



School Transport Roles and Responsibilities Guide

Daily Bus, Technology Bus, Conveyance Allowance

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1. Overview

Purpose and scope

This document outlines roles and responsibilities for the coordination and delivery of Daily Bus and Technology Bus services. It also contains general information on accessing Conveyance Allowance in cases where eligible students cannot access Daily Bus services.

Background

The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has been managing the transport of students to and from school for over 130 years. While caregivers are ultimately responsible for transporting students to and from school, the Ministry offers assistance to students who do not have access to public transport, or where distance, mobility or other issues create barriers to accessing an appropriate learning environment.

The Ministry assists over 100,000 students to get to and from school safely each school day and oversees around 40 million passenger journeys every year.

Services

The Ministry delivers school transport assistance through the following services (covered in this document):

Daily Bus	Transport assistance between schools/kura and designated bus stops within a defined proximity to students' homes.
Technology Bus	Transport assistance between schools/kura to enable Year 7 and 8 students to access technical education facilities.
Conveyance Allowance	Payments made to caregivers to assist with transport costs for eligible students where other school transport services are impractical or unavailable.

Further information on roles and responsibilities for planning and delivery of these services is provided on Page 6.

The Ministry also delivers transport assistance through the following services and funding mechanisms (not covered in this document):

Specialised School Transport Assistance (SESTA)	Transport assistance for children and young people with safety and/or mobility needs that prevent them from travelling independently to and from the nearest appropriate school able to meet their needs.
Direct Resourcing	Bulk funding provided directly to schools to provide transport assistance for their students within defined parameters.
Māori Medium Schools	Bulk funding provided directly to Kura, Kura Kaupapa Māori and designated character wharekura to provide transport assistance for their students within defined parameters.

Please refer to the Ministry of Education [website](#) for up-to-date information on SESTA or Direct Resourcing.

Eligibility criteria

Students must meet all three criteria to be eligible for School Transport Assistance:

1. The school must be the **closest state or state-integrated school where the student can enrol**.
2. Students must live more than a certain distance¹ from school, depending on their year level:
 - **Years 1-8**: at least **3.2 kilometres** from the school
 - **Years 9-13**: at least **4.8 kilometres** from the school
3. There must be **no suitable public transport options**.

Suitable public transport

For the purposes of eligibility assessment, suitable public transport is defined by timeliness and accessibility. In practice, this means any public transport option that:

- travels within 2.4 km of the student's home
- travels within 2.4 km of the school
- does not require the student to change services more than once
- departs after 7am and arrives before school starts
- leaves no later than one hour after school finishes (including after-school activities).

Please refer to the Ministry of Education [website](#) for more information on eligibility criteria.

¹ Distances are measured by the shortest public road or pedestrian route from the home roadside gate to the school's front gate.

Responsibilities at a glance

Responsibility	Ministry	Transport Service Providers	Schools	Caregivers
Policy	✓			
Communication with caregivers and students			✓	
Addressing student behaviour issues			✓	✓
Health and safety	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility assessment and advice	✓		✓	
Route design, validation and review	✓			
Ensuring students get safely to and from the bus stop or pick-up point				✓
Service delivery and operations		✓		
Safe siting of bus stops		✓	✓	
Contracts for service and contract variations	✓	✓		
Auditing and monitoring supplier performance	✓			
Emergency and incident management	✓	✓	✓	

All groups involved in the provision and management of school transport services have responsibilities and obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, and it is each party's responsibility to understand and act on these obligations while taking all practicable and reasonable steps to mitigate risks to health and safety.

2. Ministry

Overview

To deliver on its school transport assistance mandate, the Ministry has a School Transport business unit. School Transport sits within the Education Infrastructure Service (EIS) group of the Ministry.

Key responsibilities of the Ministry's School Transport group include:

- managing commercial relationships and contracts with Transport Service Providers (TSPs)
- making payments to TSPs, schools and caregivers
- route design, validation or amendment
- processing applications for service and/or assistance
- incident reporting.

