responses.

## 10. SCHOOL BUS SERVICES – OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

### 10.1. Services and Route Design

#### 10.1.1. General

Contract school bus services follow routes approved by SBS and are designed to pick up and drop off students in the safest and most practical way.

The following factors are relevant to every regional contract school bus service and the design of all regional service routes:

- Number of students being dropped off and picked up at school
- Forecast student numbers
- Actual and forecast residential distribution of students
- Distribution of existing contract services in the area
- Road distances from residences to bus stops
- Walking distances between bus stops and school
- Number of transfers required between homes and school
- In-vehicle travel time, including transfers between vehicles
- Arrival and departure times of the service in relation to the start and finish times of school.

To ensure that resources are used efficiently, and transport assistance is made available to all students on an equal basis, all existing services are regularly and continuously monitored by SBS. Where a service is under-utilised, the following actions may be taken:

- The service may be withdrawn
- The route may be redesigned, and/or
- The required seating capacity of the vehicle may be changed.

Where sufficient demand for a new service is identified, a test service may be provided for a trial period. However, if the number of students regularly using such a test service is not sufficient or appears unlikely to be maintained, it may be withdrawn and/or the route may be re-designed.

#### 10.1.2. Safety

Safety is of paramount importance in the design of service routes and is considered in the choice of roads and the location of pick-up and drop-off points, spurs, extensions, turnarounds and terminus points. All of these are determined with a view to ensuring that routes provide safe pick-up and drop-off locations for students and are appropriate to the predictable road and traffic conditions, and the size and type of vehicle being used.

#### 10.1.3. Journey Times

Routes are designed with the goal of ensuring that no journey on a contract school bus requires a student to be on the bus for longer than 90 minutes.

There are, however, situations where the geographic location of a student's residence in relation to their school (and possibly also in relation to other students' residences) is such that a journey of 90 minutes or less is not possible. In such cases, travel by contract school bus is not feasible, and an Eligible Student in such a situation may be entitled to a Conveyance Allowance.

#### 10.1.4. Waiting Times

Routes are designed with the goal of ensuring that students do not have to wait at school for more than 30 minutes before school starts or finishes, however, there are circumstances where the opening and closing times of schools in a geographic area make it difficult to ensure waiting times are kept within the 30 minute threshold.

#### 10.1.5. Transfers

No journey on a contract service should require a student to transfer between contract school buses more than twice on any journey between their residence and school.

#### 10.1.6. Travel to be by Public Roads

Transport assistance (in terms of both route design and travel for which Conveyance Allowances are paid) is normally only granted with respect to travel via roads gazetted as 'public'.

#### 10.1.7. Limited Use of Private Property

For safety reasons, contract school buses transporting students to and from schools should not be driven onto private property, whether to pick up or drop off students or for any other reason, unless all affected parties (including SBS, the owner of the property /council) have agreed in advance to such use – e.g. if an area of private property is desired for use as a turnaround point.

#### 10.1.8. Vehicles

The appropriate type of vehicle (i.e. size and seating capacity) for use on a route is determined according to the maximum number of Eligible Students requiring transport through student passenger surveys.

More information about contract school buses can be found on page 81 of this document.

#### 10.1.9. Types of Service

##### Main Type of Service

In most circumstances, contract school bus services transporting rural students in Non-Public Transport Areas, operate according to the criteria shown in the table below (Table 1).

**Table 1: Criteria for Services in Non-Public Transport Areas**

<b>Student Numbers:</b>	
Minimum number of Eligible Students (of two or more families) residing in the same area in relation to the school:	8
<b>Service provided:</b>	
Generally, one service to school in the morning, one return service in the afternoon	
<b>Service Route Design:</b>	
Maximum transfers between residence and school:	2
In-vehicle journey time (including transfers) not to exceed:	90 minutes
Arrival/departure of service prior to and after school not to exceed:	30 minutes
<b>Schools and occasional Variations to Schedules:</b>	
Schools are expected to liaise with contractors to coordinate start and finish times with services and to provide appropriate supervision	
Where a school finishes earlier than its normal time, any additional cost arising from the change in scheduling is the responsibility of the school	

**Additional Types of Services: Shuttle and Feeder Services**

There are two types of service that are used to deliver students directly to school or which provide them with access to another contract school bus service: shuttle services and feeder services.

