

School bus travel procedure

This is a mandated procedure under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting operational policies](#) page.

1. Overview

This procedure outlines the department's position on transporting students and other approved people to and from school using department-owned yellow and contract school bus services.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all department staff involved in applications and assessments of eligibility to travel on department-owned yellow or contract school bus services to and from school.



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4. Detail

The Chief Executive has authority to provide or arrange transport assistance (school bus travel) for students to travel to and from schools.

Parents (and other people outlined in this procedure) must apply for a student to travel on school transport vehicles provided by the department.

4.1. Eligibility for school bus travel

4.1.1. Eligibility criteria

Students seeking to travel on department-owned yellow or contract school buses in regional South Australia must obtain approval from the Principal with local responsibility for the school bus service.

To be eligible, a student must:

- reside in South Australia
- reside 5 kilometres or more from the closest government school by the shortest, most practicable all-weather road route
- be enrolled at a primary or secondary school.

The closest available department-owned school bus service to a student's residence determines the nearest eligible school for bus travel.

If a student meets the eligibility criteria but wants to attend a more distant government school using a different bus service, the process outlined in the [bus travel to a school of choice section](#) applies.

To check the nearest government school or school catchment zones, use the [find your local school or preschool tool](#).

4.1.2. Application process

To apply for department school bus travel:

- parents must complete an application to travel school bus form.
- the form must be submitted to the Principal with local responsibility for the school bus service
- the Principal (or their delegate) will assess the application and notify the parent of the outcome in writing.

Approval depends on meeting eligibility requirements and the parent's written acceptance of the conditions of school bus travel as specified by the Principal.

4.1.3. Non-government school students

Students attending non-government schools may use department school bus services if:

- they meet the eligibility criteria
- the bus is not required to travel extra distance to reach the non-government school.

Pick-up or set-down at a non-government school is allowed if the school is on the route to the government school serviced by the bus.

Supervision is not provided beyond the allocated pick-up or set-down area for non-government school students.

Non-government school students must follow the same behavioural policies and procedures for school bus travel as government school students. These are determined by the Principal of the government school with local responsibility for the school bus service, and require:

- the parents to agree to the terms and conditions of bus travel
- the student following seating plans if they are in place.

More information about student behaviour on school buses is available in the [school bus management procedure \(PDF 654 KB\)](#) (staff login required).

If a non-government school student requires school bus travel, the student's parents should:

- discuss this with the Principal of the student's non-government school
- apply to the Principal of the government school with local responsibility for the school bus service using an Application to travel on a school bus form.

All government and non-government students approved for school bus travel must use the service regularly to remain eligible. Regular use means 5 journeys per week (50% of weekly journeys).

If a student uses the service less than 50% in a week over a given period (for example, over a school term), the Principal may withdraw their eligibility.

For students living in shared care arrangements, the '5 kilometres or more rule' generally applies to the primary residential address listed on their enrolment form. This is the address where the student lives most of the school week. The department will assess the family circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

4.1.4. Ineligible travellers who may be approved

Other people may travel on department-owned yellow or contract school buses in regional South Australia as approved ineligible travellers.

Approval must be granted by the Principal with local responsibility for the school bus service.

Ineligible travellers who may be approved include:

- students residing in Victoria
- preschool children
- vulnerable students

- children of bus drivers
- students attending out of school hours care (OSHC)
- TAFE students
- students with exceptional family circumstances
- parent volunteers at government schools
- students residing within 5 kilometres of a government school or school of attendance.

4.1.4.1. Students residing in Victoria

Students residing in Victoria may be approved for school bus travel to attend a South Australian school if:

- priority is given to the transport needs of students residing in South Australia
- the department is not responsible for the cost of transporting the children to and from the bus route
- any request to extend the bus route to assist children residing in Victoria is referred to the Department of Education Victoria for consideration of cost reimbursement
 - if the Department of Education Victoria is not prepared to pay these costs, the bus route will not be extended
- priority is given to South Australian students if the bus becomes overloaded
 - a renegotiation with the Department of Education Victoria may be required (buses may cross the border while still following this procedure)
- students who reside in Victoria and attend school in South Australia are not counted in the numbers required to establish a new school bus service.

4.1.4.2. Preschool children

Preschools regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law (South Australia)* (National Law) and *Education and Care Services National Regulations* (National Regulations) must meet transportation requirements to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of children when transporting them.

The [safe transportation of children policy \(PDF 144 KB\)](#) and [procedure \(PDF 197 KB\)](#) ensure the department meets the transportation requirements of the National Regulations.

Preschool children are ineligible for school bus travel. However, a Principal with local responsibility for a school bus service may approve travel if:

- there is room available on the bus
- no additional travel is required
- the Principal considers the child safe to travel on the bus without disrupting the service
- a booster seat compliant with Australian Standard AS1754 (and is marked accordingly) is provided by the parents or caregivers, if required
 - bus drivers must not vacate their seat to help secure the child

- parents and caregivers must secure booster seats on morning services
- preschool staff must secure booster seats on afternoon services
- more information is available in the [school bus management procedure \(PDF 654 KB\)](#)
- a parent or caregiver meets the child at pick-up and set-down points
- approval is withdrawn if the bus reaches capacity with eligible students.

