ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Item: 4

Education, Communities and Housing Committee: 11 November 2026.

School Transport Policy.

Report by Director of Education, Communities and Housing.

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1. Overview

1.1. This report presents the revised School Transport Policy, for approval.

1.2. The revised School Transport Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, updates and replaces the Council's School Transport Policy approved in 2019.

1.3. The revised Policy has been developed following publication of the Scottish Government's School Transport Guidance 2025, which updates national guidance to local authorities on the provision of home to school transport and replaces previous guidance issued in 2021. The updated guidance promotes a safe, inclusive and sustainable approach to school transport provision whilst reaffirming local authority statutory duties under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

1.4. The revised Policy retains the Council's existing eligibility framework whilst strengthening arrangements relating to pupil safety, active travel, additional support needs, shared parenting arrangements, equality, children's rights and sustainable transport.

1.5. The updated Policy also reflects the specific transport challenges experienced within island communities and seeks to ensure that transport decision making remains fair, transparent and proportionate.

2. Recommendations

2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:

i. Approve the School Transport Policy 2026, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background

3.1. The Council has a statutory duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to make such arrangements as it considers necessary to facilitate attendance at school by pupils residing within its area.

3.2. Whilst the 2025 guidance does not introduce new statutory duties, it provides updated advice and clarification regarding:

i. Suitable walking route assessments.
ii. Shared parenting arrangements.
iii. Additional Support Needs and disabilities.
iv. Use of the Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme.
v. Sustainable and active travel.
vi. Equality and children's rights considerations.
vii. Appeals and complaints procedures.

4. Policy Review

4.1. A review of the existing policy identified several areas requiring amendment to ensure consistency with the updated national guidance.

4.2. Key amendments include:

i. Children’s rights and Inclusion – The Policy adopts a rights-based approach to decision making and incorporates consideration of the wellbeing and best interests of the child when assessing transport arrangements.
ii. Additional Support Needs – The revised Policy strengthens arrangements for assessing transport eligibility for children and young people with additional support needs, disabilities or healthcare requirements through an individual assessment process.
iii. Shared parenting arrangements – The Policy introduces formal criteria for considering transport eligibility where pupils reside between two family homes under shared parenting arrangements.
iv. Safe walking routes – The Policy provides greater detail regarding the assessment of walking routes, including consideration of road safety, weather conditions, lighting and island-specific transport infrastructure.
v. Active and sustainable travel – The revised Policy promotes walking, wheeling and cycling where routes are assessed as safe and appropriate and supports the wider objectives of the National Transport Strategy and climate change commitments.

vi. Appeals process – A clearer review and appeals process has been incorporated to ensure transparency and consistency in transport decision making.

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Implications of Report

1. **Financial -** None directly relating to the recommendations in this report. Any additional costs associated with this policy will need to be met within existing resources.
2. **Legal** – The policy had been reviewed to ensure consistency with:
   - Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
   - Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
   - Equality Act 2010.
   - UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.
   - Scottish Government School Transport Guidance 2025.

   The policy does not alter the Council's statutory duties but provides updated guidance on how those duties will be exercised.
3. **Corporate Governance**- Not Applicable.
4. **Human Resources**- Not Applicable.
5. **Equalities –** An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2.
6. **Island Communities Impact –** An Island Communities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 3.
7. **Links to Council Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:

   ☐Growing our economy.
   ☒Strengthening our Communities.
   ☒Developing our Infrastructure.
   ☒Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan:** The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:

   ☐Cost of Living.
   ☒Sustainable Development.
   ☒Local Equality.
   ☒Improving Population Health.

9. **Environmental and Climate Risk** – The revised Policy supports active and sustainable travel and contributes positively to climate change objectives through the promotion of walking, wheeling, cycling and the efficient planning of transport services.
10. **Risk -** Failure to update the Policy could result in inconsistency with current Scottish Government guidance and increased risk of challenge regarding transport decision making. The revised Policy mitigates these risks through clearer procedures and decision-making criteria.
11. **Procurement** - Not Applicable.
12. **Health and Safety** – The revised policy strengthens requirements relating to:
    - Safe walking route assessments.
    - Risk assessment of collection points.
    - Consideration of individual pupils needs.
    - School transport safety arrangements.
13. **Property and Assets** - Not Applicable.
14. **Information Technology** - Not Applicable.
15. **Cost of Living** - Not Applicable.

List of Background Papers

- OIC Travel for Pupils Requiring Special Arrangements – Code of Practice.
- Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
- Equality Act 2010.
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Scottish Government School Transport Guidance 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1 – School Transport Policy.
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment.
Appendix 3 – Island Communities Impact Assessment.

Appendix 1

ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Education, Communities and Housing

School Transport Policy

Version Control

Document reference.	Version.	Issue Date.	Reason for issue.	Reviewer.
ELH003.	1.	1 October 2009.	New Procedure.	Project Officer.
ELH003.	2.	1 August 2012.	Reviewed and updated.	Education Resources Manager.
ELH003.	3.	1 August 2016.	Reviewed and updated.	Education Resources Manager.
ELH003.	4.	1 April 2019.	Reviewed and updated.	Education Resources Manager.
ECH003.	5.	9 September 2026	To align with SG guidance.	Service Manager (Resources).

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1. Aims

The Council aims to:

- Ensure equitable access to education through safe, inclusive and sustainable school transport arrangements.
- Promote the rights and wellbeing of children consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Support active travel, including walking, wheeling and cycling where appropriate and safe.
- Reduce inequalities experienced by pupils living in rural, remote and island communities.
- Ensure transport decisions are transparent, evidence-based and take account of individual circumstances.
- Contribute to national climate change and transport objectives through efficient transport planning.

2. Principles

When making school transport decisions, the Council will:

- Place the safety and wellbeing of pupils at the centre of decision-making.
- Consider the best interests of the child.
- Apply policies consistently while retaining flexibility in exceptional circumstances.
- Consider equality, accessibility and additional support needs.
- Take account of local island circumstances, including ferry-linked and multi-modal journeys.
- Promote sustainable and active travel wherever safe and practical.

3. Introduction

Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (the Act) places a legal responsibility on Local Authorities to enable the attendance at school of children who live beyond the specified maximum walking distance.

In terms of the Act the Council must make such arrangements as it considers necessary for the provision of transport to schools. In exercising its judgement as to what, if any, provision is required, the Council is required to have regard to the safety of pupils and must consider the circumstances of each individual case.

Education Authorities also have a common law duty of care for the safety of pupils under their charge, and this duty extends to pupils using school transport.

This Policy determines the way in which Orkney Islands Council will consider applications for school transport and the operation of the service. The Council reserves the right to make exceptions to the Policy in circumstances where Education, Communities and Housing consider it reasonable.

Every pupil accessing school transport should be safe and travel in comfort. Education, Communities and Housing has developed this Policy and associated guidelines to set out the standards of service expected by pupils, parents/carers, school staff and school transport operators and drivers.