Each shuttle service and feeder service is associated with a main service and are typically established where the distribution of the students relative to their schools is such that if a single main service were to pick up all the students, it would mean the journey time would exceed 90 minutes.

**Shuttle Services**

A shuttle service operates as a supplement to a main service – using the same contract school bus to pick up and drop off Eligible Students before or after completion of the main run. Typically, a shuttle run is made after the main group of students has been conveyed to school in the morning and before they are returned in the afternoon.

Shuttle services are designed to cater for small numbers of Eligible Students residing relatively short distances from a school. They are normally established where the number and residential distribution of Eligible Students does not justify a variation of the existing service or the establishment of a new one.

Because shuttle services require students to be left at the school (usually only for short periods), the timing of drop-offs and pick-ups is important and may require coordination between the contractor/driver and the school to ensure students are supervised.

A shuttle service may be introduced where:

- The main service is at or near capacity
- The travel time of the main route (if it were to include the route covered by the shuttle service) would be longer than 90 minutes
- It is more efficient and economic than other possible service arrangements (i.e. where the location and number of students do not justify a separate service).



If one or more of the above conditions exists, a shuttle service may be considered and provided, subject to the criteria outlined in the following table (Table 2).

**Table 2: Criteria for Shuttle Services in Non-Public Transport Areas**

<b>Student Numbers:</b>	
Minimum number of Eligible Students (of two or more families) residing in the same area in relation to the school:	4
Maximum number of Eligible Students depends on how the students' residences are distributed and whether a new service would be more economic	
<b>Service provided:</b>	
One service to school in the morning, one return service in the afternoon	
<b>Service Route Design:</b>	
No transfers between pick-up/drop-off point and school	
Arrival/departure of service prior to and after school not to exceed:	30 minutes
<b>Schools and occasional Variations to Schedules:</b>	
Schools are expected to liaise with contractors to coordinate start and finish times with services and to provide appropriate supervision	
Where a school finishes earlier than its normal time, any additional cost arising from the change in scheduling is the responsibility of the school	

### Feeder Services

A feeder service is a subsidiary service that uses a bus or other contract service vehicle to transport Eligible Students to and from pick-up and drop-off points on a main service route – from where the main contract school bus conveys them to and from school.

Feeder services are designed to cater for small numbers of Eligible Students residing relatively short distances from a service route. They are normally established where the number and residential distribution of Eligible Students does not justify a variation of an existing service or the establishment of a new one.

Because a feeder service requires students to be transferred at a pick-up and drop-off point, the timing of drop-offs and pick-ups is important and may require coordination between the contractor/driver of the main service and the contractor/driver of the feeder service to ensure students are not left without access to appropriate facilities (e.g. shade, water, toilets) or left unsupervised.

A feeder service may be introduced where:

- The travel time of the main route (if it were to include the route covered by the feeder service) would be longer than 90 minutes
- It is more efficient and economic than other possible service arrangements (i.e. where the location and number of students does not justify a separate service).

If one or more of the above conditions exists, a feeder service may be considered and provided, subject to the criteria outlined in the following table (Table 3).

**Table 3: Criteria for Feeder Services in Non-Public Transport Areas**

<b>Student Numbers:</b>	
Minimum number of Eligible Students (of two or more families) residing in the same area in relation to school:	8
Maximum number of Eligible Students depends on how the student's residences are distributed and whether a new service would be more economic	
<b>Service provided:</b>	
Generally, one service to school in the morning, one return service in the afternoon	
<b>Service Route Design:</b>	
No transfers between pick-up/drop-off point and school	
Arrival/departure of service prior to and after school not to exceed:	n/a
<b>Schools and occasional variations to schedules:</b>	
Schools are expected to liaise with contractors to coordinate start and finish times with available services and to provide appropriate supervision	
Where a school finishes earlier than its normal time, any additional cost arising from the change in scheduling is the responsibility of the school	

#### 10.1.10. Route Design linked to School Opening and Closing Times

The timing of pick-ups and drop-offs of students is largely determined by the start and finish times of schools, and is determined according to the following parameters:

- Where public transport services are used by students:
  - Schools should take public transport schedules into account when planning school start and finish times
- Where contract school buses are used to transport students:
  - Schools, contractors and SBS must liaise and identify how best to coordinate public transport schedules and contract school bus service schedules with school start and finish times
- The timetables to which contract school bus services run are not normally altered to accommodate occasional changes to a school's start and finish times (i.e. if a school finishes earlier or later than its normal time)
- Where a school finishes earlier or later than its normal time, and if a contract school bus service can accommodate the variation, any additional cost incurred because of changes to a contract school bus service's schedule is the responsibility of the school or DoE.