Key roles

The following Ministry roles are involved in the administration and delivery of school transport services:

Role	Responsibilities	Key relationships
Transport Contract Manager (TCM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor legislative and contractual compliance and safety• Ensure that TSPs deliver contracted levels of service• Conduct audits of TSP depots and facilities, including vehicle maintenance processes and relevant documentation• Coordinate incident management, reporting and subsequent investigations (where required)	Transport Service Providers
Regional Transport Advisor (RTA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and optimise Ministry-contracted bus routes for eligible students within current policy parameters• Undertake reviews of priority routes• Consult with schools regarding proposed routes and changes• Assess the suitability of public transport options• Manage transition plans	Schools (Bus Controllers and Principals)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that proposed routes fall within current policy parameters • Provide quality-checking and advice on route design and amendment • Undertake annual reviews of Technology Bus routes 	
Transport Coordinators and Transport Officers (TCOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and process Conveyance Allowance applications • Process and quality-check payments to TSPs and caregivers • Respond to customer enquiries 	Parents and caregivers, Transport Service Providers

Route design and changes to routes

Route design, validation and amendment is led by the RTA in each region. The aim of bus route design and review is to offer safe, effective and efficient transport options while delivering the greatest public value.

In designing or amending bus routes, the Ministry considers:

- the location of eligible students
- the location of bus stops (determined by TSPs)
- health and safety requirements
- timetables
- cost and responsible stewardship of public funds.

In general, routes travel down main roads and students are expected to make their own way to a central bus stop. The Ministry finalises routes after discussion between the RTA, the TSP and impacted schools.

Transport Eligibility Zones

Transport Eligibility Zones (TEZ) are used to determine what is the closest school for students. Ministry funded school bus routes are designed to run within TEZs. Most boundaries are set at the half-way point (by road) between schools of the same type i.e. between state secondary schools.

TEZs are different to Enrolment Zones (or school/home zones). School enrolment zones are geographically defined areas around schools. They are designed to prevent schools from becoming overcrowded and to give children the opportunity to attend their local school.

Moving, shortening or stopping a route

The Ministry may move, shorten or stop a route if it determines that a route is no longer viable (e.g. there are not enough eligible students using the service). If a route is no longer viable, the Ministry may pay a Conveyance Allowance to the caregivers of eligible students who can no longer access transport assistance.

Changes to routes are generally aligned with the end of a school year and the Ministry will provide sufficient notice (usually a school term) to affected schools. Schools are responsible for communicating information regarding route changes to caregivers and students.

Extending a route

Services usually travel along main roads, but the Ministry will consider extensions along main or side roads to serve more eligible students, provided that the extension is practicable and meets our route design criteria and safety requirements. Extensions will be considered if:

- there are four or more eligible students living in proximity to the proposed extension
- the distance to the home of the furthest eligible student is at least 2.4 kilometres from the current route.

Eligibility assessment and application processing

Eligibility for School Transport Assistance is determined by the Ministry on the basis of relevant operational policy. The Ministry assesses applications for School Transport Assistance against a range of criteria (see Overview for eligibility criteria).

Safety, incidents and emergencies

The Ministry's procurement process ensures that TSPs have robust health and safety plans in place. As part of the evaluation process, TSPs must demonstrate clear and appropriate systems and standards for mitigating risks to health and safety.

TCMs offer appropriate support to TSPs in the event of an emergency or incident, receive incident reports and coordinate subsequent investigations, if necessary.

3. Transport Service Providers (TSPs)

Overview

TSPs are responsible for day-to-day operational management and delivery of transport services for eligible students. Responsibilities for TSPs include:

- complying with the contract for school transport services
- delivering safe, effective and efficient services for eligible students according to the terms of the contract for services
- maintaining regular communication with schools and the TCM
- safe siting of bus stops or pick-up/drop-off points
- maintaining vehicles in a fit and safe condition
- providing access to depots for auditing and compliance checks by the Ministry
- contacting emergency services during and after an accident or incident and notifying all other parties
- completing and submitting incident reports to the Ministry following an accident or incident
- responding to all requests from the TCM regarding incident management and follow-up.