All school transport operators are subject to detailed Conditions of Contract, which cover a wide range of requirements relating to the safe and legal operation of home to school transport services. Any driver performing services under Contract to the Council shall hold a valid licence to operate the type of vehicle they are driving in performing the Contract and appropriate for the type of services being performed under the Contract, as required by statute. All drivers are required to be members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme for Children.

Pupils and parents/carers must agree to comply with the school transport Code of Conduct before the Council can grant access to school transport. Pupils who do not adhere to the Code of Conduct may be withdrawn from school transport.

Whilst the core function is to provide services for children, it is recognised that in some areas, where capacity allows, a school transport service provided to secondary schools may be registered with the Traffic Commissioner to carry members of the public.

4. Provision of Transport

4.1. Qualifying Distance

The Council provides free transport to all pupils who live more than the statutory walking distance from their designated school, which is two miles for pupils less than eight years old and three miles for pupils aged eight and over.

In Orkney, this reduces to 1.5 miles for all pupils during the winter terms (October break to Easter break). These distances are measured by the shortest available route. This is more generous than that prescribed by statute and therefore may be reviewed at any time.

4.2. Entitlement

The Council provides school transport for pupils who live outwith the qualifying distance of their school as detailed in section 4.1. The statutory requirement to make travel arrangements does not imply a door-to-door service and requires only that suitable arrangements are made.

Transport is usually provided as close to home as is practical. However, parents/ carers are responsible for getting their children safely to/from the transport pick-up/drop off point. Parents/carers can be expected to walk/transport their children up to the qualifying distance as detailed in section 4.1 to reach the pick-up/drop off point.

Distances from home to school will be measured electronically using the Council's Geographic Information System (GIS) tools and Ordnance Survey large scale digital mapping.

When applying for school transport, the address provided on the school transport application form is the only address taken account of for transport purposes. However, where a pupil normally resides at two addresses due to shared parenting arrangements, both addresses may be assessed for transport eligibility where:

- The arrangement is regular and evidenced;
- Both addresses are within the catchment area of the designated school; and
- Transport can be provided reasonably and efficiently.

Each application will be assessed individually having regard to the best interests of the child and efficient use of public resources.

The Council will not consider diverting school transport provision from an existing route. Where the distance from the pupil's home address to the pick-up/drop-off point exceeds the qualifying distance, the Council will make provision. This can be either through a parent receiving a mileage allowance for undertaking the journey or, in exceptional circumstances, through extending the route of a hired vehicle to cover the stretch of road.

In cases where alterations to school transport arrangements are necessary, pupils and parents/carers will be given as much notice as possible and unless there are safety reasons, changes take effect as soon as practicable.

The safety of the pupil's journey between home and the pick-up/drop-off point is considered to include being accompanied by a responsible adult, if necessary, with such accompaniment to be arranged by the pupil's parent/carer.

The Council does not provide transport for:

- Pre-school education.
- 'Placing Request' pupils who are attending a school other than their catchment area school.

The Council does not provide transport for those pupils in receipt of a placing request. This must be taken into consideration when making a placing request. Parents must accept full responsibility for the organisation and cost of transport for their child travelling to and from school.

Home to school transport covers one return journey, to school in the morning and home at the end of the school day.

4.3. Transport Commencement

The Council requires up to five working days to organise and arrange transport for a new pupil between home and school or implement a change of address which may also mean a change of bus route. If there are capacity issues on the route, then it may take longer to allocate spaces as nominated passengers are entitled to ten working days' notice to make alternative arrangements.

4.4. Nominated Passengers

Nominated places may be allocated by the Council to pupils who do not qualify for transport but live on an established bus route where the bus serving the route has available empty seats. It is important to note that a nominated place is not an entitlement to school transport, it is only offered to a pupil who does not qualify for free home to school transport where space is available on an existing school contract vehicle.

The Council reserves the right to withdraw transport if the seat is required for a pupil travelling to their entitled school. Under such circumstances parents/carers will be provided with ten working days written notice to make alternative transport arrangements.

If the number of requests for nominated places is greater than the number of vacant seats available, the Council must select which of those pupils will be allocated nominated places. This will normally result in removing pupils who live closest to the school.

If the number of entitled pupils in any area becomes such that it may be more practical and cost effective to provide transport in smaller vehicles nominated pupils may have this provision withdrawn with ten days' notice.

Nominated passengers may also be asked to relinquish their place on school transport at any time if it is deemed necessary for any other reason at the Council's sole discretion.

A nominated place cannot be provided where a school route is also registered as a local bus service (some Secondary routes). In such cases non-entitled pupils should pay the appropriate fare.

4.5. Pupil Pick-up/Drop-off Points

Suitable pick-up/drop-off points will be agreed with Education, Communities and Housing. Consideration shall be given to younger pupils and pupils with an additional support need. As stipulated in section 4.2 above, transport may not be provided door-to-door.

Education, Communities and Housing will endeavour to assess new pick-up/drop-off points to ensure that potential dangers are identified, and solutions are found to keep risks to a minimum. If required, advice may be sought from Officers within the Roads Service of the Council. Any risk assessment carried out on a pick-up/drop-off point is made on the assumption that pupils will be accompanied by a responsible adult from their home to and from the pick-up/drop-off point. Risk assessments shall be recorded and reviewed.

Parents/carers are responsible for their child's journey to and from school, or where transport is provided, between home and the pick-up and drop off point.

Parents/carers should note that drivers are **not** required to help children cross roads and parents/carers should advise their children accordingly.

4.6. Pupil Catchment Areas

School transport is provided for pupils who reside within the catchment area of their designated school. Parents/carers should note the qualifying distances at section 4.1 above which outlines the entitlement criteria to school transport. Where a placing request is made for a school within a different catchment area the Council will not provide transport.

The Council may consider exceptional circumstances where failure to provide transport would create a significant barrier to accessing education, particularly where equality duties or additional support needs require further consideration.

4.7. Medical Grounds

In exceptional circumstances, home to school transport may be provided on medical grounds, to enable pupils to attend their designated catchment school even though they may live within the statutory qualifying distance from the school. An application should be made if a pupil who is attending their correct catchment school is unable to walk to school due to a medical reason. Supporting written medical evidence must be obtained from a GP or hospital to confirm that the pupil is unable to walk to school and the likely period of incapacity. Please note: Medical grounds do not mean automatic entitlement.

4.8. Additional Support Needs (ASN)

The Pupils Requiring Special Arrangements (PRSA) Code of Practice was produced by the Council to provide contractors, escorts, parents/carers and school staff with summary information about the provision of transport for pupils requiring special arrangements arising from additional support needs.

ASN transport applications will be assessed by the Inclusion Group. The Inclusion group is made up of the Service Manager Support for Learning and Inclusion, Educational Psychology, Principal Teacher Support for Learning and Inclusion and the two headteachers of Glaitness and KGS which have enhanced support provision. The Service Manager for Resources may provide an advisory role. The group meets regularly during term time, and a recommendation will be made to the Service Manager (Resources) for consideration. If the application is approved, an arrangement will be made to ensure the pupil is transported suitably and safely.

A Child or Young Person's Plan must also be in place before an application will be considered.