#### 10.1.11. Non-Standard School Hours

Individual schools may elect to open or close early or late on certain days of the week, for certain periods or for special occasions.

Provided there is sufficient notice, a contract school bus service may be able to accommodate such deviations, but usually only if the relevant service transports students to a single school. Where a service picks up and drops off students at or from more than one school, a variation in one school's opening or closing time could mean that the pick-up and drop-off times for students at other schools are unacceptably affected.

Where a school elects to open or close early or late, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that, if students have to wait for transport, they are adequately supervised.

## **10.2. Route Variations and Extensions**

### **10.2.1. Spurs**

A spur is a section of an Approved Route that branches from a main route and along which a contract school bus travels and returns in order to pick up and drop off Eligible Students.

A spur extension may be introduced to pick up and drop off Eligible Students who live more than 4.5 km from their school and more than 2.5 km from the existing Approved Route.

An Eligible Student who lives within 2.5 km of the approved bus route must make their own way to a bus pick-up point.

A spur may extend to a maximum of:

- 5.0 km (one-way)      if only 1 student will be using the spur
- 7.5 km (one-way)      if 2 or more students will be using the spur

Subject to the above maximum lengths, a spur will be designed to extend as far as the gate of the residence of the furthestmost student along the spur.

If a suitable turnaround is not available or cannot be constructed within the maximum length of the spur, then the spur may be extended up to a further 0.3 km – or a turnaround location may be located up to 0.3 km short of the gate of the residence of the furthestmost student along the spur.

A spur will only be maintained if it is used regularly by an Eligible Student. A spur will be considered as being used regularly if it is used to transport one or more students on at least 60% of the school days scheduled in a term.

When the furthestmost student leaves school or no longer uses the service regularly, and provided the furthestmost point is not required by another student, the turnaround for the spur will be relocated at the gate of the next student back along the spur – subject to there being a site suitable for the construction of a turnaround. If a suitable turnaround cannot be constructed at this point, then the spur will be 'brought back' toward the main route until a suitable location is found.

### **10.2.2. Exceptions**

A spur will not be approved if it would run off (i.e. be an extension of) an existing spur.

### **10.2.3. Terminus Extensions**

The terminus of a route is, on the approved morning route of a service, the first pick-up point for an Eligible Student, and, on the approved afternoon route of a service, the last drop-off point for an Eligible Student.

The location of a terminus may be moved (i.e. that part of the route may be extended) as long as the new route would not result in an unacceptable journey time.

A terminus may be extended to a maximum of:

- 5.0 km (one-way)      if only 1 student will be using the terminus extension
- 7.5 km (one-way)      if 2 or more students will be using the terminus extension

Subject to the above maximum lengths, a route can be extended up to the gate of the residence of the furthestmost student along the spur.

If a suitable turnaround is not available or cannot be constructed within the maximum distance, then it may be extended up to a further 0.3 km – or a turnaround location may be located up to 0.3 km short of the gate of the residence of the furthestmost student along the route.

#### **10.2.4. Relocation of Terminus**

When the furthestmost student leaves school or no longer uses the service regularly, and provided the furthestmost point is not required by another Eligible Student, the terminus will be relocated to the pickup/set down point of the next student back along the main route – subject to there being a site suitable for the construction of a turnaround (if required). If a suitable turnaround cannot be constructed at this point, then the terminus will be ‘brought back’ along the main route until a suitable location is found.

#### **10.2.5. Reinstatement of Relocated Terminus (Historical Terminus)**

In certain circumstances, SBS may give approval to reinstate a previous terminus point.

