

School Transport Roles and Responsibilities Guide

Directly Resourced schools

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1. Overview

Purpose and scope

This document outlines roles and responsibilities for the administration and delivery of Directly Resourced (DR) services. It also contains general information on accessing Conveyance Allowance in cases where eligible students cannot access DR services/funding.

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.

One type of school transport assistance the Ministry provides is DR funding. This is where the Ministry provides bulk funding directly to a school, or to a network of schools, to organise and manage their own transport assistance for their eligible students.

The amount of funding that a DR school receives is based on the number and location of eligible students, and the length of the bus routes the Ministry has designed for these students (i.e. Ministry-funded routes).

It is important to note that the DR school can choose how they design and deliver their services, as long as they are providing assistance to their eligible students.

The Ministry regularly reviews its directly contracted daily school bus services and its bulk funded 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 4 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:

- 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
- Conveyance allowances (CA) payments made directly to caregivers to assist with transport costs when an eligible student lives more than 2.4km from a Ministry-funded DR bus route.

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

- 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.
- Māori-medium Schools (MMS) bulk funding provided direct to kura 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. Assistance is provided via a place on a vehicle,
operated by commercial TSPs who are contracted by the Ministry, or as a conveyance allowance.

Eligibility criteria – DR funded schools

Students attending DR funded schools 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 distance from the school¹, depending on their year level:
 - Years 1-8: at least 3.2 km from the school
 - Years 9-13: at least 4.8 km from the school
- 3. There must be no public transport options available.

Public transport

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 their 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

DR conveyance allowance

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

To be eligible for a conveyance allowance, students must meet all three eligibility criteria, and they live more than 2.4 km from the Ministry-funded DR bus route, regardless of whether the school runs the route as designed.

When assessing eligibility for a conveyance allowance, the Ministry will measure the distance from the student's home address² to the Ministry-funded route. Where a DR school is choosing not to run the route as designed, the DR school is responsible for paying a transport allowance to all students that are bypassed by the revised route.

¹ The Ministry's mapping software, ArcGIS, measures the distance over the shortest public road or pedestrian route from the home roadside gate to the school. The measured route can be a combination of a public road or pedestrian route and may not be walkable or driveable in its entirety.

² The Ministry's mapping software, ArcGIS, measures the distance over the shortest public road or pedestrian route from the home roadside gate to the Ministry-funded route. The measured route can be a combination of a public road or pedestrian route and may not be walkable or driveable in its entirety

Transfer of Eligibility (ToE)

Students who are eligible for Ministry school transport assistance to their closest state or state-integrated school may be able to transfer their eligibility to a school that is further away. Schools are responsible for confirming that a student meets the criteria for an eligibility transfer.

DR schools are funded for ToE students and are required to make sure that their bus services have enough capacity to carry their ToE students. DR schools are not required to make changes to their bus routes to accommodate ToE students.

DR schools must not travel outside the Transport Eligibility Zones (TEZ)³ of their schools to pick up ToE students. ToE students must make their own way to a bus stop within the TEZ of their chosen school.

DR schools are not allowed to charge ToE students a fare for accessing their services.

Responsibilities at a glance

Responsibility	Ministry	DR schools	Caregivers
Policy	√		
Funding agreement preparation and management	√		
Designing DR routes to determine funding payments	✓		
Making DR funding payments to schools	✓		
Eligibility assessment and advice	✓	✓	
Service design, validation, and review		√	
Contracts for service and contract variations		✓	
Safe siting of bus stops		✓	
Communication with caregivers and students		√	
Students safely to and from bus stops			✓
Student behaviour while on a DR provided bus service		✓	✓
Health and safety	√	√	√

³ A Transport Eligibility Zone is used to determine what is the closest school for students. Most boundaries are set at the halfway point between schools of the same type i.e. between two state secondary schools.

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Responsibility	Ministry	DR schools	Caregivers
Emergency and incident management		✓	
Auditing and monitoring supplier performance if contracted out services		✓	
Auditing and monitor DR schools' compliance to the funding agreement	√		

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

Overview

To deliver on its school transport assistance mandate, the Ministry has a School Transport business unit.