Assessment criteria include:

- Individual risk assessments.
- Mobility needs.
- Communication needs.
- Emotional/behavioural and sensory requirements.
- Individual health care plans
- The suitability of active travel options.
- Escort requirements.
- Journey length and complexity.

ASN transport provision will be reviewed at a Child or Young Person's planning meetings.

As per section 4.2 Entitlement – Placing request pupils who attend a school other than their catchment area school will not be provided transport. However, pupils who attend Glaitness Primary School or Kirkwall Grammar School in the supported classes are considered as attending their catchment area school for the purposes of this Policy.

4.9. Pre-School Pupils

There is no statutory duty for the Council to provide transport for pupils attending nursery or pre-school, as such the Council does not provide this service.

4.10. Young Person's Free Bus/Ferry Travel Scheme

The Council recognises the Young Person's Free Bus/Ferry Travel Scheme and will consider how it may support travel to school where appropriate.

Access to the scheme does not in itself remove statutory duties relating to school transport provision.

4.11. Travel by Ferry or Plane

Pupils travelling by ferry:

- Senior pupils living on an island commuting into Kirkwall Grammar School or Stromness Academy travel by ferry on a daily or weekly basis.
- Pupils commuting on a weekly basis on the school roll of Kirkwall Grammar School are resident at Papdale Halls of Residence during the week.
- Pupils living on an island commuting to school on another island or to the mainland may also travel by ferry on a daily or weekly basis.
- Bookings for daily and weekly travel are administered by Education, Communities and Housing.

Pupils travelling by Plane:

- Pupils, who commute on a weekly basis into Kirkwall Grammar School, from Papa Westray, North Ronaldsay and, S1 and S2 pupils living on Eday, are entitled to travel by plane. Flights are booked and managed by Education, Communities and Housing.
- Transport (usually a taxi) is provided to/from Kirkwall Airport to take pupils to/from Papdale Halls of Residence or Kirkwall Grammar School. This is administered by Education, Communities and Housing.

4.12. Safety Routes

In addition to distance entitlement, free home to school transport may be provided when a route is assessed as being unsuitable for a child to walk to school whilst accompanied by a responsible adult. Even where statutory distances are not reached safety route criteria can apply if no other suitable walking route exists.

The OIC Assessment of School Walking Routes Policy considers road conditions, traffic volume, speed, lighting, weather, seasonal factors, and rural/island characteristics. The suitability of a route during winter darkness will also be considered. Parents remain responsible for arranging suitable travel arrangements for their child during this time.

Any assessment carried out on a route is made on the assumption that pupils will be accompanied by a responsible adult. Where a parent/carer allows a child to walk unsupervised, the parent/carer is responsible for the safety of that child.

Where a route is deemed as unsuitable, transport provision will be organised. This may be in the form of providing transport or paying a parental allowance per mile.

Assessments will be reviewed periodically or following significant changes to route conditions.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. Responsibilities of Orkney Islands Council

The Schools (Safety and Supervision of Pupils) (Scotland) Regulations 1990 place a general duty on Local Authorities to secure, as far as is practicable, the safety of pupils under their charge.

Pupils travelling on dedicated school transport arranged by the local authority are under the charge of the authority. Therefore, the authority will keep school transport provision under review to ensure the safety of pupils when travelling on school transport.

The Council provides assistance with transport to all pupils who live more than the statutory qualifying distance from their designated school, which is two miles for pupils less than eight years old and three miles for pupils aged eight and over. In Orkney, this reduces to 1.5 miles for all pupils during the winter terms (October break to Easter break).

Education, Communities and Housing will:

- Agree all routes and schedules with the school transport contractor.
- Ensure that the contractor provides a suitable vehicle and that all drivers are suitably licensed and insured for the conveyance of school children.
- Ensure that all conveyors, drivers and escorts are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme for Children.
- Monitor the requirement to ensure that all conveyors, drivers and escorts are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme for Children.
- Ensure that, as far as possible, the maximum single journey time will be up to 45 minutes for a primary pupil and 65 minutes for a secondary pupil.

Schools will:

- Investigate any instances of anti-social behaviour on school transport and report their findings to Education, Communities and Housing.
- Ensure pupils are aware of the school transport Code of Conduct and enforce where necessary.
- Work with Education, Communities and Housing to decide the appropriate actions for pupils who are in breach of the Code of Conduct.
- Report any school transport contractor who fails to meet their contractual obligations to Education, Communities and Housing so appropriate action can be taken.

5.2. Responsibilities of Contractors

The safety and welfare of pupils is of paramount importance.

The School Transport Contractor will be contracted by Education, Communities and Housing to provide the safe conveyance of pupils between their designated pick-up/ drop-off point and the school site, and vice versa. The contractor’s duties will be set out in full in its contract with the Council.

Contractors should pay close attention to the advice in Appendix 1 which details their responsibilities while contracted to carry out school transport.

5.3. In the event of a Breakdown or Accident

In the case of a breakdown, emergency or an accident on a school service, the driver should not leave the pupils unless in situations of extreme emergency. Pupils should be instructed to stay in the vehicle until alternative transport arrives. If the situation is deemed to be dangerous, the pupils will be guided to a safe place by the driver.

Drivers should be made aware of the information and advice contained in Appendix 4 in regard to dealing with a breakdown or accident.

5.4. Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

The information detailed in Appendix 5 should be read and understood by parents and carers before their children use free school transport provided by the Council.

Parents/carers are ultimately responsible for the proper and safe behaviour of their child when getting on, whilst travelling and when getting off the transport provided. They are also responsible between home and the pick-up and drop off point, immediately prior to boarding school transport each morning and again following the afternoon journey.

It is advisable that parents/carers wait at their children's drop off point and accompany them across the road if necessary as parents/carers are responsible for their children's safety after they have left the school transport vehicle.

Parents/carers are also reminded that they are ultimately responsible for the behaviour of their child when travelling on school transport. Parents/carers have a duty to read through the Code of Conduct with their children and explain its importance and consequences for not adhering to it.

5.5. Code of Conduct – School Transport

School Transport users must read the Code of Conduct and sign to say that they agree to adhere to it before they are entitled to use free school transport. For pupils under the age of 16 parents/carers must also sign to say that they agree to the terms.

The Code of Conduct relates to pupils who are entitled to school transport provided by the Council and sets out what is expected of pupils if they are to travel on school transport.

Pupils who fail to abide by the Code of Conduct could have their entitlement to school transport removed for a period of time. Should this situation arise, it will become the responsibility of the pupil's parents/carers to arrange transport to and from school for this period of time.

The Council requests that parents/carers of pupils who use school transport familiarise themselves with the behaviour expected of their children by reading the 'Code of Conduct' (Appendix 6).

6. General Information

6.1. Behaviour on School Transport

Parents/carers are ultimately responsible for the proper and safe behaviour of their child when getting on, travelling and getting off the transport provided. Pupils travelling on school transport who misbehave, cause damage or injury, either to the vehicle or other passengers, may at the Council's discretion either be temporarily or permanently removed

from using school transport. In cases of anti-social behaviour, children will be subject to the normal disciplinary procedures of the school.

