

## Appendix 9 - Transport Implications and Considerations

This appendix paper sets out what is known about current transport arrangements and processes and what the impact and therefore actions might need to be about changes to the secondary school admission arrangements in the city.

### Policy Overview

The government outlines the Council's statutory duties in relation to providing transport assistance for pupils to attend school. These are detailed in guidance that can be found [here](#). In addition to making provision for eligible children the Council has discretionary power to arrange travel to school for other children.

Travel arrangements need to be suitable for the needs of the children for which they are made and there should be a transparent process so that parents can appeal a decision about travel to school for their child.

The Council also has a duty to promote sustainable and active travel to school.

The guidance notes that schools should support councils to deliver their home-to-school travel functions, for example, by promoting good behaviour on transport.

Statutory walking distances are used to determine whether a child is eligible for free travel to school. They are the distance beyond which a child who is attending their nearest suitable school is eligible for free travel arranged by their local authority. Where a child lives within the statutory walking distance, the parent is responsible for arranging their child's travel to school. There is no expectation that the child will walk. It is for the parent to determine what arrangements would be suitable for their child.

In addition, a child is eligible for free travel to school if they attend their nearest suitable school, and it is within the statutory walking distance of their home, and the nature of the route means they could not be expected to walk there in reasonable safety even if accompanied by their parent, and there is no alternative route within the statutory walking distance that they would be able to walk in reasonable safety, even if accompanied by their parent.

The statutory walking distances are:

- A child under the age of 8 is eligible for free travel to their nearest suitable school if it is more than 2 miles from their home.
- A child aged 8 years or over is eligible for free travel to their nearest suitable school if it is more than 3 miles from their home.

A child is also eligible for free travel to school if they attend their nearest suitable school, and it is within the statutory walking distance of their home, and they could not reasonably be expected to walk there because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, even if they were accompanied by their parent.

To be eligible on these grounds, a child does not need to have an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP), attend a special school or live beyond the statutory walking distance.

The guidance also details that entitlement to travel assistance is extended to support low-income families to exercise school choice. A child is eligible for free travel to school if they are eligible for free school meals and they are:

- aged 11 to 16 years, and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools provided it is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or
- aged 11 to 16 years, attend a school that is more than 2 but not more than 15 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home

The guidance confirms that, as a general guide, the maximum journey time for a child of primary school age should be 45 minutes each way, and 75 minutes each way for a child of secondary school age, including any time taken to walk to a pick-up point. It also states that, wherever possible, a pupil should not be expected to make several changes on public transport.

The Council's own home to school transport [policy](#) confirms the local delivery of the requirements set out in the government guidance. All applications are considered individually and discretion is available to the Council to provide assistance with travel when considered appropriate on a case by case basis.

### Current local arrangements

There are a number of bus routes in the city that can be used by children to attend secondary school. The table below shows services that specifically support pupils to attend schools in the city. These services are a combination of commercial and supported bus routes.

School	Dedicated School Service*
Blatchington Mill School	93, 27B, 5B
BACA	70
CNCS	14/14C, 55, 48, 59A, 73, 91, 95, 95A
Dorothy Stringer School	55, 94, 94A
Hove Park School	55, 71, 93,
King's School	6, 96, 98
Longhill High School	2, 22, 72, 72A, 76, 76A,
Patcham High School	74, 75
PACA	71A, 55
Varndean	55, 94, 94A

\*information supplied by Brighton and Hove Buses

Patronage on services is known but due to commercial sensitivities cannot be shared externally to the Council.

The Council currently spends approximately £339,000 per year on providing supported bus routes. The routes and contributions are detailed below.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Cost £,000</b>
72	68
74	32
75	34
76	28
76A	34
91	44
95	51
95A	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>339</b>

The Council currently supplies approximately 600 bus passes to qualifying pupils. attending school at a cost of £445 per pupil. This includes approximately 250 bus passes for pupils eligible for FSM. The cost per pupil will be expected to change to reflect inflationary pressures prior to September 2026. This is a current total spend of approximately £267,000.

The Council does not routinely provide train passes to pupils but are not precluded from doing so. No concessionary fares are agreed between the Council and the train operators. An example of annual season tickets from stations in the city are shown below.

<b>Route</b>	<b>Annual cost (child 5-15)</b>
Brighton – Hove	£352.00
Brighton – Portslade	£472.00
Brighton – Falmer	£510.00
Portslade – Falmer	£770.00
Hove - Falmer	£644.00
Hove – London Road	£466.00
London Road - Falmer	£442.00

There are already mitigations in place to support the safety of pupils travelling on bus routes in the city. All buses are equipped with CCTV cameras for safety and monitoring. Driver training includes dealing with challenging passenger behaviour. Bus supervisors are sometimes deployed on routes where concerns are reported and there is a dedicated schools liaison supervisor. Brighton and Hove Buses also work with schools on behaviour agreements, reporting protocols and offer free travel to teachers to use routes involving pupils.