Further information on these responsibilities is provided below.

This is a reference guide only, and TSPs should refer to their contract for services in the first instance for a complete and accurate account of their responsibilities and obligations.

Delivering services for eligible students

TSPs are responsible for delivering safe and reliable services to eligible students according to the routes, groups, timetables and rates identified in the contract. Services must be delivered in line with appropriate legislation and their contract for services.

Setting timetables

Timetables for Daily Bus services are set by the TSP, though the Ministry may require changes at any time to ensure that timetables meet the needs of students.

Carrying ineligible students

TSPs may make private arrangements for the use of any spare capacity on Daily Bus routes to transport ineligible students. From January 2022, the Ministry allows TSPs to transport ineligible students if:

- there is excess capacity on the service
- all students will be seated (applies from 1 January 2022)
- the presence of ineligible students doesn't disadvantage eligible students
- the TSP gains prior written permission from affected schools
- the TSP maintains a list of the ineligible students being carried

- the TSP advises ineligible students of the conditions of transportation and retains a record of the ineligible students or their caregivers acceptance.

TSPs may charge ineligible students a fare at their discretion. TSPs are not permitted to deviate from the bus route to pick up ineligible students.

Communicating with schools and the Ministry

To support a coordinated approach to service delivery, TSPs must provide schools with:

- contact information, including an emergency phone number and depot contact information
- at least 48 hours' notice of route or pick-up/drop-off time changes, except in the event of an emergency.

TSPs should be in regular contact with all schools served by each route (at least once per school term) to discuss any issues with service delivery, student behaviour and expected changes in student numbers or patronage.

TSPs must advise the Ministry in writing if:

- they become aware of any duplication of routes, including the introduction of new public transport services
- eligible student numbers fall below eight on any route, or below four on any Ministry-designed side road extension.

Managing student behaviour on school buses

To help promote positive behaviour among students, TSPs should:

- ensure that bus drivers understand their responsibilities in behaviour management processes
- report any incidents to the school that the student/s attends
- liaise with a school when behavioural issues arise with one of their students and work in partnership to resolve issues
- if necessary, work with schools to introduce a code of conduct for students, if one is not already in place.

Drivers should report any inappropriate student behaviour to the TSP, who should contact the Bus Controller or school as appropriate.

Removing students from buses

If a student's behaviour is disruptive or poses a safety risk, the TSP should notify their school. The school will take appropriate steps to manage this behaviour, and the student could lose their place on the school bus (temporarily or permanently). To address persistent risks to health and safety posed by behavioural issues, the TSP may decide to revoke a student's place on a school bus. In this scenario, the TSP should notify the student's school and notify the TCM.

If a student is not meeting behavioural expectations during the delivery of a school bus service, the bus driver cannot remove the student from the bus. In the interests of safety, the driver must finish the route and deliver all students to their usual stops. In extreme cases, where the driver judges that it is no longer safe to continue the route, they should pull over and contact the school or the police to remove the student before continuing the service.

Safe siting of bus stops

TSPs are responsible for determining pick-up/drop-off locations along the route and ensuring that these locations are fit for purpose. In deciding on the location of pick-up/drop-off points, TSPs should refer to Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's Guidelines for Safe Siting of School Bus Stops: nzta.govt.nz/resources/siting-school-bus-stops

In determining the location of stops, TSPs should consider:

- visibility of the bus, bus stop and disembarking students to other road users
- shoulder or lane width
- hazards that students may face accessing the stop
- space for students to stand back from the road
- space for parent/caregiver vehicles
- weather conditions.