Any such behaviour can be reported by a teacher, pupil, parent, driver, operator or member of the public.

The Council may request an investigation into the alleged incident by working closely with the school and transport operator. If requested, this would be carried out by senior management within the school. This would normally involve taking written statements from pupils who witnessed the incident and interviewing individually those pupils who were named or identified as involved. Operators may also be requested to submit a report. CCTV images may be shown to school staff, and, in the case of a serious incident, to the Police.

Any information given is treated in confidence. The investigation will seek to establish, as far as possible, exactly what happened and who was responsible.

Following an investigation, any further action to be taken will be agreed between Education, Communities and Housing and the investigating officer. This will usually take the form of an exclusion from transport for a defined period although disciplinary action within school, e.g. after school detentions, may sometimes be agreed as an alternative.

The action taken will depend on the severity of the incident and whether a pupil has previously been involved in anti-social behaviour.

The following can be used as a guideline for a minor incident (e.g. persistently moving around the school bus while in motion, not wearing a seatbelt):

- Warning letter on the first occasion.
- On the second occasion, exclusion from school transport for one to five days.
- On subsequent occasions, exclusion from transport for five to 10 days.

For a serious incident (e.g. bullying, physical or verbal abuse of driver/operator or pupils, smoking, any action threatening the safety of individuals or the vehicle, vandalism or damage):

- Exclusion from transport for a minimum of five days or up to one term depending on circumstances and previous history.

These are only guidelines and the action agreed in any particular case will take into account individual circumstances and the views of the school.

When exclusion from transport has been agreed, parents/carers will normally be notified in writing and given an appropriate period of notice before the exclusion period starts. This is to allow parents/carers an opportunity to make alternative transport arrangements. During the exclusion period, it remains the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure their child’s continued attendance at school.

In very serious cases, where it is considered that the safety of the vehicle, pupils and other transport users would be put at risk by allowing a pupil to continue to travel, exclusion from transport may start immediately and without written notice. In such cases, the school or service will attempt to contact the parents/carers to make them aware of the situation and arrange for them to collect the pupil from school.

If there has been damage, the operator will seek to recover the cost of repairs. Education, Communities and Housing will write to the parent/carer of the pupil(s) responsible detailing the date of the incident, the damage caused and the cost of repairs.

After a period of exclusion has ended, a pupil will normally be allowed to travel on the school transport again. However, the operator may require certain conditions (e.g. that the pupil must use a specified seat at the front of the bus) or the pupil may be transferred to another school bus.

Parents/carers are reminded that they have a duty to ensure that their children regularly attend school. Where a child fails to attend regularly at school (and has no reasonable excuse) then, unless Education, Communities and Housing have consented to the withdrawal of the child from school, their parents/carers shall be guilty of an offence (Education (Scotland) Act 1980 – Section 35). It is therefore the parent/carer's responsibility to get their children to and from school whilst entitlement to school transport has been removed.

6.2. Behaviour on Other Modes of Transport

Pupils who travel on other modes of transport (e.g. ferry, plane or taxi) who misbehave, cause damage or injury may, at the Council's discretion, have their entitlement to school transport withdrawn.

Orkney Ferries staff can report instances of anti-social behaviour by pupils on board the ferry to Education, Communities and Housing.

Parents/carers and pupils should note the procedure in section 6.1 'Behaviour on School Transport' will also be followed in the event of any report of anti-social behaviour on other modes of transport.

6.3. Seatbelts

All coaches, minibuses and cars used for the conveyance of school transport are fitted with seatbelts. Pupils are expected to wear the seat belts provided for them. Failure to wear a seatbelt means that the pupil is in breach of the Code of Conduct and therefore may have their entitlement to school transport removed.

6.4. CCTV Cameras

Parents/carers and pupils should be aware that CCTV equipment is operational on some modes of transport. Vehicles/vessels using CCTV will have notices displayed to this effect. Recorded images may be shown to school staff to identify individual pupils.

In order to comply with the Data Protection Act, operators are required to have their own policy and procedures in place.

6.5. Bus Passes

Pupils travelling on certain routes may be issued with school bus passes. Pupils should ensure that they carry their card with them at all times so the drivers are aware that they are entitled to use the bus, and if travelling on a public service bus do not incur a fee.

If a pass is lost, stolen or damaged, pupils should inform the school as soon as possible. Please note there will be an administration fee for a replacement pass.

6.6. Winter Weather Operation

During periods of adverse weather some or all school transport routes may not operate, or alternatively operate a curtailed service depending on local road conditions. It is very difficult to obtain individual route information to advise parents/ carers whether the school bus on their route is running that morning, as this will depend on the local weather and road conditions. We therefore are only able to advise whether there will be disruptions to school transport in general.

Decisions to cancel or amend school transport routes are taken in the interests of the safety and welfare of pupils, school transport and other road users. These decisions are taken by operators in liaison with Council staff and will have regard to the prevailing weather forecast and road conditions along with advice from Police Scotland.

Parents/carers are responsible for their child's journey to and from school, or where transport is provided, between home and the pick-up and drop-off point and immediately prior to boarding school transport vehicles each morning. They assume that responsibility again at the moment their children leave the school transport vehicle following the afternoon journey.

Over the winter months when conditions of severe weather can arise, it is advised that parents/carers agree a length of time, such as 20 minutes, that children wait for transport at their designated pick-up point before returning or contacting home if their transport has not arrived. Parents/carers should make sure their children are aware of what to do if the transport is late or does not arrive.

If there is no school transport due to bad weather, it is the parents/carers decision whether or not it is safe to transport their children to school. We expect that parents/ carers base this decision on the condition of roads in their area – there is no expectation that all parents/carers will be able to transport their children. If a parent/ carer decides it is not safe to put their children to school, then they should contact the school stating that the absence is weather related.

If school transport is cancelled in the morning by the operator and parents/carers make the decision to transport their children to school, they must also arrange their afternoon transport, as the operator will not be responsible for conveying their children home (other than Barrier closures, where the Barriers are re-opened before the end of the school day). This applies even if the weather has greatly improved throughout the day. Parents/carers also need to be available to pick-up their children earlier if conditions deteriorate and an earlier closure is needed.

How to obtain information on Morning Closures:

- The OIC School Transport Facebook page is available. This will be the first stop for information on school closures and transport changes. (Note: This Facebook page is an open page; you do not have to be a member of Facebook to access the page.)
- The Facebook page and OIC X feed are both updated as soon as information is available. This can be as early as 06:15, which should assist daily isles travellers in planning their travel. Information about and links to these sites are available at: www.orkney.gov.uk/contact-us/oic-updates/
- School closure information is passed to BBC Radio Orkney, which they then broadcast on their programme at 07:30 (on 93.7 FM) and also post on their Facebook page (also

an open page). Radio Orkney will be notified if there is disruption to transport, however detailed information on specific routes will not be provided.
- Information on school closures and transport disruption is also provided on the Council's answer phone (01856 873535).

