



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

School Transport Roles and Responsibilities Guide

Daily school buses, Technology Class school buses,
Conveyance Allowance

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1. Overview

Purpose and scope

This document outlines the roles and responsibilities for the coordination and delivery of Ministry-contracted daily school buses and technology class bus services. It also contains general information on conveyance allowances.

This document may be amended from time to time and is available from the Ministry of Education website, or from the Ministry's School Transport team via School.Transport@education.govt.nz.

Background

The primary responsibility for transporting children to and from school rests with their caregivers.

The Ministry may be able to help where distance and/or accessibility may be a barrier for students accessing their closest state or state-integrated school.

The Ministry is funded to offer school transport assistance to eligible students only, and the Ministry regularly reviews its school bus services to ensure that they are operating within policy and continue to reflect the numbers and locations of eligible students. Information on the eligibility criteria that students have to meet to qualify for school transport assistance is available on our [website](#) or on Page 2 of this document.

Ministry school transport services

The Ministry assists around 100,000 students to access education each school day through a number of commercial and funding arrangements.

Covered in this Roles and Responsibility Guide:

- Daily school bus services – buses that take students to and from school via services provided by commercial transport service providers (TSPs) who are contracted by the Ministry.
- Technology class bus services – transport for Year 7 and 8 students, whose school does not offer technology classes, to a technology class facility. Provided by commercial TSPs who are contracted by the Ministry.
- Conveyance allowances (CA) – payments made directly to caregivers to assist with transport costs when the Ministry cannot provide a vehicle service or where students live more than 2.4km from a bus route.

Covered in other roles and responsibilities guides (available on our website):

- Direct Resourcing (DR) – bulk funding provided direct to schools, or networks of schools, for them to organise and manage their own transport assistance for their eligible students.
- Māori-medium Schools (MMS) – bulk funding provided direct to kura for them to organise and manage their own transport assistance for their eligible ākonga.
- Specialised School Transport Assistance (SESTA) – transport assistance for students with safety or mobility needs who require additional assistance. Provided by commercial TSPs who are contracted by the Ministry.

Eligibility criteria

Daily school buses

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 **3.2kms** from the school
 - **Years 9-13:** at least **4.8kms** from the school
3. There must be **no public transport options**.

Public transport

For the purposes of eligibility assessment, we define public transport 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

Daily school buses conveyance allowance

A conveyance allowance is a contribution to the cost of transporting students to school or their nearest bus route. It is not intended to be a full reimbursement of the transport cost.

To be eligible for a daily school bus conveyance allowance, students must meet all three daily school bus eligibility criteria and:

- there is no school bus available, or
- they live more than 2.4kms from their nearest school bus route.

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

Technology Class school buses

Technology class school buses are for Year 7 & 8 students whose schools are unable to offer technology classes.

To qualify for a technology class school bus:

- there must be at least eight students requiring transport
- the students must be attending their closest technology provider
- the students must be at least 1km away from the site of the classes

Technology Class Conveyance Allowance

A Technology Class Conveyance Allowance will be provided to a school:

- if the technology provider is at least 1km away, and
- there are seven or fewer students, or
- if a school prefers this type of funding.

Note: The Ministry of Education's website has more information on the eligibility criteria for all types of school transport assistance.

Responsibilities at a glance

Responsibility	Ministry	Transport Service Providers	Schools	Caregivers
Communication with caregivers and students			✓	
Addressing student behaviour issues			✓	✓
Health & safety	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility assessment and advice	✓		✓	
Route design, validation and review	✓			
Student safety to and from bus stops				✓
Student behaviour while on the bus			✓	✓
Service delivery and operations		✓		
Safe siting of bus stops		✓	✓	
Contracts for service and contract variations	✓	✓		
Auditing and monitoring TSP performance	✓			
Emergency and incident management	✓	✓	✓	

Everybody involved in the delivery of school transport services has responsibilities and obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. It is their responsibility to understand and act on these obligations while taking all practical and reasonable steps to mitigate any risks to health and safety.