The reinstatement of a previously used terminus (Historical Terminus) that exceeds the distance described above under Terminus Extensions may only occur under the conditions outlined below:

- On application for transport assistance by an eligible family is received
- The pickup and set down point requested is the same as the terminus point (Historical Terminus) prior to moving to the current terminus
- The previous terminus was an authorised terminus used by an Eligible Student/s, and
- The application is lodged within 2 years of the terminus being relocated.

Any decision to reinstate the terminus would take into account whether:

- The bus route had varied significantly since the terminus ceased to be used
- The reinstatement would cause the bus service to run over 90 minutes, and
- The new student met the eligibility criteria for transport assistance.

Note: SBS may consider a pickup/set down point along the previous route leading to the Historical Terminus, with a distance greater than allowed under Terminus Extension but less than the Historical Terminus distance, on a case-by-case basis.

#### **10.2.6. Alternating Terminus**

In some situations, the distribution of students in relation to schools is such that a school bus route may be designed with an alternating terminus.

For example, a route might be designed so that the school bus runs in one direction one week and in the other direction the following week.

The arrangements that are acceptable in terms of alternating termini depend on the locations of students and schools and are subject to approval by SBS.

### 10.3. Mapping and Updating of Routes

Accurate, frequently updated route mapping is critical to SBS and contractors, not only for reasons of safety and timeliness but because payments to contractors are calculated according to distances actually travelled.

To achieve this, SBS uses a variety of data sources and mapping systems, including data from the Department of Land Information (DLA) and Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies. The resultant map and distance dataset provides SBS with an accurate and flexible tool for the ongoing management of school bus contracts and allows for adjustments to routes to be made relatively easily and quickly.

### 10.4. Service and Route Reviews

SBS undertakes service reviews in accordance with a scheduled review program, which includes:

- Area reviews for specific geographical areas – to ensure the most efficient operation of groups of services in a given area
- Route reviews – to ensure the efficient operation of individual routes.

In developing review programs, the following factors will be considered:

- Scheduled school closures, openings and re-organisations
- Planned changes or extensions to public transport services
- Survey forms of expected student loadings
- Annual returns from contractors
- Changes in demand from Eligible Students, and the potential impact on required seating capacities and service criteria
- Contract expiry dates
- Scheduled vehicle replacements
- Route changes proposed by SBACs.

### 10.5. Consultation and Communication

The process of reviewing either a single service route or an area review of multiple service routes will be conducted in an open and transparent way. SBS will engage; School Bus Advisory Committees (parent representative groups), Contractors and schools to ensure all affected parties are provided with the opportunity to discuss any concerns.

#### **Existing Student Passengers to be taken into account**

When reviewing services, consideration should be given to the needs and expectations of Eligible Students already using the services. The presence of complimentary passengers on a service will not usually be taken into account in determining the viability of a service or the design of routes.

Changes to a route may be made in order to preserve or enhance an Eligible Student's entitlement or level of access – as long as such changes do not incur additional cost to the PTA and do not disadvantage other students.

## 10.6. Service Terminations

A contract service may be terminated if:

- There is no longer a need for the service – if, for example:
  - A school is closed
  - A new school is established
  - Services in the area are rationalised or amalgamated
- It no longer satisfies the criteria required for the particular type of service (e.g. if there were a decrease in the number of Eligible Students<sup>5</sup>), or
- A public bus service or urban school bus service is introduced.

### Effect of School Closures on Existing Services

If a school is closed, it can mean that some contract school bus services become redundant. In such a case, SBS may, depending on the circumstances:

- reconfigure the routes followed by the existing services, or
- terminate the contracts associated with those routes.

In considering what transport assistance arrangements are appropriate for the students affected by the closure of a school, SBS will take into account the age and residential distribution of the affected students in relation to the remaining schools and the routes followed by, and capacities of, existing services.

### School Closures and Practical Equidistance

If a school is closed, SBS will treat the remaining schools in the area as being practically equidistant if the distance variation between them in relation to a student's residence is less than or equal to 25 km (for information about how the concept of practical equidistance is applied, see page 19 of this document on how the Nearest Appropriate School Policy is applied).

### Effect of New Schools on Existing Services

When a new school is established, it often results in a change in the distribution of students relative to the schools in the district – e.g. a new school may attract new students to the area and/or draw some away from existing schools.