7. Additional Information

7.1. Complaints and Appeals

Any queries over the operation or timing of a service should be made initially to the operator of the service. Where the response received is deemed unsatisfactory, a complaint should be made to the Education Transport Administrator who will investigate, and address concerns raised.

Concerns regarding behaviour of children using school transport should be addressed direct to the relevant school. Schools will take active steps to investigate and address issues of misbehaviour raised with them. In extreme cases, access to school transport may be withdrawn.

Concerns about the conduct of any transport operator or employees of transport operators should be made to the Education Transport Administrator. All concerns will be investigated and appropriate action taken.

If parents/carers are otherwise unhappy with the school transport service they should contact the Education Transport Administrator. If they wish to report a particular incident they should note as many details as possible of the incident, including time, place and registration number of the vehicle and then contact the service.

Parents and carers may request a review of any school transport decision. The review process shall:

- provide written reasons for decisions.
- allow submission of additional evidence.
- include escalation to an independent Council review stage.
- explain access to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman where appropriate.

8. Equality, Children's Rights and Island Communities

The Council will implement this policy with due regard to:

- the Equality Act 2010.
- the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004.
- UNCRC requirements.
- Island Communities Impact Assessment principles.
- the needs of pupils living in remote and island communities.

Contact Details

Education, Communities and Housing, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY.
Telephone: 01856 873535 extension 2427.
Email: education.leisure@orkney.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Responsibilities of Contractors

The safety and welfare of pupils is of paramount importance.

The School Transport Contractor will be contracted by Orkney Islands Council's Education Transport Service, to provide the safe conveyance of pupils between their designated pick-up/drop-off point and the school site, and vice versa. The contractor's duties will be set out in full in its contract with the Council.

In summary, the operator will:

- Ensure that all staff are members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme for Children and hold an appropriate valid driving licence.
- Follow the route and schedule as agreed with the Council.
- Ensure that a suitable vehicle is provided and that all drivers and vehicles are suitably insured for the conveyance of school children.
- Ensure that all school buses display the correct service number and appropriate signage.
- Ensure school transport vehicles fitted with CCTV cameras have notices displayed to that effect.
- The same driver will be required to provide each service for a minimum of 75% of the time each school term.

Appendix 2

Advice to and Responsibilities of School Bus Drivers

The driver should:

- Be presentable and courteous at all times.
- Be in possession of an appropriate licence to drive the vehicle being used to convey school children and be able to produce it on demand.
- Ensure that they adhere to the scheduled route, timings and any additional instructions as approved by Orkney Islands Council's Education, Communities and Housing.
- Ensure that they are familiar with the routes and pick-up and drop-off points before carrying out a route. Any driver assigned to a new route should receive appropriate 'route training' before they are assigned to it.
- Ensure that all pupils are seated with seat belts fastened before the bus departs from the school or moves off from a pick-up / drop-off point.
- In the event of a vehicle breakdown, emergency or an accident on a school bus service, not leave pupils unless in situations of extreme emergency. Pupils should be instructed to stay on the vehicle until alternative transport arrives. If the situation is deemed to be dangerous, the pupils should be guided to a safe place by the driver or escort.
- Not have any physical contact with any pupil except to provide emergency assistance or in other exceptional circumstances. The driver must not enter into discussions of an inappropriate nature with pupils. A breach of these conditions may result in immediate suspension or removal from school transport provision.
- Only use an alternative pick-up or drop-off other than a designated stop when a pupil's safety is at risk.
- Never try to resolve any act of misconduct on the part of a pupil, unless a pupil's behaviour presents a danger to the vehicle or other passengers. In these circumstances, the driver should report the names of the pupils who have been misbehaving or carrying out acts of vandalism to the driver's headquarters, who should then pass the information on to the Education Transport Administrator or the head teacher at the earliest opportunity.

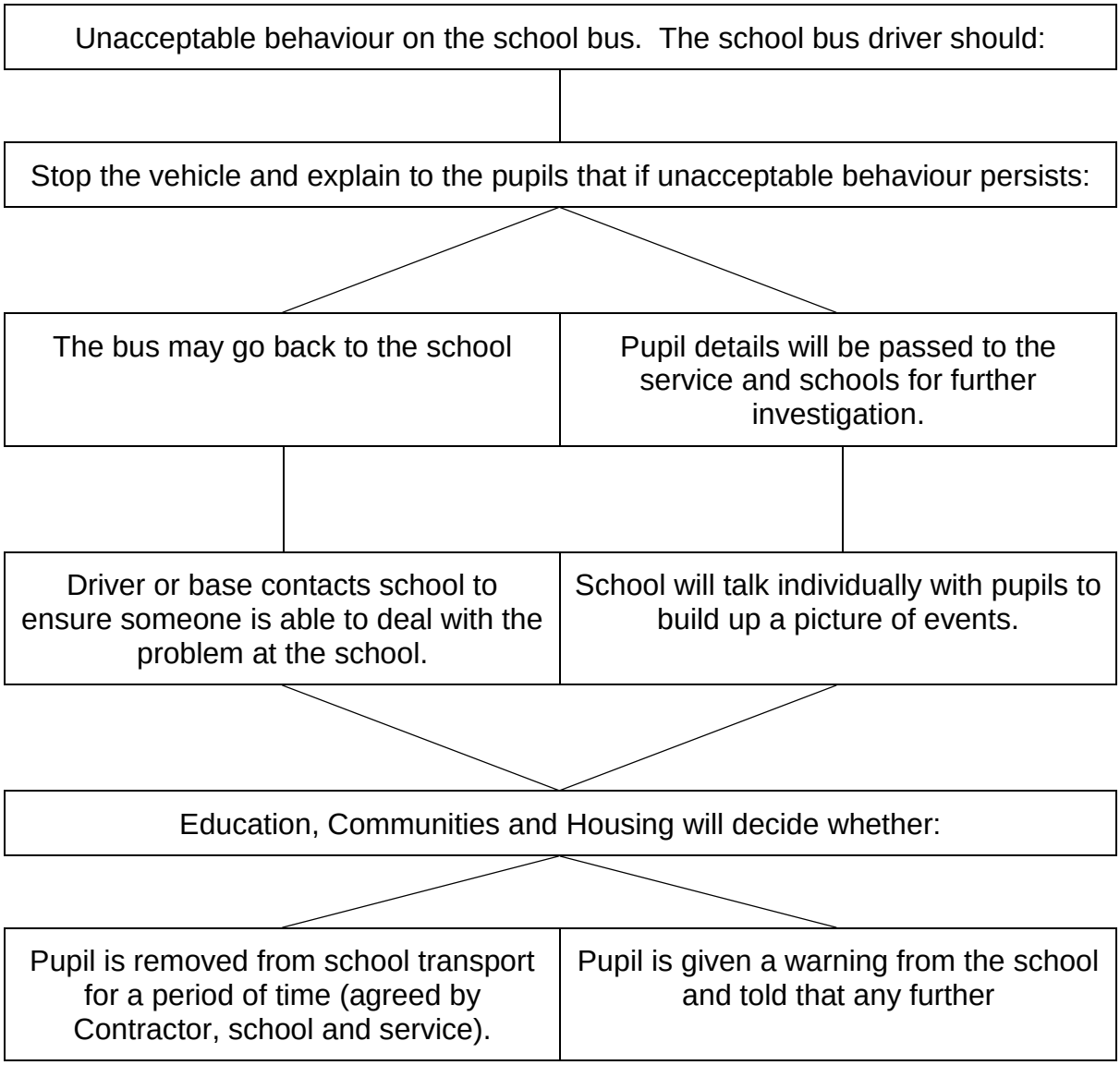
Under no circumstance shall any driver set down or leave unattended any pupil involved in an instance of misbehaviour, other than at the normal terminus of any such pupil's journey. Drivers should refer to the 'advice for drivers' flowchart in Appendix 3 for further information.