2. Ministry

To deliver on its school transport assistance mandate, the Ministry has a School Transport business unit. This unit sits within the Te Pou Hanganga, Matihiko | Infrastructure & Digital group of the Ministry.

The School Transport team's key responsibilities are:

- Managing the commercial relationships and contracts with its Transport Service Providers (TSPs)
- Making payments to TSPs, schools and caregivers
- Designing school bus routes, validating routes and amending routes
- Processing student applications for service and/or assistance
- Incident reporting

Key roles

Role	Responsibilities	Key relationships
Transport Delivery Advisors (TDAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor legislative and contractual compliance and safety• Monitor TSPs contracted levels of service• Conduct desktop and spot-check audits of TSPs• Coordinate incident management, reporting and subsequent investigations, where required• Undertake reviews of bus routes• Design and optimise Ministry-contracted bus routes for eligible students within current policy settings• Provide advice and engage with schools on all school transport matters	TSPs Schools (Bus Controllers and Principals)
Transport Coordinators and Transport Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess and process conveyance allowance payments	Parents Caregivers

Role	Responsibilities	Key relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process and quality-check payments to TSPs and caregivers Respond to customer queries 	TSPs

Daily school bus routes

Route design

Bus routes are designed by the Ministry based on key design principles:

- to transport as many eligible students as efficiently as possible
- a minimum of eight eligible students is required for a bus route to be considered
- buses generally travel as far as the fourth furthest eligible student on any given road

Route design takes into consideration:

- location of eligible students
- location of bus stops
- safety
- timetables
- financial cost, as prudent stewards of public funding.

TSPs decide where the safest bus stops are along the route. Routes usually travel down main roads and students are expected to make their own way to a central bus stop.

Reviewing school bus routes

The Ministry regularly reviews its school bus routes to make sure that they are safe, efficient and meet the needs of eligible students.

Route reviews are an important mechanism for ensuring ongoing alignment of service design with policy settings, and ensure that school transport services remain viable, cost effective, and responsive to local conditions.

Route reviews can be either proactive or reactive. Planned proactive route reviews involve Ministry TDAs analysing routes or groups of routes to confirm alignment with policy and route design guidelines.

Reactive reviews are typically triggered by external factors such as requests from schools or kura, or in response to changes to school networks and/or demographic changes that may have an impact on vehicle capacity, student eligibility or service viability.

Route reviews can result in new routes or extensions, curtailments, or terminations of existing routes.

Changing, shortening or stopping a route

Routes may be changed, shortened or terminated if there aren't enough eligible students using the service. If a route is no longer viable, caregivers of eligible students who can no longer access a daily school bus route may be eligible for a Conveyance Allowance. Information of how to submit an application for a [Conveyance Allowance can be found on our website](#).

If a school bus service is changed, shortened or terminated, a school term's notice is normally given to the affected schools. This provides schools and caregivers sufficient time to make alternative transport arrangements for their children.

Schools are responsible for communicating information regarding route changes to caregivers and students.

Extending a route

Services usually travel along main roads, however extensions along main or side roads to serve more eligible students may be considered if 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 2.4kms from the current route

Transport Eligibility Zones

A Transport Eligibility Zone (TEZ) is used to determine what is the closest school that a student can enrol at. 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. If a school has students that range between Years 1-13, then they may have multiple TEZs (as different year levels have different distance criteria to meet and there may be different types of schools in the area).

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.

Where a student may be living in a different TEZ than the school they are in the enrolment scheme for, the closest school that they can 'enrol' at will be considered the one they are eligible for (a student may not physically be able to enrol at the school whose TEZ they are living in if there are enrolment schemes in their area).

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 the eligibility criteria for each type of school transport assistance).

Safety, incidents and emergencies

The Ministry requires all transport service providers to have robust health and safety plans in place. This includes having clear and appropriate systems and standards for mitigating risks to health and safety, including incident management and investigation processes.

