



Frequently Asked Questions: Transport

The questions below were provided by parents and carers of children and young people with SEND in 2018. Swindon Borough Council have worked collaboratively with Swindon SEND Families Voice to provide this document in response to these questions.

How do I apply for transport?

Under certain circumstances, the Council can arrange assistance with home-to-school travel for eligible pupils resident in the Borough. Decisions about transport are made in accordance with Swindon Borough Council's Education Transport Policy which is published each academic year and can be found on the Schools travel support page on Swindon Borough Council's website www.swindon.gov.uk

If your child does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan, and you would like to make an application for travel assistance you can do this via the Schools Travel Support page on Swindon Borough Council's website www.swindon.gov.uk

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and you would like to make an application for travel assistance please contact your child's allocated Senior SEN Officer in the Special Educational Needs Assessment Team on 01793 445500 or senat@swindon.gov.uk.

We are currently working towards an online application process for requests for SEND transport, therefore this guidance will be updated to reflect this once this is available.

When should I apply for transport?

If your child does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan then you can make an application for in-year school travel support at any time. However, please note that applications for the following school year will not be accepted before May in the preceding academic year.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan then you can make an application for in-year school travel support at any time by speaking to your child's allocated SEN Case Officer. However, please note that applications for the following school year will be dealt with by the SEND Assessment Team in May and June in the preceding academic year. During this time the team will consider whether your child is eligible for SEN Transport by applying the SEND transport criteria which can be found

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20070/special_educational_needs/419/apply_for_special_educational_needs_transport . If you would like travel support considered but your child does not meet the published criteria please contact your child's allocated SEN Case Officer to discuss this during May and June of the preceding academic year.

What is the criteria for SEN travel assistance?

The criteria can be found on the Swindon Borough Council website

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20070/special_educational_needs/419/apply_for_special_educational_needs_transport

When will I be told the times for collection/drop off?

If travel assistance has been agreed for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan travel options can include:

Other bodies or persons making travel arrangements might include:

- a. A parent consenting to a personal travel budget to enable travel arrangements for the student.
- b. A parent consenting to use their car in return for a mileage allowance
- c. A school or group of schools reaching an agreement with a local authority to provide transport in minibuses owned by the school;
- d. Or a transport authority providing free bus passes for all children under the age of 16.

Swindon local authority may otherwise provide transport in one of the following ways, according to the needs of the student:

- e. Provision of a pass for a public service bus or other means of public transport.
- f. Provision of a seat on a bus or minibus provided by the local authority
- g. Provision of a seat in a taxi where more individualised arrangements are necessary

If options **f** or **g** are agreed then:

- if the travel assistance is in-year the Passenger Transport Team has 10 working days from the date the travel has been authorised with the SEN Assessment Team to implement the transport. In these cases you will be advised by letter confirming travel arrangements. This letter will provide you with the company who will be providing the transport contact details, and you will need to telephone them to ask what the estimated pick up and drop off times are for your child. Please allow flexibility for the first couple of weeks of a new travel arrangement whilst the route is becoming embedded.

- if the travel assistance is for the following school year then you should receive a letter from the Passenger Transport Team approximately one week prior to the start of the new school year. This letter will provide you with the company who will be providing the transport contact details, and you will need to telephone them to ask what the estimated pick up and drop off times are for your child. Please allow flexibility for the first couple of weeks of a new travel arrangement whilst the route is becoming embedded.

Why is it left so late to provide the collection/drop off times?

Swindon Borough Council are responsible for ensuring safe, cost-effective transport services to mainstream, special schools and colleges for children and young people who have been assessed as requiring a seat on a bus, minibus or taxi provided by the local authority. The Passenger Transport Team therefore start to construct these plans towards the end of the summer term to ensure minimal changes are made as a result of school placement changes being finalised at the end of term.

What do I do if the times given to me do not suit me?

Requests for changes in transport arrangements may be considered but adjustments are not always possible for reasons of safety, timings and routings.

What do I do if the times given don't support my child's needs?

Please contact the Passenger Transport Team in the first instance to discuss and seek a resolution.

Once I'm given the timings for collection/drop off will they remain the same every year?

The routes for all transport are reviewed during the summer term for the proceeding academic year, and may change on an annual basis. Additionally, the timings of transport may change in-year depending on whether changes are needed to be made to the route - for example the inclusion of an additional child or a change of address.

Do they have to be dropped off at the same address as they are picked up from?

Transport to and from school will be determined and approved from a single permanent residence. This is the one where the student spends most time with the parent/guardian and has been used for admission purposes and the school.

Transport provision will reassessed if there is a change in the home address. The criteria for this for children without an Education, Health and Care Plan is set out in the published Transport Policy.

In exceptional circumstances, consideration will be given to whether a different address can be used however this will include the consideration of the efficient use of resources.