The School Transport team's key DR responsibilities are:

- Managing DR funding agreements with schools
- Designing optimal routes for eligible students to determine DR funding payments
- Making payments to DR schools and caregivers
- Processing student applications for Conveyance Allowance

Key roles

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

Role	Responsibilities	Key relationships
Transport Delivery Advisors (TDAs)	Designing optimised 'funded routes' for eligible students within current policy parameters, used to inform the funding payment to DR schools	DR schools
	 Undertake DR funding reviews as part of a periodic review, or when requested by schools due to a significant change in the number of eligible students⁴ 	
	Engage with DR schools regarding proposed routes, and route and funding changes	
	Assess the public transport options	
	Provide advice on Ministry School Transport Assistance policy, optimal route design, and delivery models	
	Monitor legislative and contractual compliance and safety	
	Ensure that DR schools are complying with their funding agreement	
	Provide assistance and guidance regarding the school's obligations	
Transport Coordinators (TCOs)	Assess and process DR conveyance allowance payments	DR schools
	Process and quality-check payments to schools and caregivers	Caregivers
	Respond to customer enquiries	

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⁴ A request for a funding review can only be made once in any 24-month period, provided that at least six months has passed since the last Ministry funding review

DR route design and funding reviews

The amount of funding that a DR school receives is based on the number and location of eligible students, and the length of the bus routes the Ministry has designed for these students (Ministry-funded routes).

It is important to note the DR school can choose how it designs and deliver their services, as long as they are providing assistance to their eligible students, and they comply with their funding agreement with the Ministry.

Ministry-funded routes

Ministry-funded routes are designed by the Ministry based on the following key design principles:

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

Ministry-funded routes take into consideration:

- the location and numbers of eligible students
- financial cost, as prudent stewards of public funding

The Ministry finalises Ministry-funded routes after discussion between the Ministry and DR schools.

Note: as DR schools decide what bus routes they will run, they are responsible for deciding timetables and locations of bus stops.

Funding reviews

The Ministry can undertake a funding review at any time. Funding reviews are an important mechanism for ensuring ongoing alignment with policy settings and guidelines and ensure that school transport assistance is cost effective and responsive to local conditions.

A funding review considers the eligibility of all students attending schools that are part of a DR funding agreement. A funding review will not assess individual students or single schools within a DR network. Reviews apply to the entire network.

DR schools may request the Ministry undertakes a funding review once in any 24-month period if:

- · there is a significant change in eligible students; and
- it has been at least six months since the last funding review by the Ministry

When a DR network of schools requests a funding review, all schools within the network need to agree to the request being made.

If DR funding changes following a review, a school term's notice is normally given to the affected schools.

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).

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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 school transport assistance (a student may not physically be able to enrol at the school whose TEZ they are living in if there is an enrolment scheme in their area).

DR schools must not uplift any student from outside of the TEZs of the DR school or network unless it has met certain criteria as set out in its funding agreement with the Ministry.

If a DR school has an agreement with a non-DR school to travel into its TEZ to pick up students, this agreement must be renewed with the non-DR school's Board at least every two years.

Eligibility assessment and policy advice

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 Page 4 for the eligibility criteria).

While the Ministry will provide eligibility assessments of DR school students during a funding review, DR schools are expected to answer eligibility questions from students, parents and caregivers.

3. Schools

Overview

DR schools are funded to provide transport assistance to their eligible students. How they provide that assistance is at the discretion of the school or network receiving the funding. Assistance can be through a place on a vehicle provided by a transport service provider or school, or by financial assistance provided direct to caregivers.

DR schools are responsible for the day-to-day management and delivery of transport assistance for their eligible students.

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

Key responsibilities

All DR schools have responsibilities for the coordination and delivery of school transport assistance.

Where there is a DR network of schools, the fundholder school of the DR network has additional responsibilities. A single DR school is considered the fundholder school for their DR funding.

Fundholder school responsibilities

Comply with the Ministry's funding agreement for school transport assistance

Procure⁵ and manage contracts required for the provision of transport services

Provide access and information for auditing and compliance checks by the Ministry

Assess and determine the safe siting of bus stops (pick-up/drop-off points)

Report incidents and accidents to the Ministry

Undertake incident investigations following an accident or incident and submit any investigation reports to the Ministry

Provide student data to the Ministry when requested

Ensure services are safe

Ensure all eligible students at their schools receive transport assistance

Promote and manage safe behaviour from students while they use school transport

Act as the point of contact for caregivers and students for all school transport enquiries, including eligibility

Assist caregivers in completing conveyance allowance applications, if required6

Network school responsibilities

Promote and manage safe behaviour from students while they use school transport

⁵ Run a contestable and competitive process when procuring services

⁶ Access to Pokapū Waka Kura is required before you can complete the online Conveyance Allowance application

Act as the point of contact for caregivers and students for all school transport enquiries, including eligibility

Assist caregivers in completing conveyance allowance applications, if required7

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

Bus Controller

Every DR-funded single school must appoint a Bus Controller for their school. DR networks must have at least one Bus Controller for their DR network.