In the event of an emergency or incident, the Ministry's TDA will liaise between the TSP and schools as needed.

3. Transport Service Providers (TSPs)

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

TSP responsibilities
Complying with the Ministry's 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 their TDA
Assessing and determining the safe siting of bus stops (pick-up/drop-off points)
Determining the timetable for the route contracted by the Ministry
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
Reporting incidents and accidents to the Ministry
Undertaking incident investigations following an accident or incident and submitting any investigation reports to the Ministry

Further information on these responsibilities is provided below.

This is a reference guide only, and TSPs should refer to their contract for a complete and accurate list of their responsibilities and obligations.

Delivery services for eligible students

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

Bus route

TSPs must operate the route as contacted by the Ministry. They are not to deviate from this route unless notified by the Ministry to do so, or if an emergency temporary diversion is required.

Setting timetables

Timetables for daily school bus services are set by TSPs, though the Ministry may require changes at any time to ensure that timetables meet the needs of students.

Determining location of bus stops (pick-up/drop-off points)

TSPs are responsible for determining where the bus will safely stop to pick-up and drop-off students. TSPs must use Waka Kotahi | NZ Transport Agency's 'Guidelines for safe siting of school bus stops' to assist them in determining the bus stop locations.

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

Carrying ineligible students

TSPs may use any spare capacity on their daily school bus routes to provide assistance to ineligible students as long as certain conditions are met.

The decision to carry ineligible students is entirely at the discretion of TSPs and the Ministry cannot, under its contract with TSPs, influence them to carry ineligible students.

TSPs may transport ineligible students if:

- all students on the service (including eligible and ineligible) are seated
- the presence of ineligible students doesn't disadvantage those who are eligible
- any schools the ineligible students are bypassing have given written consent

TSPs may charge ineligible students a fare at their discretion.

The bus route must not deviate to pick up ineligible students unless it is before or after the Ministry contracted route.

Communicating with schools and the Ministry

TSPs must provide schools with:

- contact information, including an emergency phone number and depot contact information
- at least 48 hours' notice of temporary route changes or bus stop location and 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
- the number of eligible students fall below eight on any route, or below four on any Ministry-designed side road extension
- a route needs to temporarily change, i.e. as a result of roadworks

Managing student behaviour on school buses

TSPs should:

- ensure that their bus drivers understand their responsibilities in behaviour management processes
- report any behaviour issues 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 the issue
- if necessary, work with schools to introduce a code of conduct for students, if one is not already in place

Drivers must report any inappropriate student behaviour to their depot so that the school's Bus Controller can be notified.

Removing students from buses

If a student's behaviour is disruptive or poses a safety risk, the TSP must notify the student's school. The school is responsible for taking the appropriate steps to manage this behaviour – 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 their local TDA.

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.

Safety, incidents and emergencies

In the event of an accident or incident, the driver of the vehicle or transport service provider is responsible for contacting emergency services immediately. The TSP must follow their own emergency procedures. They must also immediately contact:

- bus controllers at the schools serviced by the route
- the Ministry's regional TDA

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 the Ministry with an incident report as soon as possible, ideally within 48 hours
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 the Ministry with an incident report as soon as possible, no later than 48 hours
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 TDA or other School Transport staff (by phone) • Follow standard reporting protocols

Severity	Definition	TSP actions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform bus controllers at the schools serviced by the route • Notify Worksafe of incident (if applicable) • Undertake an incident investigation to determine causation and measures to prevent reoccurrence

Reporting requirements

Automatic vehicle location data reporting

Daily school bus TSPs must submit their Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) data no later than five working days after the end of the month.

Incident reporting

TSPs must create an incident report in the Ministry's School Transport Hub | Pokapū Waka Kura about the accident or incident as soon as possible. This must be within 48 hours after the accident or incident.

Monthly reports

TSPs must complete their monthly report in Pokapū Waka Kura no later than five working days after the end of the month. The Ministry may schedule on-site checks and complete follow-up reviews as required.