Do I need to supply a car seat?

Car seats are not required for public transport, however if you child has specific travel equipment requirements related to their disability, then please provide this information at the point of requesting travel assistance and an assessment will be arranged. We provide car seats with harnesses if the child's disability requires this.

If you would like your child to travel using a booster seat this needs to be provided by parents/carers. This equipment may need to be stored at your child's school during the day.

Who is on the bus with my child?

Swindon Borough Council are responsible for ensuring safe, cost-effective transport services to mainstream, special schools and colleges for children and young people who have been assessed as requiring a seat on a bus, minibus or taxi provided by the local authority. It is likely that the other children in the vehicle will be attending the same provision as your child.

A Passenger Assistant may also be provided depending upon your child or other children on the vehicles Special Educational Needs and / or medical needs.

What training do Passenger Assistants and bus drivers receive?

Passenger Assistants are employed by Swindon Borough Council and receive induction training on the role of the PA in addition to specialist training in Safeguarding, Manual Handling, Emergency First Aid and Safely Managing Challenging Behaviour. Training is updated every three years. Passenger Assistants receive annual appraisals in line with Swindon Borough Council policy.

Drivers are employed by transport operators and are required to comply with the terms of the contract with the Council. Quality assessment of contractors is carried out prior to contract award, and all drivers are licensed under the appropriate regime for the class of vehicle they drive. For instance, taxi drivers have to pass a local knowledge and English language test. Minibus drivers have to be accredited under the MiDAS scheme (Minibus Driver Awareness). All drivers are required to have Enhanced DBS clearance.

What training is given on securing wheelchairs?

Minibus drivers receive training under the MIDAS scheme which covers securing wheelchairs.

What happens if the driver or Passenger Assistant is sick?

If the driver is sick then cover will be arranged by the transport operator as soon as possible in line with the contracts held with transport providers.

If the Passenger Assistant is sick, cover is provided from within the pool of casual staff under the Passenger Transport Team.

Will I be given contact information for driver and Passenger Assistant in case I need to contact them at short notice?

We encourage parents, drivers and Passenger Assistants to communicate with each other to ensure the best experience for the child.

Can I request photos of the vehicle, driver and Passenger Assistant?

Yes you can. Please indicate this is required at the time of discussing your travel requirements.

Will my child have an allocated seat that will remain the same?

Not necessarily. If you feel this is required then please share the reasons for this as the time of discussing your travel requirements.

How can I apply for a personal travel budget if I choose to transport my child myself?

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and you have been advised that your child is eligible for travel assistance then you can request a personal travel budget.

What do I do if my application is denied?

The appeal process is set out in the published criteria which is available
https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20070/special_educational_needs/419/apply_for_special_educational_needs_transport

What do I do if transport doesn't arrive?

Please telephone the Passenger Transport Team and inform your child's school.

What happens if the transport breaks down either when my child is on the transport or is waiting to be collected?

A replacement vehicle will be allocated and deployed as soon as possible.

Who do you contact when there are issues with the escort/driver?

Please contact passengerassistant@swindon.gov.uk.

What do I do if my child is sick (and doesn't need collecting) or I've collected them early from school (so wouldn't need dropping home)?

Please contact your Passenger Assistant if your child has one. If they do not then contact the Passenger Transport Office on 01793 445500.

What is the complaints policy?

Service requests and complaints are slightly different. A service request is a contact from a customer that brings a matter to the council's attention for the first time, and requests a service offered by the council, for example, advising of a change of address or requesting a change of arrangements.

A complaint is a where the customer expresses dissatisfaction about the standard of a service, actions, or lack of actions by the council and its staff. A complaint can be made online by following this link https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20022/customer_services/463/customer_complaints_comments_and_feedback

Concerns with the contracted operational education transport should be referred to raised directly to the Passenger Transport Services office by calling 01793 445500 or email educationtransport@swindon.gov.uk .

Concerns regarding Passenger Assistants and pupil behaviour then please contact passengerassistant@swindon.gov.uk.

Who do I contact if my child is regularly having problems on the journey?

Please refer to the complaints and enquiry question above

What can I do if I'm unhappy with the service?

Please contact the Passenger Transport Team in the first instance to discuss and seek a resolution. If you remain unsatisfied then you should proceed to the complaints route as described above.

Who do I speak to about queries regarding transport? Telephone number/email address

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan and your query relates to eligibility e.g. to request transport or to change your address on existing transport then please call your allocated Senior SEND Officer in the Special Educational Needs Assessment Team on 01793 445500 or senat@swindon.gov.uk

If your query relates to the operational running of transport then please contact Passenger Transport on 01793 445500 or email educationtransport@swindon.gov.uk

If your child does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan please refer to the School travel support page on Swindon Borough Council's website www.swindon.gov.uk