In line with the [safe transportation of children policy \(PDF 144 KB\)](#) and [procedure \(PDF 197 KB\)](#), Principals must ensure the following have been completed when approving preschool children to travel on a school bus service:

- an [authorisation for transportation in early childhood services \(DOCX 56 KB\)](#)
- a [safe transportation of children risk assessment \(DOCX 89 KB\)](#).

When a parent requests school bus travel for a preschool child, the following steps must be followed:

1. The Principal discusses the request with the Director, Early Childhood Services (ECS).
2. The Director, ECS ensures the parent understands the process, and that the child cannot travel until the Principal grant's approval.
3. The Director, ECS completes an [authorisation for transportation in early childhood services \(DOCX 56 KB\)](#).
4. The Director, ECS completes all ECS sections of a [safe transportation of children risk assessment \(DOCX 89 KB\)](#).
5. The Principal completes the bus specific portion of the risk assessment.
6. The Director, ECS obtains parent consent by requesting they site the risk assessment and sign the authorisation form.
7. The Principal and Director, ECS both retain copies of the signed authorisation form and completed risk assessment.

4.1.4.3. Students in care, Aboriginal students, and vulnerable students

The Principal may approve vulnerable students who require regular access to a school bus service. This includes:

- students under the guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection (DCP)
- Aboriginal students.

4.1.4.4. Children of bus drivers

The Principal may approve a bus driver's child to travel on the bus, if no alternative option exists.

The child must be deemed safe to travel by the Principal and must not disrupt the service.

4.1.4.5. Students attending OSHC

The Principal may approve school bus travel for students attending OSHC.

4.1.4.6. TAFE students

The Principal may approve travel for TAFE students if:

- the student is attending a full-time approved course at a TAFE institute
- for TAFE students aged 18 years and over, the Principal has interviewed the student, is considered suitable to travel with minors, and has a current and valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) and National Police Clearance.
- the student meets other conditions for ineligible students.

4.1.4.7. Students attending out-of-school activities

Students may travel on school buses for out-of-school activities, such as sports training or alternative approved drop-off points (for employment or work experience) if:

- the Principal receives a request in writing from the parent
- the Principal provides written approval to the parent, bus driver, or bus owner.

4.1.4.8. Students facing exceptional family circumstances

The Principal may approve travel for students facing exceptional family circumstances, such as the death of a family member.

4.1.4.9. Parent volunteers at a government school

The Principal may approve travel for parents who volunteer in school or curriculum programs at a government school. The parent holds a current and valid WWCC.

4.1.4.10. Students residing within 5 kilometres of a government school or school of attendance

Students residing within 5 kilometres of a government school or their school of attendance are expected to attend that school. They are not entitled to school bus travel. However, the Principal may approve travel to that school on a school bus.

4.1.5. Approval and conditions for ineligible travellers

The Principal with local responsibility for the school bus service may approve travel for ineligible travellers under the following conditions:

- there is available room on the bus
- approval does not result in additional bus services

- school bus routes are not altered to suit the needs of ineligible travellers
- approval is given for a maximum of 12 months period
 - a new application for approval must be submitted each year
- short-term approvals (less than 12 months) are only valid for the dates specified
- eligible students have priority over ineligible students
- the Principal consults with relevant parties, such as the governing council, bus committees, Education Director, or other principals, to resolve disputes about eligibility or approval revocation
- parents of ineligible travellers must sign a 'Terms and Conditions of School Bus Travel form' and a declaration agreeing that their child will travel as ineligible traveller
- if spare seats are available, priority should be given to government preschool children, however the Principal decides who is allocated any remaining seats.

The Principal may withdraw approval at any time if the bus reaches capacity with eligible students. The Principal must advise the parents of ineligible travellers explaining why their approval will be revoked.

4.2. Bypassing the nearest government school to attend a school of choice as an ineligible traveller

Department-owned yellow and contract school buses operate on approved routes from designated areas or townships to specific government schools.

While parents may choose to enrol their child at a school of their choice, this does not guarantee the department will provide transport assistance for that school.

Parents who enrol their child at a school of choice must apply to the Principal with local responsibility for the school bus service for their child to access that bus service.

The Principal can approve travel as an ineligible traveller if:

- the student is granted enrolment at their government school of choice
- approval does not result in additional bus services
- bus routes are not altered to suit the needs of students enrolled in a school of choice
- spare seats are available, based on departmental demographic studies and local information
- approved school of choice students will relinquish their seats if the bus reaches capacity with eligible students
- approval is given for a maximum of 12 months period
 - a new application for approval must be submitted each year
- the parents accept the terms and conditions of travel in writing.

The Principal will advise parents of the availability or non-availability of school bus travel in writing.

4.2.1. Criteria for government secondary students

The Principal with local responsibility for the bus service must:

- determine spare seat availability
- approve whether the student may travel on the bus.

The Principal must consult with:

- the Principal of the student's nearest government school
- the Principal of the student's school of choice (if this is a different Principal).

Disputes must be referred to the Education Director for resolution.