Patronage reporting

TSPs are required to provide patronage data for each route during a given period on request.

Vehicle reporting

TSPs must also maintain accurate vehicle lists for all service fleets and provide fleet lists to the Ministry on request.

Key contacts for TSPs

All TSP enquiries should be directed to their local TDA, or to Transport.Contracts@education.govt.nz.

4. Schools

Schools are the first point of contact for caregivers and students for any queries about school transport assistance, including assessing student eligibility.

Bus Controllers

Every school that has a Ministry school bus service must appoint a Bus Controller for their school. Bus Controllers serve as the single point of contact for their school on their school transport. The Bus Controller has a key safety role as well as an administration and communication role within the school transport service.

An online training course for Bus Controllers is available. To access the training course:

1. Go to the [Education Learning Management System](#)
2. Login via your ESL Logon
3. Search 'Catalogue' for 'Bus Controller'

Key responsibilities

All schools have responsibilities for the coordination and delivery of school transport assistance. Every school bus route has a designated Head School which has additional responsibilities.

Responsibilities	
All schools	Act as the point of contact for caregivers and students for all school transport enquiries, including eligibility
	Notify caregivers of changes to timetables, routes and bus stops as soon as practical (usually within a week)
	Assist caregivers in completing conveyance allowance applications, if required ²
	Provide student data to the Ministry on request
	Promote safe behaviour from students while they use school transport
	Supply an after-hours contact phone number to the TSP and TDA
	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
	Work with TSPs, drivers and caregivers to address student behaviour issues
	Maintain relationships with other school transport stakeholders e.g. other Bus Controllers that share your school's bus services, your TSP and TDA
	Liaise with the Ministry when requesting a route review or amendment

² Access to [Pokapū Waka Kura](#) is required before you can complete the online Conveyance Allowance application

Head schools	In addition to the responsibilities listed above, head schools must:
	Co-ordinate with the TSP and all schools on a shared bus route when there is a temporary timetable change i.e. due to an early closure in a weather event
	Notify their TDA of any complaints about drivers, vehicles or behavioural issues on behalf of all schools served by the bus route
	Report all incidents and accidents to their TSP and the Principals of all schools on shared routes

Communicate with caregivers and students

As schools are the point of contact for caregivers and students for all school transport enquiries, they are responsible for notifying their caregivers and students of their bus service information, such as the route, timetable and bus stop locations.

Schools are also responsible for regularly reminding caregivers and students not only of the behavioural expectations for students using the buses, but also how to keep students safe before, during and after using a school bus. It is the caregivers responsibility to safely transport their students to and from their school bus stop.

Upcoming changes to school buses

When a school bus route is changed or stopped, the Ministry usually gives the impacted school at least a school term's notice. It is then the school's responsibility to notify their caregivers of any changes to their school bus services as soon as they can. This allows caregivers time to make alternative arrangements if necessary. The expectation is that this would happen within one week of the school being notified.

Schools may need to notify their caregivers a number of times – when they are initially notified that a bus route is changing, when they have received updated route timetable and bus stop information from the transport service provider, and again closer to the start date of the change.

Manage student behaviour

Students are expected to comply with the code of conduct of their TSP. TSPs will report any behaviour problems to schools who are then required to manage the behavioural issue of the student in accordance with their discipline policy.

Provide eligibility advice

Schools are responsible for determining whether students are eligible for school transport assistance. Schools should familiarise themselves with the eligibility criteria for school transport assistance. The [Ministry's website](#) has the most up-to-date information on the eligibility criteria.

If a student's eligibility is unclear, schools can contact their local TDA for advice.

Keep accurate and up-to-date bus lists

It is essential that from the first day of each school year, that accurate and up-to-date lists of the students travelling on each bus route are kept. This is a Health and Safety requirement in case of any emergency and a good record for knowing the total number of students on each bus.

This information must be easily accessible if there is an accident involving the school bus or when there is an emergency such as a weather event that impacts roads. Schools should have a system in place for contacting caregivers. This might involve phoning caregivers where possible.