Bus Controllers serve as the single point of contact for their school or network on their school transport. The Bus Controller acts as the liaison between the school, caregivers, and the Ministry on all matters related to school transport. The Bus Controller has a key safety role as well as an administration and communication role for its school transport.

DR Constitution - DR networks

All DR networks must have in place a Constitution. A Constitution lays out how the DR network will work. It should cover the following:

- How the DR network is managed and operated
- Defines the relationship between all parties and their responsibilities
- Outlines internal procedures such as a dispute resolution process, how often meetings are held, and the procedure should a school wish to withdraw from the DR network

For further information, refer to Schedule 4 of the DR network funding agreement.

Delivery of services

Schools who accept DR funding are responsible for delivering safe and reliable services or providing a transport allowance for all of their eligible students. They can provide a combination of both a bus service and a transport allowance.

Where a school is choosing not to run the route as designed, the school is responsible for paying a transport allowance to all students that are bypassed by the revised route.

Route disruption

If a DR school bus route is disrupted (e.g. due to roadworks or a temporary diversion), the Ministry will not fund any additional kilometres required. The DR schools and networks are responsible for absorbing these costs.

School transport assistance via a place on a bus/van

If DR schools provide school transport assistance via a place on a bus/van, no eligible student is to be charged for use of the transport, and no student is to be uplifted from outside of the TEZs of the DR school or network unless it has met certain criteria as set out in its funding agreement with the Ministry.

⁷ Access to Pokapū Waka Kura is required before you can complete the online Conveyance Allowance application

By providing school transport assistance via a place on a bus/van, schools are responsible for:

- having robust health and safety plans (including a drug and alcohol management plan) in place and can demonstrate clear and appropriate systems and standards for mitigating risks to health and safety.
- complying with all relevant NZ legislation and rules, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and the Children's Act 2014.
- determining locations where the vehicle will safely stop to pick-up and drop-off students. Schools
 must use NZ Transport Agency's 'Guidelines for safe siting of school bus stops' to assist them in
 determining the bus stop locations.
- ensuring student safety during pick-up and drop-off at school by:
 - having in place appropriate procedures for vehicle stopping and loading and unloading of students at school. These procedures should include information on where the students are to wait, how they are to wait, where they are to walk when loading etc.
 - 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.
 - supervising the bus loading and unloading at school in the morning and in the afternoon
- incident reporting and creating 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. If an incident involves an accident or an injury, schools must notify their local Transport Delivery Advisor via phone as soon as practical. Schools may be required to investigate and provide the Ministry with a report on the investigation and its findings.
- offering information and support to students and caregivers as necessary during and after an incident or emergency.
- ensuring vehicles used to provide services are legally compliant and maintained. The age of vehicles providing the services must be less than:
 - o 26 years old for Large Passenger Service Vehicles, and
 - 15 years old for Small Passenger Service Vehicles
- ensuring all drivers of vehicles are appropriately licenced, trained and police vetted (including compliance with Children's Act 2014)
- promoting good behaviour and for managing student behaviour on the transport, and reminding caregivers and students of their responsibilities (see 'Managing student behaviour on school transport' below for further advice)
- providing information to caregivers on the transport services such as routes, bus stops, timetables, and notifying them prior to the implementation any changes.
- keeping accurate and up-to-date bus lists of the students travelling on each bus route (including caregivers phone numbers where possible). This is a Health and Safety requirement in case of any emergency.

Procuring services

Where a school outsources the provision of any part of the school transport services they provide, they are required by the funding agreement with the Ministry to carry out the procurement of the services in accordance with the following criteria:

- the process must be contestable and transparent
- if the total budget over the lifetime of the contract exceeds \$100,000 it must be advertised on GETS
- any conflicts of interest must be managed.