- Drivers should NEVER give a signal to a pupil to cross – pupils should only cross when the vehicle has moved away and they can see clearly in both directions before they cross.

Appendix 3

Advice to Drivers Flowchart

In the event of:



Appendix 4

Advice to Drivers in the Event of a Breakdown or Accident

The driver should:

- Try to keep pupils in the vehicle unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Notify base as they will try and organise an alternative vehicle.
- Ensure base contact Education, Communities and Housing immediately by telephone of the circumstances and be kept informed of developments.
- Always remain with the passengers.
- Impress on pupils that they should wait with the vehicle until alternative arrangements are made (unless it is unsafe for them to remain in the vehicle).
- Be alert to non-obvious injuries to pupils, including shock. Always call an ambulance if in doubt.

Appendix 5

Advice to and Responsibilities of Parents and Carers

Parents and Carers

- Should make sure that their child has read and understood the pupil Code of Conduct (see Appendix 6) and that both parent and pupil have signed and returned the appropriate section to the Council.
- Are responsible for advising their child in road safety.
- Are responsible for the proper and safe behaviour of their child when getting on, whilst travelling and getting off the transport provided. They are also responsible between home and the pick-up and drop-off point, immediately prior to boarding school transport each morning and again following the afternoon journey.
- Are responsible for the safety of their child making sure that their child arrives at the pick-up point in good time, and where appropriate that they are looked after until the vehicle comes.
- Should ensure that their child reaches home safely from the drop-off point in the afternoon. It is advisable that parents/ carers wait at their child's drop-off point and accompany them across the road if necessary, as parents/carers are responsible for their child's safety after they have left the school transport vehicle.
- Are ultimately responsible for the proper and safe behaviour of their child when getting on, whilst travelling and getting off the transport provided. They are also responsible between home and the pick-up and drop-off point, immediately prior to boarding school transport each morning and again following the afternoon journey.
- Where necessary should ensure that their child is met when the vehicle returns from school. In the case of younger children, they often forget road safety as they leave the vehicle.
- Should make sure that if their child be unaccompanied between home and the pick-up/drop-off point, that the child knows and follows the safest route using the safest crossing points.
- Need to meet their child if the vehicle stops on the opposite side of the road. Parents should cross over with, or meet their child, do not expect them to cross the road to meet you.
- Should walk the route with their child at least once and talk about the hazards.
- Need to make sure their child knows what to do if the vehicle is late or does not arrive.
- Need to be aware that if the transport fails to arrive on time children should have,a pre-agreed length of time set with the parents. It would be suggested that this may be 20 minutes. During this time, the child should wait for transport before returning or contacting home.
- Should ensure their child is suitably dressed for the weather. They should always wear something bright, preferably with reflective and fluorescent strips or panels.
- Should ensure their child is expected to use a seat belt on school transport. All buses are fitted with seat belts and the service expects pupils to use them.
- Should ensure their child is aware that in the event of an accident or if the bus breaks down, they should follow the driver's instructions and stay in the bus until another one arrives, or other alternative arrangements are made.
- Need to be aware that if their child is involved in anti-social behaviour or causing damage while on school transport, their child may have their entitlement to school transport temporarily suspended or permanently withdrawn. Parents/carers may have

to meet the costs for repair or replacement of equipment or property damaged as a result of their child's actions.

- Need to be aware that if their child is either temporarily or permanently removed from school transport, it is their responsibility to make alternative arrangements and to ensure that their child continues to attend school.

Appendix 6

School Transport Code of Conduct

- The Code of Conduct will be issued to all pupils and parents/carers. Pupils and parents/carers must read and agree to the Code of Conduct before the Council can grant access to school transport.
- Pupils who do not behave on the journey between home and school may have their right to travel withdrawn.
- School transport contractors are instructed to report any serious incident of unacceptable behaviour to the school or service.
- If a pupil is withdrawn from school transport, it is the parents/carers responsibility to make alternative arrangements to ensure their child's attendance at school.
- Returning the agreement to the Code of Conduct means that both the pupil and parent/carer understand the contents of the Code of Conduct and agree to the terms.

Code of Conduct for Bus Users

Before the Journey

Pupils should:

- Ensure that they are at the pick-up point on time and before the bus is due to stop.
- Wait in an orderly, courteous and calm manner.
- Keep away from the kerb and well clear of other traffic.
- Keep clear of moving school buses.
- Only board the bus when it is stationary.
- Not try to get on or off the vehicle until it has stopped.
- If transport fails to arrive on time, agree a length of time with their parent/carer, such as 20 minutes, that they wait before returning or contacting home.
- Make sure they know what to do if the vehicle is late, or does not arrive. Parents/carers should advise of the appropriate course of action under such circumstances.

At the End of the School Journey

Pupils should:

- Be careful not to get coats, bags, or scarves caught in the doors.
- Not use handheld mobile devices when leaving the vehicle (to avoid distraction).
- Stand back from the road as the bus moves off.
- Only cross the road once the bus has moved away and the road is clear in both directions so you can see other vehicles.
- Never take a signal from any driver to cross – they may not be able to see if the road is clear in both directions.

During the Journey (for all modes of transport)

Pupils should:

- Treat the drivers/operators with respect and follow their instructions.
- Remain in their seat and always use the seatbelt provided.
- Not distract the driver/operator, except in an emergency.
- Not open the emergency exits except in an emergency.
- Treat other passengers or members of the public, with care and respect and not bully other pupils.
- Not smoke.
- Not drop any litter or food.
- Not throw things.
- Note that vandalism on school transport or to other people's property will not be tolerated. If damage has been reported parents/carers may have to pay for the damage.
- Follow the instructions given by the operator if the transport breaks down or is in an accident,
- Report any incidents of inappropriate behaviour to the driver/operator or school.

Appendix 2

Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a proposal or changes by anticipating the consequences and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

Should you have any questions or wish for your draft EqIA to be reviewed by our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Adviser, please contact OD@orkney.gov.uk.

1. Identification of the Proposal or Change

Name of proposal or change being assessed.	School Transport Policy 2026
Responsible Service and Directorate.	Education, Communities and Housing
Date of assessment.	October 2026
Is the proposal or change existing? (Please indicate if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Revised School Transport Policy. The policy updates the Council framework for eligibility, provision and operation of school transport, including qualifying distances, shared parenting, nominated passengers, medical and additional support needs, route safety, behaviour and review arrangements.