4.2.2. Criteria for government primary students

The Principal with local responsibility for the bus service must determine spare seat availability.

The Principal of the student's nearest government school and the Principal of the student's school of choice recommend travel to the Education Director.

The Education Director must approve whether the student may travel on the bus.

4.2.3. Criteria for non-government primary and secondary students

The Principal of the school with local responsibility for the bus service must:

- determine spare seat availability
- approve whether the non-government school student may travel on the bus.

4.3. Bypassing the nearest government school to attend a school of choice as an eligible traveller

Parents may apply for their child to travel on a department-owned yellow or contract school bus to attend their school of choice, bypassing their nearest government school.

To begin the process, they must complete an Application to travel on a school bus form.

Principals cannot approve travel for students bypassing their local government school under the following criteria. Only the Education Director may approve travel to a school of choice as an eligible student if:

- the student attends a school other than the nearest government school, and the Education Director determines that it is the nearest school that offers a course of study that meets the student's educational needs
- the Education Director determines, based on written specialist psychological and other relevant medical advice from medical practitioners, that:
 - the school attended is the nearest school that adequately supports the student's emotional or psychological needs

- not supporting the student to attend that school is likely to increase their emotional or psychological distress and interfere with their ability to participate in the curriculum
- the Education Director directs the student to attend a specified school because of disciplinary, bullying, or conflict problems
- at DCP's request or by Court Order, the student is required to attend a school other than their nearest government school
 - a copy of the request or order must be included with the application process
 - this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis
- the student lives in a court ordered shared residence program equally between 2 homes
 - a copy of the legal documents or court order must be included with the application
 - this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis
 - this may require professional or legal advice, or consultation with senior departmental officers.
- the department requires the student to attend an alternative government school to alleviate overcrowding at the nearest government school.

If approved, the student is deemed eligible for school bus travel, bypassing their closest government school, for the duration of their enrolment at the specified school.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. All department staff and volunteers

Comply with this procedure and associated policy and procedures.

5.2. Education directors

Approve transport assistance for students to attend a school other than their nearest government school for:

- study courses that meet the educational needs of the student
- emotional or psychological needs of the student
- disciplinary or conflict reasons.

5.3. Principals

Manage school transport services at the local level, including day-to-day management of drivers.

Approve students to travel on school transport vehicles.

5.4. Transport Services Unit (TSU)

Manage school transport services at the corporate level, including providing advice on applying this procedure, and associated policies and procedures.

Monitor, evaluate, and review this procedure.

6. Definitions

6.1. bus

A bus is a motor vehicle that seats more than 12 adults including the driver.

The definition of a bus is based on the number of seats, regardless of the Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) or whether the seats are occupied or vacant.

6.2. child or young person in care

Where a child or young person is the subject of a custody or guardianship order under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* (SA). This includes the following care arrangements:

- where a child or young person is under the custody or guardianship of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection
- where there is an order granting a specified person care of a child (previously referred to as Other Person Guardianship)
- voluntary custody agreements
- unaccompanied refugee minors under the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946* (Cth) with guardianship delegated from the Minister for Home Affairs to the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection.

6.3. eligible traveller

A student or other person who is considered eligible for transport assistance, such as school bus travel or a travel allowance.

6.4. ineligible traveller

A student or other person who is **not** considered eligible for transport assistance.

An ineligible traveller may be approved to travel on a school bus subject to conditions in the [Other students/persons who can apply to travel on Department owned yellow and Contract school buses as ineligible travellers section](#).

6.5. official record

A record made or received by an agency in the conduct of its business.

6.6. school transport service

A school service that:

- uses a school transport vehicle
- is provided to students or persons eligible to travel
- meets service viability criteria.

6.7. school transport vehicle

A vehicle that is a:

- bus provided by the department as a department-owned and operated school bus (not a bus that is owned by a school)
- bus operated by a third-party provider under a contract with the department (which may include a transport service for children and young people with a disability or those enrolled in the Intensive English Language Program)
- taxi or hire car.

6.8. transport assistance

Transport assistance can be:

- provision to travel on a school transport vehicle
- payment of a travelling allowance.

7. Supporting information

7.1. Related legislation

Nil.

7.2. Related policies

[Camps and excursions policy \(PDF 665 KB\)](#)

[Closed-circuit television \(CCTV\) use on department school transport vehicles procedure \(PDF 604 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Department and contract school bus driver procedure \(PDF 632 KB\)](#)

[Driver review procedure \(PDF 589 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Establishing or altering a school transport service procedure \(PDF 589 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[Safe transportation of children policy \(PDF 144 KB\)](#)

[Safe transportation of children procedure \(PDF 197 KB\)](#)

[School bus driver policy \(PDF 590 KB\)](#)

[School bus maintenance and safety policy \(PDF 580 KB\)](#)

[School bus maintenance and safety procedure \(PDF 649 KB\)](#)

[School bus management procedure \(PDF 654 KB\)](#) (staff login required)

[School transport policy \(PDF 678 KB\)](#)

[Travelling and State Education Allowance procedure \(PDF 596 KB\)](#)

8. Record history

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9. Contact

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