Useful information to comply with these criteria can be found here:

- Financial Information for Schools Handbook: https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/funding-and-financials/day-day-financial-management#financial-information-for-schools-handbook-1
- Procurement Guidance for Public Entities: http://www.oag.govt.nz/2008/procurement-guide/
- Government Procurement Rules: https://www.procurement.govt.nz/procurement/principles-charter-and-rules/government-procurement-rules/getting-started/

Services for ineligible students

Schools may provide transport assistance to ineligible students, using their DR funding, provided that:

- No student (eligible or ineligible) is required to stand on the vehicle
- Such assistance does not disadvantage eligible students
- All DR students reside within the school's or network' TEZ (the scheme that allowed students to cross TEZs and receive transport prior to 31 December 2020 has been grandfathered)

Schools may charge ineligible students a fare at their discretion.

Agreement to pick up students outside of TEZ

DR schools must not uplift any student from outside of the TEZs of the DR school or network unless it has met certain criteria as set out in its funding agreement with the Ministry.

If a DR school has an agreement with a non-DR school to travel into its TEZ to pick up students, this agreement must be renewed with the non-DR school's Board at least every two years.

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 region's Ministry TDA for advice.

Safety, incidents and emergencies

The Ministry requires all DR schools 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 DR school must notify the Ministry. DR schools should refer to Clause 7.2 (c) and Clause (d) in their Funding Agreement with the Ministry for details of what needs to be reported and when.

Managing student behaviour on school transport

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.

Where a student's behaviour presents an ongoing or serious problem, the school may decide to revoke the offer of a place on funded transport. 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 funded school transport, the caregiver/whanau needs to ensure they are meeting their legal obligation to get their child to school. In this scenario, caregivers/whanau are not entitled to a Conveyance Allowance paid by the Ministry of Education.

Schools may choose to establish a Code of Conduct, signed by the student, their caregiver/whanau, the school and the transport provider (if any). A sample Code of Conduct can be found on the Ministry's <u>website</u>.

A factsheet 'Keeping safe while using the bus' is available on the <u>Ministry's website</u>. It is recommended that this factsheet is shared with caregivers.

Key contacts

Enquiries regarding school transport assistance should be directed to their region's TDA. Contact details for all TDAs can be found on our website.

4. Students and caregivers/whānau

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 4 of this Roles and Responsibility Guide.

Type of school transport assistance

Caregivers must contact the Bus Controller at their school to confirm that their child is eligible, and what transport assistance may be available to them.

DR schools are funded to provide transport assistance to eligible students. How they provide that assistance is at the discretion of the school or network receiving the funding. Assistance can be through a place on a vehicle, or by financial assistance⁸ provided direct to caregivers.

Conveyance Allowance

If a student is eligible for school transport assistance and they live more than 2.4km from the Ministry-funded route, the student may be eligible for a Conveyance Allowance paid directly by the Ministry.

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

When assessing eligibility for a conveyance allowance payment, the Ministry will measure the distance from the student's home address⁹ to the Ministry-funded route, regardless of whether the school runs the route as designed. Where a school is choosing not to run the route as designed, the school is responsible for paying a transport allowance to all students that are bypassed by the revised route.

Applications for a Conveyance Allowance are made online via the <u>Ministry's website</u>. Caregivers can apply directly, or their school can complete the application on their behalf.

Responsibilities if transport assistance is provided via a place on a bus/van

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

⁸ Financial assistance provided by the DR school is separate to the Ministry Conveyance Allowance, which is based on distance from home to a Ministry-funded route, not the actual route run by the DR school.

⁹ The Ministry's mapping software, ArcGIS, measures the distance over the shortest public road or pedestrian route from the home roadside gate to the Ministry-funded route. The measured route can be a combination of a public road or pedestrian route and may not be walkable or driveable in its entirety.

Safety and behaviour tips for students		
Getting on the school bus/van	 Wait in the designated place—well back from the road Wait until the school bus/van 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 school bus/van	 Follow all instructions from the 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 driver Respect the transport provider'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 driver Don't stand or sit in the door wells 	
Getting off the school bus/van	 Wait for the bus/van 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/van 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 school or any transport provider.

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/van (if the 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 bus/van). If a student loses their place on the school bus/van, 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 paid by the Ministry in this situation.

Key contacts for caregivers

Enquiries regarding	Contact
Eligibility	Your school
Assistance provided	
Where a vehicle is provided:	
Transport routes	
Pick up/drop-off points	
Timetables	



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