2. Primary Information

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal or change?	The School Transport Policy 2026 sets out a clear, consistent and transparent framework for determining eligibility for and the operation of school transport across Orkney. The intended outcomes are: • Safe and equitable access to education for pupils who meet school transport eligibility criteria. • Consistent application of qualifying distances and route-safety assessments. • Appropriate individual consideration for pupils with medical needs, disabilities and additional support needs (ASN). • Clear arrangements for shared parenting, nominated passengers and pick-up/drop-off points.

	• Arrangements which reflect Orkney's rural, remote and island geography, including ferry and air travel where required. • Clear behaviour, adverse-weather and review/appeal processes.
Is the proposal or change strategically important?	Yes. The policy supports the Council's statutory responsibilities for education and school transport and contributes to safe, inclusive and equitable access to education across Orkney.
State who is or may be affected by this proposal or change, and how?	• Children and Young People – entitled pupils will receive school transport and some non-entitled pupils may access spare capacity through nominated places. Pupils with medical needs or ASN may receive individual assessment and provision. • Parents and Carers – will use the policy to understand eligibility, applications, pick-up arrangements, their responsibilities and review/appeal processes. • Schools and Education Staff – will apply and support consistent transport, safeguarding, behaviour and ASN arrangements. • Transport Providers and Escorts – will operate services within the Council's safety, conduct and individual-support requirements. • Island and rural communities – may be particularly affected by route availability, journey length, ferries, winter conditions and limited alternative transport.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this proposal or change?	The revised policy has been developed through review of existing school transport arrangements and operational practice and consideration of statutory duties, additional support needs, route safety, children's rights, shared-parenting arrangements and the particular geographical circumstances of Orkney. Implementation should continue to be informed by feedback from pupils, parents/carers, schools, Inclusion staff and transport providers, with equality impacts reviewed where issues emerge.
Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking.	The policy area is directly relevant to equality because access to transport can affect access to education. Particular considerations arise for younger pupils, disabled pupils and pupils with ASN, and pupils whose journeys are affected by rural, remote or island geography. The revised policy includes individual ASN assessment, route-suitability assessment and review arrangements as safeguards. Monitoring of applications, refusals, nominated-place

	withdrawals, complaints, exclusions from transport and reviews will provide further local evidence of differential impact.
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	Households that do not qualify for free school transport may face transport costs or practical barriers, particularly where alternative public transport is limited. This may include families making placing requests, households required to reach a pick-up point, or families affected by withdrawal of a nominated place. Free entitled transport, the nominated-passenger scheme, exceptional consideration and individual medical/ASN assessment can reduce barriers. Socio-economic effects should be considered alongside disability, caring responsibilities and rural/island geography.
Could the proposal or change have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour, and nationality.	No adverse differential impact is anticipated. However, families with language or literacy barriers may require translated, interpreted or otherwise accessible information about applications, conduct and review arrangements.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	No differential impact anticipated. Safeguarding, bullying or harassment concerns should continue to be addressed consistently through school and transport procedures.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	No differential impact anticipated. Any bullying or harassment affecting a pupil's use of transport should be addressed promptly through safeguarding and conduct arrangements.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	No differential impact anticipated. Confidentiality should be protected and any bullying or harassment affecting access to transport should be addressed promptly.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	Potential positive impact in individual cases. Pregnancy-related mobility or health needs may make walking or ordinary transport unsuitable and should be considered through individual medical assessment and reasonable adjustment where appropriate.
6. Age: people of different ages.	Positive impact. The policy recognises that age affects safe walking expectations, including different statutory qualifying distances for pupils under eight and older pupils and the Council's reduced 1.5-mile winter threshold. Age and maturity are also relevant to route and pick-up/drop-off safety.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	No differential impact anticipated. Where operational arrangements interact with religious observance, individual circumstances can be considered where reasonable and compatible with safe and efficient provision.

8. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	Positive impact. The policy contains specific medical and ASN arrangements and provides for individual consideration of mobility, communication, health, sensory and behavioural needs, escorts, active travel suitability and journey complexity. Reasonable adjustments must be considered in eligibility, conduct and review decisions.
9. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No differential impact anticipated. Shared-parenting provisions focus on the child's normal residences and transport circumstances rather than the legal relationship status of adults.
10. Caring responsibilities	Mixed impact. Shared-parenting provisions can support families with caring responsibilities. However, assumptions that a responsible adult can accompany a pupil to a pick-up point may be more difficult for some carers, including lone parents, disabled carers and families with competing caring or work responsibilities. Exceptional circumstances should be considered.
11. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Mixed impact. Free entitled transport can reduce household costs and support attendance. Non-entitled families, placing-request families and households affected by nominated-place withdrawal may face additional cost or practical barriers. The review and exceptional-circumstances processes provide safeguards, and impacts should be monitored.
12. Care experienced	No specific adverse impact identified solely on the basis of care experience. Where a care-experienced pupil has ASN, disability, changing residence or other exceptional circumstances, these should be considered individually through the relevant transport, ASN and review arrangements.

3. Impact Assessment	
Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	Yes. Potential differential impacts require active management in relation to disability/ASN, age, caring responsibilities and socio-economic disadvantage. Particular attention is also required where these factors intersect with remote and island geography.
Does the analysis above identify any potential negative impacts?	Yes. Potential negative impacts could arise if reasonable adjustments are not considered, if medical/ASN evidence requirements are applied rigidly, or where withdrawal of nominated transport or transport following behaviour creates a barrier to education.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes. There is sufficient information to approve and implement the policy with mitigation and monitoring. The EqIA should be reviewed if monitoring identifies unequal outcomes or

	if material changes are made to eligibility, nominated passenger, ASN, route-safety or placing-request arrangements.

4. Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Please complete the following action plan where you have identified any differential impacts or potential negative impacts in Section 3 of the Equality Impact Assessment. The actions below are recommended to minimise identified risks and support consistent equality-conscious implementation.