If a new school is opened, SBS will evaluate whether the existing routes can be altered to service the new school and still adequately service the existing schools, or whether new services need to be instigated. Rare situations can arise where the presence of a new school results in a distribution of students and schools that makes an existing route redundant. In this case, any service contracts associated with the route will be terminated.

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<sup>5</sup> Usually, this circumstance occurs if there are three or less students on the service.

## 10.7. Contract School Buses

### 10.7.1. Vehicles and Carrying Capacities

The physical and legal carrying capacity of a vehicle is essentially defined by its gross vehicle mass (GVM). In determining what vehicles are appropriate for transporting students and how vehicles may be modified to accommodate students, SBS refers to a variety of Commonwealth and State legislation and regulations, including:

- [Australian Design Rules](#);
- [Road Traffic Act 1974 \(WA\)](#);
- [Road Traffic Code 2000 \(WA\)](#);
- [Road Traffic \(Omnibus\) Regulations 1975 \(WA\)](#);
- [Road Traffic \(Vehicle Standards\) Regulations 2002 \(WA\)](#).

This is not an exhaustive list of the legislative and regulatory standards, which may be relevant to the legal and safe use of vehicles for student transport.

Specific requirements relating to contract school buses and the permissible body and seating configurations are also set out in school bus service contracts.

### 10.7.2. Students to be seated

The vehicles used as contract school buses and their seating capacities and configurations are approved according to the actual and forecast numbers of students using the services, with a view to ensuring that every student is seated whilst the vehicles are in motion.

Other than in extraordinary circumstances, no student should be standing on a contract school bus whilst the vehicle is in motion.

### 10.7.3. Seat Belts

From the start of 2006 all new buses come fitted with 3-point lap sash seatbelts.

The Government has confirmed that all seatbelts must be of a 3-point lap-sash configuration, which is widely acknowledged to be the best and safest restraint solution. Younger passengers that are not able to be restrained effectively due to their small physical size will be provided with an approved 'booster seat'.

#### Impact on Seating Capacity and Services

In an effort to minimise the potential loss of seating capacity on vehicles, SBS will generally recommend that a new or replacement set-belted vehicle have the maximum adult seating capacity available in that Class of bus. These buses must be fitted with seat-belted seats at point of sale.

For larger buses SBS will include approval to use specially designed seat-belted seats to accommodate three primary children in lieu of two adult passengers (i.e. The McConnell 2/3 Educator) to maximise potential seating capacity.

For small buses SBS will look to always maximise adult seating capacity. However, where a vehicle with lower adult capacity is to be considered, approval may be given for the use of that vehicle with McConnell 2/3 Educator seats if there are specific operational requirements or the price of a converted vehicle is comparable with the maximum adult seating capacity vehicle.

Parents/carers, students, contractors, drivers and other stakeholders will be kept informed of progress regarding the implementation program.

#### 10.7.4. Air-conditioning

All 'Orange' School Buses are fitted with air-conditioning.

#### 10.7.5. Communication Devices

Mobile telephones or other communication devices are required on all contract school buses and must be kept in an accessible location on the vehicle and kept 'switched on' whenever student passengers are being transported.

Where services are operating outside metropolitan areas, contractors and drivers should be alert to the possibility that mobile telephone coverage may not be comprehensive or reliable in all areas. In such cases, the use of two-way radios or alternative devices capable of maintaining telecommunication contact at all points on the route should be considered.

#### 10.7.6. Storage of Luggage

Unsecured items (e.g. school bags, sporting equipment) in any vehicle can become dangerous projectiles in the event of emergency braking or an accident. However, the circumstances under which students are picked up and dropped off means that luggage cannot feasibly be stored in under-carriage compartments on contract school buses.

SBS accordingly recommends that, as much as possible, contractors and drivers ensure that passenger luggage is stored on racks or under seats and/or is positioned so that it is not likely to restrict exit routes in the event of an emergency.

Specific requirements regarding luggage storage facilities are set out in school bus service contracts and reflect the stipulations of the *Road Traffic Act 1974 (WA)*, its associated *Road Traffic Code 2000 (WA)* and *Road Traffic (Vehicles) Regulations 2014 (WA)*, and the Australian Design Rules.