Supervision of students

Before and after school

Schools are responsible for providing a duty of care for students from when the school bus drops them off at school in the morning, and after school while students wait for their bus.

Bus loading and unloading

Schools also have a duty of care to ensure that students arriving at and leaving school are safe. This includes supervising the bus loading and unloading on school grounds.

All schools must have a documented loading procedure as part of their travel management plan. This includes information on where the students are to wait, how they are to wait, where they are to walk when loading etc.

Schools can choose to have a Code of Conduct signed by the student, the caregiver, the school and the TSP. An example of a [Code of Conduct is available on the Ministry website](#).

Incident and emergency management

TSPs will notify schools in the event of an incident or emergency. Schools should then follow their emergency procedures.

Schools may be asked to assist in an incident investigation.

Key contacts for schools

Enquiries regarding school transport services provided to schools should be directed to their region's TDA. [Contact details for all TDAs can be found on our website](#).

5. Students and caregivers

The primary responsibility for transporting children to and from school rests with their caregivers.

The Ministry may be able to help where distance and/or accessibility may be a barrier for students attending their closest state or state-integrated school. To be eligible to receive Ministry-funded school transport assistance, students must meet our eligibility criteria. These criteria are available on the [Ministry's website](#) or on page 2 of this Roles and Responsibility Guide.

Applying for a place on a daily school bus or for a conveyance allowance

Daily school buses

An application is not required for a place on a Ministry daily school bus. Caregivers must contact the Bus Controller at their school to confirm that their child is eligible, and for timetable and bus stop information of Ministry school buses.

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.

If you live more than 2.4km away from a school bus route, you may also be eligible for a Conveyance Allowance.

Applications for a [Conveyance Allowance are made online](#) via the Ministry's website. Caregivers can apply directly, or their school can complete the application on their behalf.

Responsibilities

Safety and behaviour

Caregivers are responsible for safely transporting their children to and from their school bus stop as well as for the behaviour of their child while travelling on the school bus.

Caregivers should:

- teach their children not to run across the road.
- supervise any road crossings made by their child
- not park in bus bays
- observe the speed limit of 20 km/h while passing a stationary school bus on either side of the road

Guidelines for students

Safety and behaviour guidelines for students	
Boarding the bus	<p>Arrive at the bus stop five minutes early.</p> <p>Stand five giant steps away from the kerb.</p> <p>Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says it's okay before stepping onto the bus.</p> <p>Board the bus one at a time.</p> <p>Be patient – no pushing.</p> <p>Find a seat and sit down straight away.</p> <p>Put your bag and anything you're carrying on your lap or under the seat in front of you.</p>
On the bus	<p>Follow all instructions from the bus driver.</p> <p>No eating, drinking, smoking or vaping on the bus.</p> <p>Once seated, stay seated.</p> <p>When seated, put your bag on your lap or under your seat.</p> <p>If standing, hold on to a seat handle or rail for support.</p> <p>If standing, stay behind the driver.</p> <p>Keep your voices low so the driver is not distracted.</p> <p>Keep the inside of the bus clean and damage free.</p>
Leaving the bus	<p>Wait for the bus to stop before making your way to the door.</p> <p>Leave the bus one at a time – no pushing.</p> <p>Wait well back from the road until the bus has gone and you can see clearly before leaving the bus stop.</p>

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, their school will take appropriate steps to manage this behaviour, and the student could lose their place on the school bus. 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

For enquires regarding:	Contact:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility • Bus routes • Bus stops • Bus timetables 	Your school and/or your school's Bus Controller
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SESTA • Conveyance Allowance applications • Conveyance Allowance payments 	School Transport team at the Ministry of Education: 0800 287 272 School.Transport@education.govt.nz



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

We **shape** an **education** system that delivers
equitable and **excellent outcomes**

He mea **tārai** e mātou te **mātauranga**
kia **rangatira** ai, kia **mana taurite** ai ōna **huanga**

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