Impact Identified	Action to be taken	Owner	How will it be monitored	Date Action to be completed
Disability / ASN: risk of rigid application eligibility.	Ensure eligibility decisions explicitly consider reasonable adjustments, individual need and disability/ASN-related behaviour.	Education Transport / Inclusion Group	Review decision templates, complaints and appeals; sample case review.	At implementation and ongoing
Caring responsibilities / pick-up points: adult accompaniment may not be practicable for every household.	Consider individual and exceptional circumstances where the expected accompaniment or pick-up arrangement creates a significant barrier to education.	Education Transport	Monitor requests for alternative stops, exceptional decisions, complaints and reviews.	Ongoing
Socio-economic disadvantage / nominated places: loss or absence of free transport may create cost and access barriers.	Give clear notice and reasons for allocation/withdrawal decisions; signpost review arrangements; consider equality and exceptional circumstances before withdrawal where appropriate.	Service Manager (Resources)	Monitor nominated-place withdrawals, complaints and review outcomes.	Ongoing

5. Sign and Date	
Signature:	
Name:	Andrew Hamilton
Date:	06/10/26

Island Communities Impact Assessment

OIC School Transport Policy 2026

Preliminary Considerations	Response
Please provide a brief description or summary of the policy, strategy or service under review for the purposes of this assessment.	This policy sets out the Council's arrangements for providing home-to-school transport for eligible pupils. It establishes eligibility criteria, transport provision arrangements, responsibilities of all parties, appeals processes and arrangements for pupils requiring additional support. The policy seeks to ensure equitable access to education whilst recognising the unique circumstances of rural and island communities.
Step 1 – Develop a clear understanding of your objectives	Response
What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?	The policy aims to ensure equitable access to education through safe, inclusive and sustainable transport arrangements; reduce inequalities experienced by pupils living in rural, remote and island communities; support children's rights and wellbeing; and ensure transport decisions are transparent, evidence-based and responsive to individual need.
Do you need to consult?	No, there has been no legislative change and the revised policy retains the Council's existing eligibility framework.
How are islands identified for the purpose of the policy, strategy or service?	The assessment applies to all inhabited islands within Orkney, particularly those whose pupils require ferry, air or multi-modal transport arrangements to access education.
What are the intended impacts/outcomes and how do these potentially differ in the islands?	The intended outcome is that all children can access education safely regardless of location. For island communities, the policy has greater significance because educational access often depends upon ferry services, air services, school accommodation and complex transport arrangements.

Is the policy, strategy or service new?	No. This is an updated version of an existing policy which has been revised to align with current Scottish Government guidance and policy requirements.
Step 2 – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders	Response
What data is available about the current situation in the islands?	Current transport arrangements include daily and weekly ferry travel, air travel from certain islands, transport to Papdale Halls of Residence and dedicated school transport services across the islands. Existing operational experience demonstrates the importance of tailored transport provision for island pupils.
Do you need to consult?	Not specifically for completion of this assessment. Ongoing consultation through schools, parent councils and transport operators should continue.
How does any existing data differ between islands?	Travel requirements vary significantly depending on island geography, ferry links, air links, weather vulnerability and access to secondary education. Some pupils require daily travel while others require boarding arrangements at Papdale Halls of Residence.
Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?	Yes. The policy contains specific sections addressing ferry travel, air travel, weather-related disruption, supported accommodation, ASN transport provision and flexibility to consider individual circumstances.
Step 3 – Consultation	Response
Who do you need to consult with?	Schools, island communities, parent councils, pupils, transport operators, and officers responsible for education and transport
How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales?	Consultation should take place as part of future policy reviews and service redesigns through established stakeholder engagement processes.

What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?	Whether transport arrangements remain reliable and accessible; whether ferry and air travel arrangements meet educational needs; whether weather-related disruption is being managed effectively; and whether pupils experience barriers to educational access.
What information has already been gathered through consultations and what concerns have been raised previously by island communities?	Previous engagement has highlighted the importance of reliable transport links, minimising journey times, addressing weather disruption, maintaining educational access and recognising the unique circumstances of island pupils.
Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?	Yes.
Step 4 – Assessment	Response
Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?	Yes. Pupils living on islands are disproportionately affected by transport policy because educational access may depend on ferry transport, air travel, boarding accommodation, complex journey arrangements and weather-dependent services.
Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?	Potential barriers include weather disruption, ferry cancellations, longer journey times, dependence on transport infrastructure and reduced flexibility where transport services are limited.
How will you address these?	Thorough continued engagement with stakeholders, weather contingency procedures, supported accommodation arrangements, safety route assessments and ongoing review of transport provision.

You must now determine whether in your opinion your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community, which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).

If your answer is **No** to the above question, a full ICIA will NOT be required and **you can proceed to Step 6**.
If the answer is **Yes**, an ICIA must be prepared and y**ou should proceed to Step 5**.

To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:

• Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as different levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)? • Are these different effects likely? • Are these effects significantly different? • Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the Scottish mainland or between island groups?	
Step 5 – Preparing your ICIA	Response
In Step 5, you should describe the likely significantly different effect of the policy, strategy or service:	Island pupils depend more heavily on transport provision to access education. The policy therefore has a greater direct effect on island communities than it does on communities with local school access. The policy's consideration of ferry, air and multi-modal transport are essential to achieving equitable educational access.
Assess the extent to which you consider that the policy, strategy or service can be developed or delivered in such a manner as to improve or mitigate, for island communities, the outcomes resulting from it.	The policy already includes a strong recognition of island circumstances. Continued monitoring in relation to specific island circumstances will further improve outcomes.
Consider alternative delivery mechanisms and whether further consultation is required.	Continue exploring integration with national free travel schemes, digital communication systems for disruption alerts and improved coordination between education and transport services. Future consultation should be undertaken during policy review period
Describe how these alternative delivery mechanisms will improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	Improved communication, service coordination and flexibility would reduce disruption and provide greater certainty for pupils and families.
Identify resources required to improve or mitigate outcomes for island communities.	Continued funding for bus, ferry and air travel, support for boarding accommodation where required, transport administration capacity and ongoing transport route assessments.
Stage 6 – Making adjustments to your work	Response

Should delivery mechanisms/mitigations vary in different communities?	Yes. Island circumstances require different solutions, including ferry services, air transport and supported accommodation arrangements which are not required in most mainland communities.
Do you need to consult with island communities in respect of mechanisms or mitigations?	Existing engagement arrangements are considered sufficient, though ongoing dialogue should be maintained.
Have island circumstances been factored into the evaluation process?	Yes. The policy explicitly recognises island travel requirements, weather impacts, ferry and air services and remote community needs.
Have any island-specific indicators/targets been identified that require monitoring?	No specific indicators have been identified. However, transport reliability; journey times; ferry and air travel disruptions; island pupil attendance; transport appeals; and parent satisfaction levels will continue to be monitored.
How will outcomes be measured on the islands?	Through attendance data, transport complaints and appeals, route reviews, stakeholder feedback and regular policy review exercises.
How has the policy, strategy or service affected island communities?	The policy is expected to have a positive effect by supporting continued access to education and reducing barriers associated with living on an island.
How will lessons learned in this ICIA inform future policy making and service delivery?	Monitoring outcomes will help identify emerging transport challenges and ensure future revisions continue to address the needs of island pupils and communities.
Step 7 – Publishing your ICIA	Response
Have you presented your ICIA in an Easy Read format?	No, but this would be possible on request.
Does it need to be presented in Gaelic or any other language?	Not currently considered necessary.
Where will you publish your ICIA and will relevant stakeholders be able to easily access it?	Attached as an appendix to the Committee Report and on the OIC website alongside the School Transport Policy.

Who will sign off your final ICIA and why?	James Wylie – Director of Education, Communities and Housing, in accordance with Council policy.

ICIA completed by:	Andrew Hamilton
Position:	Service Manager (Resources)
Signature:	
Date complete:	6/10/2026

ICIA approved by:	James Wylie
Position:	Director, Education, Communities and Housing
Signature:	
Date complete:	06/10/2026