To ensure student safety during pick up and drop off, TSPs should also establish appropriate procedures for vehicle stopping and unloading.

Monthly reporting requirements

To assist with the Ministry's regular monitoring of operational performance, TSPs must complete a monthly report in the form supplied by the Ministry no later than five working days after the end of each month. The Ministry will provide reasonable notice for any changes to the monthly reporting templates. The Ministry may schedule on-site checks and complete follow-up reviews as required.

Other reporting

If necessary, TSPs may be required to provide details of the number of students using services daily for each route during a given period. TSPs must also maintain accurate vehicle lists for all service fleets and provide fleet lists to the Ministry upon request.

Incident and emergency management

The following table describes the follow-up action that is required of a TSP in the event of an incident or emergency:

Severity	Definition	TSP actions
Service disruption	Service disruptions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service delay due to vehicle mechanical problem• Service delay due to road works or accident not involving Ministry transport vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform bus controllers at the schools serviced by the route• Provide TCM with an incident report by the end of the day

Minor / Moderate	Resolvable at point of issue and/or managed locally. Minor incidents include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near miss incidents • Minor student behaviour concern on vehicle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform bus controllers at the schools serviced by the route • Provide TCM with an incident report by the end of the day
Serious	Serious incidents may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a crash or serious incident involving any vehicle transporting students • any form of assault between driver and student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact emergency services • Report incident immediately to the TCM or other School Transport staff (by phone) • Follow standard reporting protocols • Inform bus controllers at the schools serviced by the route • Notify Worksafe of incident (if applicable)

Key contacts for TSPs

All TSP enquiries should be directed to the relevant TCM, or to Transport.Contracts@education.govt.nz.

4. Schools

Overview

Schools are the first point of contact for caregivers and students for School Transport Assistance, eligibility, applications, safety and other enquiries. Schools are also responsible for assessing student eligibility, coordinating and creating documented procedures for vehicle loading and unloading and maintaining regular communication with all other parties.

All schools are responsible for:

- advising caregivers and students of School Transport Assistance eligibility criteria and communicating other relevant information as required
- submitting Conveyance Allowance applications to the Ministry
- maintaining accurate and up-to-date lists of eligible students by route
- providing student data to School Transport upon request
- promoting safe behaviour and working with Transport Service Providers (TSPs) and drivers to address student behaviour issues as needed
- ensuring processes are in place for safe loading and unloading of students and ensuring that school bus bays are clear and accessible by the bus
- advising caregivers of any changes to bus routes/stops
- reporting all incidents, accidents and emergencies to their Regional Transport Advisor (RTA)
- providing School Transport with information on Technology Bus requirements.

Key responsibilities

All schools have responsibilities for the coordination and delivery of school transport assistance. Each route has a designated head school, which has some additional responsibilities.

Type	Responsibilities
All schools	<p>All schools served by a Ministry school bus service must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act as the first point of contact for caregivers and students for all school transport enquiries, including eligibility• Supply an after-hours contact phone number to the TSP and RTA• Assess student eligibility using Ministry criteria• Maintain accurate, up-to-date lists of eligible students• Supervise bus loading and unloading and create a documented procedure for bus loading and unloading

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform caregivers of bus timetables and changes to routes and stops • Clearly communicate expectations for appropriate behaviour on school transport services to caregivers and students.
Head school	<p>In addition to the responsibilities above, head schools must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify their RTA of any complaints about drivers, vehicles or behavioural issues on behalf of all schools served by the route • Notify all relevant parties in the event of an incident or emergency • Prepare incident reports and submit to Ministry when required • Advise their RTA of a change in Bus Controller.

Appointing a Bus Controller

Each school served by Ministry bus routes must nominate a Bus Controller to serve as a single point of contact on school transport issues. The Bus Controller must take responsibility for all relevant tasks above, including supervising loading and unloading at their school.