Any reports of concerning behaviour or incidents will be collected by Brighton and Hove Buses and, where necessary, there will be liaison with Sussex Police. The Council's Education Safeguarding Officer has no record of any referrals or concerns relating to safety on school transport and there are no patterns of incident reporting to the community safety team.

## Developing future arrangements

A core public transport network across the city is key to ensure that pupils will be able to travel to school in future years. Should there be adjustments to admission arrangements it will be necessary to ensure that pupils in Years 8 - 11 are able to get to school conveniently whilst adapting the transport options for those starting school in September 2026.

The Council has undertaken work with Jacobs to identify the capacity and coverage of bus routes in the city taking account of the proposals to change the catchment area boundary between Longhill High School and Doroty Stringer/Varndean schools and reducing the PAN of Longhill High, Dorothy Stringer and Blatchington Mill schools.

Some planning assumptions have been made; the proposals are expected to increase travel between catchments both from pupils in single school catchment areas and from pupils not able to receive a place in their catchment area school.

The analysis relies on an assumption that families will favour adjacent catchments and schools with more positive Ofsted inspection outcomes.

This review focused on expected capacity and coverage impacts for services to each school.

**Capacity** - risk of overcrowding or pupils unable to board buses has been considered.

- This relies on loading data from Brighton and Hove Buses, mode splits from National Travel Survey data and journey planner / online bus maps for distribution onto services.
- Only 'final leg' services known to be used by pupils to reach schools have been assessed – connecting 'first leg' services have not been considered (e.g. traveling from home to the city centre to connect with a school service).
- The capacity assessment is sensitive to the proportion of spaces available to Open Admissions (OA).
- Results have been 'stress-tested' by considering peak vs mean loadings and vehicle sizes.
- RAG assessment considers if the stress-testing indicates a high (R), medium (A) or low (G) risk of capacity issues.

**Coverage** – considered the risk that pupils placed through the 'Open Admission' criteria will struggle to use buses to get to their preferred school due to long or difficult journeys and either switch to car or be unable to take up the opportunity.

- This has been assessed using isochrones showing the bus travel time to each school across the catchments (in bands showing 15, 30, 45 and 60-minute maximum journey times, including walk and waiting times).

- This coverage assessment used Podaris, a widely-used and reliable software tool for accessibility analysis, based on data for the current bus network as a confirmed base for analysis.
- Both direct journeys (typically preferred by pupils) and those requiring up to one interchange have been considered.
- RAG assessment has considered if the accessibility analysis indicates a poor (R), partial (A) or acceptable (G) match of student flows to the coverage of the origin catchment.

## Summary

The impact review has found that there are a range of potential impacts on the City's bus network resulting from the proposed introduction of Open Admissions (OA), reductions in PANs and boundary changes.

These impacts are predominantly issues with coverage potentially limiting affected pupil's use of bus to get to and from their school, particularly for OA pupils at the central catchment schools.

It should be noted that RAG scoring is high-level and there can be material differences in impact severity within the same RAG score.

It is recommended that as more information emerges about the specific details and context for updated admissions arrangements, more detailed work to assess pupils' needs and to develop a management strategy and mitigations take place.

School	PAN	5% Open Admission RAG		
		Places	Capacity	Coverage
Brighton Aldridge Community Academy	180	0		
Hove Park & Blatchington Mill	480	24		
Longhill High School	210	11		
Patcham High School	225	12		
Portslade Aldridge Community Academy	220	0		
Varndean & Dorothy Stringer	600	30		

Where there are concerns for coverage and capacity the Council will need to consider what additional analysis and mitigations will need to be put in place for September 2026. Additional analysis will need to be undertaken after National Offer Day (March 2026) and before the start of the new academic year (September 2026). This will be required to assess if there were journeys to school that would exceed the 75 minute journey time or where no suitable service exists.

When doing so consideration must be given to how circumstances can change between a school place being offered and the pupil starting secondary school in September. For pupils starting in September 2024 there were 249 places reallocated

during this time which is 10% of the cohort. A further 24 places at community schools were offered to pupils from a waiting list during the Autumn term 2024.

As a result of this high pupil mobility, prior to the start of term, it is important to ensure the overall network is resilient to changes and by necessity, any additional capacity required will only be apparent in the months leading to September 2026.

### **Potential implications**

The Council already invests £339,000 in the bus network to facilitate pupils getting to school. In future years, this investment could be re-prioritised from the existing routes to support any new journeys that are required.

