



PARENT GUIDE

For most learners their journeys between home and school pass without incident or concern. Unfortunately some journeys are marred by poor, disruptive and unacceptable behaviours that can impact on learners and the wider public. This can be a real threat to safety and can have tragic consequences.

The Travel Behaviour Code ('the Code') is a statutory code that sets out the standards of behaviour required of learners and consequently promotes the safeguarding of learners.

The Code applies to all learners up to the age of 19 years and applies to all types of travel to and from school or college, whether or not travel arrangements are made by a local authority. This includes contract buses, public buses, public trains, walking, taxis, scooters and motorbikes, cycling and journeys in cars. It also includes journeys between schools during the day, not just at the beginning and end of the day.

The Code should form part of a school's behaviour policies and any misbehaviour on the journey to and from school can be dealt with under individual school behaviour policies or by enforcement of the Code or, in very serious cases, by the police.

Parents of learners should ensure their children are aware of and understand the Code. Parents and learners need to be aware of the implications if a learner does not adhere to the Code.

A local authority can withdraw an individual's entitlement to free transport, or their school could impose a disciplinary penalty on the learner. In the event that transport is withdrawn, it is the responsibility of the learner's parents to arrange suitable transport to and from the place of learning.

It is also important that parents are aware of how to report incidents of poor behaviour that impact the safety and well-being of their child – for example, in cases where bullying occurs.

Parents may be asked to sign Travel Behaviour Contracts. These contracts are between learners, parents, transport operators and local authorities. They are designed to foster a sense of shared responsibility for ensuring safety and to improve safety on the home to school journey on dedicated learner transport. They set out what behaviour is expected of everybody, including their roles and responsibilities.

Parents and learners in receipt of dedicated learner transport from the local authority sign the contract to state they will comply with the Code and the Contract and that failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of transport. Local authorities and transport operators, in turn, sign the contracts to confirm the actions they will take to ensure safety on the home to school journey.

Parents have a number of roles

- Help their children understand the Code
- Help their children report incidents
- Encourage their children to comply with the Code in order to ensure school transport is safe for all
- Be aware of the sanctions if the Code is breached, including the removal of transport to and from school and other measures that a school may take if the school's behaviour policy is breached
- Parents are responsible in law for the learner's continued attendance at school if transport is withdrawn
- Co-operate with education institutions, transport operators and local authorities
- Adhere to signed Travel Behaviour Contracts
- Ensure the learner understands the requirement to wear a seatbelt

Sanctions

If a reported incident has been investigated and it has been determined that a learner has breached the Code, the local authority may withdraw the transport it provides. Before a decision to withdraw travel arrangements is made, the learner and the parents of the learner will be given the opportunity to make representations, which must be considered by the local authority. Parents should contact the local authority to find out the process for making a representation as each local authority may have a different process.

Where the learner is a registered pupil at a maintained or non-maintained school or a pupil referral unit, the local authority must consult with the school about the decision to withdraw travel arrangements. The head teacher must be given written notice of the decision to withdraw learner transport at least 24 hours before the withdrawal takes effect specifying the period for which travel arrangements are to be withdrawn and the reasons for withdrawal.

The local authority must give written notice of the withdrawal of travel arrangements to the learner's parents at least 24 hours before the withdrawal takes effect specifying the period for which travel arrangements are to be withdrawn and the reasons for withdrawal.

The local authority should continue to provide transport until the period of the withdrawal begins. However, there may be occasions when it is inappropriate for the learner to continue to travel to their place of learning in their normal way, particularly if they pose a risk of harm to others. In such cases, the local authority must make suitable alternative transport arrangements.

The period of withdrawal must not exceed 10 consecutive school days, including where these are at the end and beginning of different school terms. The period of withdrawal must not result in the learner having travel arrangements withdrawn for more than 30 days in the school year in which the withdrawal takes effect.

The local authority and school may decide that it is more appropriate for sanctions to be imposed under the school's behaviour policy. A learner should not generally have sanctions imposed on them for an incident on learner transport under both the Code and the school's behaviour policy.

When considering whether the learner's parents can reasonably make alternative arrangements, it should be acknowledged that the withdrawal of learner travel would generally inconvenience parents and learners. Inconvenience of itself is not considered a sufficient reason for not withdrawing transport.

There is no statutory appeals process for the withdrawal of transport by the local authority. However, local authorities' complaints procedures and education institutions' disciplinary policies should be made available to learners and parents.