Receiving the Bus Controller Allowance

Teaching staff with Bus Controller duties may be able to claim the Bus Controller Allowance. Teachers and principals covered by the following employment agreements may be eligible for the allowance:

- Primary Teachers' Collective Agreement
- Primary Principals' Collective Agreement
- Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement
- Area School Teachers' Collective Agreement.

More information on how to claim the Bus Controller Allowance, including detailed eligibility criteria, is available on the Ministry's [website](#).

Providing eligibility advice

Schools should be familiar with the eligibility criteria for School Transport Assistance and prepared to answer enquiries from caregivers and students regarding eligibility. Refer to the Ministry's website for up-to-date information on eligibility for School Transport Assistance: education.govt.nz/school/property-and-transport/transport/sta-eligibility

In most cases, schools will be able to determine eligibility for School Transport Assistance without input from the Ministry. In particularly complex cases, schools should seek the Ministry's advice by contacting the RTA for their region.

Providing and submitting Conveyance Allowance application forms

Schools are responsible for providing Conveyance Allowance application forms to caregivers upon request and ensuring that application forms are complete before submission to the Ministry. A copy of the application form can be found on the Ministry's [website](#).

Schools should send completed application forms to school.transport@education.govt.nz for processing. Either the Principal or another authorised person must sign each form and confirm the student's details.

A Conveyance Allowance application form must be submitted as early as possible for:

- new applications
- a change of address
- a change of school.

Caregivers do not need to complete an application form to request a place on a school bus. Instead, they should contact the Bus Controller at their child's school to confirm eligibility.

Maintaining lists of eligible students

All schools served by Ministry bus routes are responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date lists of all students receiving School Transport Assistance at their school and for providing student data to the Ministry when requested by an RTA. Schools should also inform the RTA if an existing route is no longer viable, effective or meeting the needs of eligible students.

Communicating with caregivers and students

Schools are responsible for notifying caregivers and students of:

- bus service information such as route name, bus route, bus stops and travel times
- changes to routes or stops
- rules around pick-up and drop-off
- behavioural expectations
- safety information and caregiver responsibilities.

Schools should provide as much notice as possible to caregivers prior to the implementation of changes.

Supervising bus loading and unloading

Schools have a responsibility to support a safe environment for bus loading and unloading on school grounds. To ensure safe procedures are in place during pick-up and drop-off, schools should:

- create documented processes for safe loading and unloading of students
- choose a safe bus stop location for loading and unloading at school
- supervise loading and unloading every afternoon and every morning
- control traffic (when necessary) and guide the driver safely through the loading zone
- communicate clear instructions for safe loading and unloading to students (including how to safely store bags—on laps, or under the seat in front)
- remind caregivers of their responsibilities for ensuring student safety (e.g. not parking in bus bays, adhering to the speed limit of 20 km/h on either side of the road while passing a stationary school bus) and issuing guidelines as necessary
- work collaboratively and proactively with TSPs to address safety hazards.

Managing student behaviour on school buses

Schools must clearly communicate expectations of acceptable standards of student behaviour and take appropriate steps to manage any unsafe or inappropriate behaviour, as in any other area of school life. (See the Parents and Caregivers section for more information on expectations for student behaviour.)

Where a student's behaviour presents an ongoing or serious problem, either the school or the TSP may decide to revoke the offer of a place on a bus. This may be a temporary or permanent measure, depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the school. If a student loses their place on a school bus, the caregiver needs to ensure they are meeting their legal obligation to get their child to school. In this scenario, caregivers are not entitled to a Conveyance Allowance.

Schools may choose to establish a Code of Conduct, signed by the student, their caregiver, the school and the TSP. A sample Code of Conduct can be found on the Ministry's website: education.govt.nz/school/health-safety-and-wellbeing/managing-risks-and-hazards-at-school/safety-and-behaviour/

Incident and emergency management

In the event of an accident or incident involving school transport, the TSP will notify the bus controllers at the relevant schools. All schools should offer information and support to students and caregivers as necessary during and after an incident or emergency.