### 10.8. Safety Management Planning

It is important that every person involved in the transporting of students evaluates how safely the service is provided, whether safety related aspects could be improved and how any emergencies that may arise could best be managed. Appropriate management of safety systems will lead to the prevention of foreseeable unsafe situations and minimise the consequences of any incidents that might occur.

Contractors are required to maintain an appropriately comprehensive and up-to-date written Safety Management Plan, which must be:

- Kept in an accessible but secure location on each contract school bus
- Updated at least annually and more often if there are any relevant changes to the service or route.

Contractors must provide SBS with a copy of their Safety Management Plan for audit purposes.

Safety Management Plans provide guidelines for drivers and bus aides about how to prevent and deal with emergencies. They also include records of students' medical conditions, drop-off addresses and alternative transport arrangements. This could be particularly important if a driver were to be incapacitated as a result of an emergency – in which case the Safety Management Plan may be the only source of information available to emergency services personnel.

Contractors must ensure that they and all drivers and bus aides assisting in the transport of students and passengers:



- Have all qualifications and certifications required under the service contract and by law
- Are aware of their responsibilities under the service contract and any relevant legislation and standards, and
- Are aware of the whereabouts and contents of the Safety Management Plan.

### **10.8.1. Emergency Drills**

In conjunction with the implementation of their Safety Management Plan, contractors should conduct occasional safety and emergency drills to ensure that drivers, bus aides and students have an appreciation of the types of emergencies that may arise and how they should respond in such situations.

The timing and format of such drills should be organised through consultation between the contractor and principals/Coordinators, and may include instruction about emergency equipment (e.g. fire extinguishers), the location of emergency exits, where students should assemble in the event of an emergency, and the appointment of responsible students to take charge if the driver is incapacitated.

## **10.9. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **10.9.1. SBS Branch and Staff**

With respect to the provision of transport assistance to rural students attending mainstream schools, the PTA's SBS branch:

- Negotiates and administers contracts relating to the use of contract school buses to provide transport for students to schools and education facilities, and remunerates contractors for such services
- Provides direction and advises on the selection, construction, modification and maintenance of contract school buses according to the specifications required at law and by SBS
- Ensures that contract services and routes are safe, cost efficient and regularly maintained
- Supports and guides School Bus Advisory Committees (SBACs) in applying the Government's policies on transport assistance for students
- Considers recommendations from SBACs
- Reviews Approved Routes to determine whether the level of service could be provided more efficiently, and informs SBACs of route changes that may improve the service or reduce the cost to Government
- Advises the Minister responsible for the PTA on matters relating to transport assistance for students
- Supervises the payment of Conveyance Allowances
- Maintains policies relating to the provision of transport assistance
- Develops procedures covering the operational aspects of providing transport assistance.

In addition to the above functions, SBS has specific responsibilities with respect to transport assistance made available to students attending Education Support Facilities, including:

- Considering and approving requests for the appointment of bus aides
- Considering and approving requests for the transport of students to respite centres or for home-based respite or foster care

- Supervising the construction, modification and maintenance of safety and restraint equipment installed on Education Support Vehicles.

#### **10.9.2. Contract Officers**

- Coordinates student transport services
- Ensures contract services are operating within operational policy guidelines and negotiates terms and conditions for contract payments
- Provides advice to relevant stakeholders on the application of departmental policy for student transport services
- Assists school principals and local school bus advisory committees with the rationalisation of existing services and preparation of submissions for new services
- Contributes to the development of a work plan, which includes a community consultation strategy.

#### **10.9.3. Data Administration Officer**

- Responsible for data maintenance of School Bus Services' RTSIMS, including processing data relating to school bus contracts/contractors, transport assistance applications, bus route variations, and bus details
- Liaises with clients and assists with customer enquiries concerning the processing of Conveyance Allowance claims
- Assists with enhancements or changes to systems and procedures
- Processes authorised Conveyance Allowance claims and forwards for payment.

#### **10.9.4. Vehicle Inspection Program**

All vehicles used as contract school buses are subject to ongoing mechanical safety inspections via the Department of Transport Vehicle Examination Centres or Approved Inspection Stations located throughout Western Australia.