As part of the consultation on admission arrangements the council has not proposed any changes to its home to school transport policy but has signalled throughout the consultation that a review of the Council's policy will occur before September 2026. This is where mitigations to the impact of the determined admission arrangements can be considered.

The Council currently meets the statutory requirements placed on it by central government but has the potential to widen qualifying measures if it chooses to do so.

Before forming the current administration, the Labour Group indicated a policy intention to provide free bus travel for under-19s still in education. Any review undertaken will explore how the Council can continue to work to this policy aspiration. In addition, the review can explore what other entitlements to travel assistance beyond the Council's statutory duties, may be considered appropriate in response to decisions taken on the admission arrangements.

Currently the definition of 'nearest suitable school' in relation to secondary education means the catchment area school (or schools in a dual catchment area) for those able to attend a mainstream school, except for children whose family meets the criteria for low income, where the suitable school may be one of the three closest schools.

The definition of 'nearest suitable school' could be changed to take account of the introduction of priorities 5 and 6 in the proposed admission arrangements.

The following table is copied from the Cabinet report in December 2024.

September 2026	No. pupils in catchment area requiring a catchment area school	No. FSM places available for out of catchment pupils	No. of pupils unable to be placed in catchment area schools(s)
PACA	221	0	5
Hove Pk & Blatch Mill	434	7	57
DS & Varndean	624	0	144

Longhill	175	0	0
Patcham	205	19	44
BACA	129	0	0

Under the forecast made at that time, it is estimated that in September 2026 26 pupils will be offered a place under criteria 5 and the cost associated with this would be £11,570.

With 5% of places made available under criteria 6 the estimated cost to provide these pupils with travel assistance in September 2026 would be £33,820.

School	Proposed PAN	5 % of places	Estimated cost
Blatchington Mill	300	15	£6,675
Dorothy Stringer	300	15	£6,675
Hove Park	180	9	£4,005
Longhill High	210	11	£4,895
Patcham High	225	11	£4,895
Varndean	300	15	£6,675
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>£33,820</b>

Currently the eligibility criteria to receive travel assistance for distance is 3 miles. The council could determine to reduce this requirement, as part of its own policy initiative to 2 miles and therefore make it the equivalent of the assistance to low income families. This will be part of further exploratory work on transport assistance. On National Offer Day 2024 32 pupils were directed to a school between 2 and 3 miles away, but only 5 of them ended up attending the allocated school in October 2024.

Modeling where all FSM pupils in catchment will be considered under the FSM priority (not asking about FSM eligibility on application) with priority 1-3 included in FSM count						
20% open admissions		10% open admissions		5% open admissions		
	% of intake FSM eligible	Potential number of catchment area pupils not offered a catchment area school	% of intake FSM eligible	Potential number of catchment area pupils not offered a catchment area school	% of intake FSM eligible	Potential number of catchment area pupils not offered a catchment area school
Dorothy Stringer	35.11%	144	34.46%	84	34.13%	54
Varndean	35.10%		34.37%		34.01%	
Blatchington Mill	33.04%	57	31.52%	9	30.76%	0
Hove Park	21.16%		19.91%		19.96%	
Patcham	27.03%	43	26.04%	21	25.50%	9

Taking the modelling shared in the report showing the potential number of catchment area pupils not offered a catchment school it would be possible to calculate the

maximum cost of providing all these pupils with a bus pass, irrespective of qualifying criteria.

<b>Catchment area</b>	<b>Number of children not offered 5%</b>	<b>Cost at 5%</b>
DS/V	54	£24,030
BM/HP	0	£0
PHS	9	£4,005
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>£28,035</b>

Over the following 5 years costs would rise as new pupils begin secondary school and are considered under the new transport assistance criteria. It will be expected that costs will rise each year although, depending on the policy initiative, the annual uplift in cost may vary depending on factors such as falling overall pupil numbers, varying numbers of pupils in each catchment area, the PAN of each secondary school and the pattern of parental preferences. In addition, the cost of travel assistance can be expected to rise due to inflationary pressures. Therefore the figures in the following table are purely illustrative.

**Summary Table of Potential Costs – full cost implementation not reflecting potential factors outlined above**

<b>Option</b>	<b>No. of pupils</b>	<b>Year 1 cost – Sept 2026</b>	<b>Estimated full implementation cost (5 years) per year</b>
Provide all pupils offered places under criteria 6 (5%)	76	£33,820	£169,100
Provide all pupils offered places under criteria 5	26	£11,570	£57,850
Provide all pupils not able to be placed in their catchment area school due to open admission at 5%	63	£28,035	£140,175