Key contacts for schools

Enquiries regarding transport services provided to schools should be directed to the region's RTA:

Location	RTA Contact
Tai Tokerau	Kyla Cameron ST.Northern@education.govt.nz
Auckland and Tai Tokerau	North and West Auckland – Kyla Cameron Central, East and South Auckland – Reade Nikora ST.Auckland@education.govt.nz
Waikato	Reade Nikora ST.Waikato@education.govt.nz
Bay of Plenty – Waiariki	Tracey Tupai-Rewi ST.Bayofplenty@education.govt.nz
Hawke's Bay – Tairāwhiti	Janice Kennerley ST.Eastern@education.govt.nz
Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatu, Wellington	Dylan Stewart ST.Western@education.govt.nz
Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast	Jem Pupich ST.Tasman@education.govt.nz
Canterbury/Central Otago/Waitaki	Craig Reynolds ST.Canterbury@education.govt.nz
Otago/Southland	Dermot Harris ST.Southern@education.govt.nz

5. Students and caregivers

Overview

Caregivers are ultimately responsible for getting their children to school. However, the Ministry may provide school transport assistance to help students overcome barriers to education due to distance or accessibility.

Applications

Daily Bus and Technology Bus

An application is not required for a place on a school bus. Caregivers should contact their school's Bus Controller to confirm that their child is eligible and that there is a school bus available.

Conveyance Allowance

If a student is eligible for school transport assistance but a place in a vehicle or bus is not available, their caregiver may be eligible for a Conveyance Allowance. Schools can provide caregivers with the Conveyance Allowance application form, or caregivers can download the form from the Ministry's website:

education.govt.nz/school/property-and-transport/transport/sta-eligibility/#applications.

Caregivers must complete Section A and take it to their child's school. Schools are responsible for submitting applications for Conveyance Allowance to the Ministry.

Safety and behaviour

To ensure a safe environment for bus loading and unloading, caregivers should:

- not park in bus bays
- adhere to the speed limit (**20 km/h while passing a stationary school bus** on either side of the road)
- try to eliminate the need for children to cross the road
- ensure children get to and from the bus stop safely
- teach children not to run across the road.

Caregivers should encourage students to follow these safety and behaviour guidelines throughout their journey.

Safety and behaviour tips for students

Getting on the bus

- Wait in the designated place—well back from the road
- Wait until the bus stops and doors open before approaching
- Carry your bag in front of you so it doesn't get caught in the door
- If there is a seat available, sit down straight away and remain seated for the whole journey

On the bus

- Follow all instructions from the bus driver
- No eating, drinking, smoking or vaping

- Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated
- Don't shout or in any way distract the bus driver
- Respect the TSP's property
- Respect other passengers
- When seated, wear a seatbelt (if available) and put your bag on your lap or under the seat in front of you
- If standing, stay behind the bus driver
- Don't stand or sit in the door wells

Getting off the bus

- Wait for bus to come to a stop before making your way to the door
- Use the front door if possible
- Wait well back from the road until the bus has moved away
- Only cross the road when there is no traffic in either direction

Conditions of carriage

Students are expected to comply with the behaviour guidelines above and any code of conduct or conditions of carriage issued by the TSP.

If a student's behaviour is disruptive or poses a safety risk, the school will take appropriate steps to manage this behaviour, and the student could lose their place on the school bus (please note if the bus driver judges that it is no longer safe to continue the route, the school or the Police will be contacted to remove the student from the school bus). If a student loses their place on the school bus, the caregiver needs to ensure they are meeting their legal obligation to get their child to school. Caregivers are not entitled to a Conveyance Allowance in this situation.

Key contacts for caregivers

Enquiries regarding	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility • Bus routes • Bus stops 	Your school or Bus Controller
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SESTA • Conveyance Allowance applications • Conveyance Allowance payments 	0800 287 272 School.Transport@education.govt.nz