All inspections are carried out in accordance with relevant Vehicle Standard Regulations, Australian Design Rules; the School Bus Specifications established by SBS and set out in the service contract.

#### **10.9.5. The Department of Education**

'The purpose of the Department of Education (DoE) is to ensure that all government school students and all adults have an ongoing opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to achieve their individual potential and contribute to the social and economic development of Western Australia.

DoE is the key agency in realising the Government's strategic objective of developing 'an educated and skilled future for all Western Australians'.'

#### **10.9.6. Central Office**

The Central Office of the Department of Education, liaises with SBS regarding education-related policies and how they are applied (particularly where they relate to school openings and closures and foreseeable changes in student numbers and distribution), and contributes to SBS development of policies relating to transport assistance for students.

### 10.9.7. Education Regional Offices

Education Regional Offices are involved in coordinating the activities of student intakes for government schools within DoE districts, defining school catchment areas and dealing with cases of students attending schools outside specific districts.

### 10.9.8. Coordinating School Principals and Schools

DoE formally withdrew the roll of 'Coordinating School Principal' in 2011.

Consequently, from the start of 2013 the management of student behaviour on 'Orange' School Buses has now become the sole responsibility of school bus contractors, their drivers. and coordinating principals do not exist to undertake operational school bus issues.

While these formal arrangements are now in place, you may find in a number of small rural towns and communities the local principal may still be willing to assist school bus contractors with the management of student behaviour. Where this occurs the PTA and contractors will work with these principals on an ongoing basis. However, parents/carers should understand that these arrangements are fluid and may not continue with a new incoming principal when the current principal moves to another school.

Therefore, the PTA encourages all parents/carers (and their children) to be fully aware of the 'Code of Conduct' for children travelling on school buses, and to understand the Behaviour Management Guidelines relating to the management of incidents of poor behaviour.

Under these new arrangements the PTA asks parent/carers to offer their full support to bus operators who are now required to manage student behaviour on 'Orange' School Buses.

### 10.9.9. School Bus Advisory Committees

Since DoE has formally withdrawn its support in the administration for transport assistance the function of School Bus Advisory Committees (SBAC) are no longer required. While this is the case, some schools have continued to operate a SBAC where there are 'Orange' School Bus services network operating in their community.

In areas where SBAC exist, they act in an advisory role to SBS in relation to rural contract school bus services; provide it with recommendations in accordance with transport assistance policy, information about local circumstances; and consider issues relating to transport assistance, including:

- Applications for modifications to routes (e.g. spurs, extensions)
- Advice regarding the students wishing to travel as complimentary passengers.

SBAC should note the Government's policies on transport assistance are intended to promote a system that is equitably applied across the State, the policies must be applied as uniformly and therefore as rigorously as possible – consequently, the approval of transport assistance outside the existing policy framework will be made by SBS only in exceptional circumstances.

SBACs must consider issues raised carefully, and closely scrutinize any requests that appear to be outside policy. All recommendations made by SBACs are subject to approval and audit by SBS.

All positions on SBACs are voluntary and unpaid, and the committees should, where possible, be comprised of:

- Parents of Eligible Students who attend the schools serviced by the routes, and
- Representatives of the schools serviced by the routes.

### 10.9.10. Parents/Carers

The general behaviour of students whilst they are travelling on contract school buses is the responsibility of their parents/carers.

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Applying for transport assistance for their child via the online application form on the SBS website [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)
- Completing and submitting all required forms relating to transport assistance and providing such information as is necessary for SBS to determine their child's eligibility and entitlements
- Ensuring their child is delivered to the pick-up point on time and making appropriate arrangements for their child to be collected from the drop-off point in the afternoon
- Notifying the Contractor or the driver of any variations to their child's usual school or travel schedules or pick-up/drop-off arrangements
- Managing their child's behaviour, including ensuring that their child understands and obeys the requirements of the *Code of Conduct*.

### 10.9.11. Changes to Student Details or Travel Arrangements

A change to a student's circumstances such as their custodial issues, family address, school, pick up and drop off location, attendance, medical information condition or behaviour, will require the parent/carer of that student to complete a new application form for transport assistance as soon as possible. The online application form for transport assistance is located on the SBS website [www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au](http://www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au)

It's important to note that any changes to a student's circumstances or travel arrangements can also affect other students and the efficiency of services (e.g. if the last student to be picked up on a rural service stops attending, and SBS was not informed, the driver and other students will be travelling to the end of the route unnecessarily).

Accordingly, parents/carers should complete a new application form for transport assistance as soon as they become aware of any changes to their child's circumstances.

### 10.9.12. No Private Arrangements with Contractors or Drivers

Parents/carers must not make private arrangements with contractors or drivers regarding delivery of their children to or from a school or education support facility.

All inquiries regarding transport assistance should be directed to the student's school, education support facility or SBS.

### 10.9.13. Students

Students must behave appropriately when travelling on contract service vehicles and conduct themselves in accordance with the *Code of Conduct* published by the PTA.

Under the Code of Conduct, students are required to:

- Follow the instructions of the driver and bus aide
- Respect the personal space and property of others
- Store luggage (e.g. school bags) safely and appropriately
- Let other students travel in peace and comfort
- Stay in their seat whilst the bus is in motion

- If the bus is equipped with seatbelts, keep them appropriately fastened whilst the bus is in motion
- Stay off the steps whilst the bus is moving
- Not touch emergency equipment or exits (other than in emergencies)
- Not throw anything inside, or out of, the bus
- Not put any part of their body out of the window
- Not smoke on the bus
- Not eat or drink on the bus without the permission of the driver
- Not bring any offensive or dangerous weapon or item onto the bus.

Failing to abide by these requirements, especially where they relate to matters of safety and where a student continues to behave unacceptably after being warned, may result in a student's entitlement to transport assistance being suspended or withdrawn.

## 11. Complaints

Any person who has involvement or comes in contact with school bus operations may want to make a complaint if they are unhappy or concerned with service or safety of school bus operations.

Complaints about may include the quality of transport provided, possible negligence issues, safety of passengers, or concerns about how your personal and medical information has been used.

It is usually best to try to resolve the problem with those that are directly able to make a decision or provide a direction. Where this is not possible or not appropriate a formal complaint may be lodged with School Bus Services.

Information on Complaints can be found at the [Public Transport Authority Feedback and Complaints](#) website.

**APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Item/Subject</b>
I	<a href="#"><u>Legislation, Regulations and References</u></a>

## APPENDIX I – LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND REFERENCES

The items listed below are generally relevant to the provision of transport assistance in Western Australia.

In some electronic versions of this document, hyperlinks have been provided to published versions of the following items or to the websites of organisations which maintain up-to-date versions – readers should note, however, that some electronic versions of the document may not be able to support hyperlinks.

Readers should note that all legislation is subject to amendment and the links provided below may not be to the most current versions.

Online versions of legislation and related documents can be accessed through:

Western Australian Legislation – [www.legislation.wa.gov.au](http://www.legislation.wa.gov.au)

Australasian Legal Information Institute - [www.austlii.edu.au](http://www.austlii.edu.au)

Legislation and Regulations

[Australian Design Rules](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)

[Disability Services Act 1993 \(WA\)](#)

[Equal Opportunity Act 1984 \(WA\)](#)

[Public Transport Authority Act 2003 \(WA\)](#)

[Regional Development Commissions Act 1993 \(WA\)](#)

[Road Traffic Act 1974 \(WA\)](#)

[Road Traffic Code 2000 \(WA\)](#)

[Road Traffic \(Omnibus\) Regulations 1975 \(WA\)](#)

[Road Traffic \(Repeals and Amendment\) Regulations 2014 \(WA\)](#)

[School Curriculum and Standards Act 1997 \(WA\)](#)

[School Education Act 1999 \(WA\)](#)

[School Education Regulations 2000 \(WA\)](#)

[Transport \(Road Passenger Services\) Act 2018 \(WA\)](#)

[Transport \(Road Passenger Services\) Regulations 2020 \(WA\)](#)

[Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2020 \(WA\)](#)

[Working with Children \(Criminal Record Checking\) Amendment Act 2022 \(WA\)](#)



Version	Date	Description of Change
1.0	November 2023	Extensive updates to reflect recommendations following the release of the Public Accounts Committee – Bus Fair report. Republished Version 2023