



Transport and Main Roads
Education and Training

Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses

Effective from 23 January 2006

Supporting safe travel on buses

Contents

- 1. Purpose 2

- 2. Legislative status of this document 2

- 3. Rights and responsibilities of those involved with student bus travel 3

- 4. Roles of those involved with students travelling on buses 5
 - 4.1 Students 5
 - 4.2 Parents/carers 6
 - 4.3 Bus drivers 6
 - 4.4 Bus operators 6
 - 4.5 Conveyance committees 6
 - 4.6 School principals 6
 - 4.7 Department of Transport and Main Roads 6

- 5. Categories of breaches of the Code of Conduct 7

- 6. Responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct 7
 - 6.1 Procedures and principles for bus operators and drivers to observe 7
 - 6.2 Guidelines for responding to breaches 8
 - 6.3 Repeat offenders 8
 - 6.4 Review process for students refused travel 8
 - 6.5 Students with disabilities 8

- 7. Procedures for bus operators and drivers for dealing with breaches of the Code of Conduct 9
 - Category 1 – Unacceptable behaviour 10
 - Category 2 – Dangerous behaviour 11
 - Category 3 – Dangerous and destructive behaviour 12
 - Category 4 – Life-threatening behaviour 13

- 8. Review process for students refused travel 14

1. Purpose

A significant number of school students in Queensland travel on buses to attend school each day. All students have the right to a safe and enjoyable journey between home and school. In the morning, a pleasant trip to school can set the tone for a day of productive learning.

The overwhelming majority of students behave appropriately whilst on buses and contribute to enjoyable travel. However the inappropriate behaviour of some students travelling on public transport can spoil the trip for other students.

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to:

- assist bus operators in the management of situations where students behave inappropriately on buses; and
- encourage and support appropriate behaviour on school buses.

This document also outlines:

- the roles, rights and responsibilities of students, parents/carers, bus drivers, bus operators, conveyance committees (where kilometre-based school bus services operate), school principals and the Department of Transport and Main Roads in contributing to safe and enjoyable travel
- the framework which identifies categories of misbehaviour
- situations where bus operators may refuse travel in response to breaches of the Code of Conduct.

This document is supported by the *Managing Student Behaviour on School Buses: Training package for use by School Bus Operators* (Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2002). The package provides a range of preventative strategies for bus drivers to use in ensuring students behave appropriately and within the intent of the Code of Conduct. The package also outlines how bus operators can support their drivers through a session on managing student behaviour strategies.

The Code of Conduct applies to all primary and secondary school students in Queensland who use buses either to travel to and from school or for other school-related activities, for example school sports, excursions and camps.

In many areas across the state effective arrangements are in place between bus operators, conveyance committees and school principals to ensure appropriate behaviour on buses. This ensures that cases of misbehaviour on buses are dealt with promptly and appropriately. These arrangements may continue provided they are consistent with the principles of these guidelines.

An effective partnership between bus operators, schools and parents is needed to develop and encourage appropriate behaviours on school buses.

This framework was developed in consultation with the Department of Education and Training, bus industry groups, parent groups, principals' associations, unions and non-state school authorities.

2. Legislative status of this document

This document has been approved by the Chief Executive, Department of Transport and Main Roads, as a Code of Conduct applying in relation to school students travelling on buses, in accordance with section 139 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 2005*.

The Code and its associated procedures also apply to bus drivers and bus operators. In this Code, 'buses' means any forward control passenger vehicle, off-road passenger vehicle, light bus or heavy bus as defined in Schedule 8 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 2005*.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads will support actions taken in line with the procedures outlined in this document.

The terms Code and Code of Conduct are used in this document as an abbreviation of the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses.

3. Rights and responsibilities of those involved with student bus travel

Stakeholders	Rights	Responsibilities
Students	<p>Students have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safe and comfortable travel • be treated with courtesy • travel free from verbal and physical abuse • expect their property to be safe • board and disembark in a safe manner • enjoy their travel. 	<p>Students have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to safe and enjoyable travel for all passengers • follow the Code of Conduct and accept the rules of bus operators • be responsible for their attitudes and actions • respect the rights of other passengers • treat bus drivers with respect • follow direction/instruction of drivers • report any unsafe behaviour to drivers/schools • express concerns in an appropriate manner • demonstrate self control • be cooperative.
Parents/carers	<p>Parents/carers have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safe and comfortable travel for their students • be respected and treated fairly by drivers, bus operators and students • receive accurate information about the behaviour of their students • have concerns listened to and considered in a fair manner. 	<p>Parents/carers have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the safe travel of their students to and from the bus service • ensure their students have an understanding of the Code of Conduct • maintain lines of communication with bus operators or schools to discuss concerns • treat bus operators and their employees fairly and with respect • be available for discussions about the behaviour of their students and be prepared to support decisions arising out of such discussions • pay for costs of repairs of malicious damage to bus or property caused by their students.
Bus drivers	<p>Bus drivers have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be trained in behaviour management strategies and the Code of Conduct • feel safe and be free from dangerous actions from students and others • be treated with courtesy and respect free from physical and verbal abuse • receive help and support from the bus operators, parents/carers and schools, as required • conduct their duties in an environment free from excessive noise. 	<p>Bus drivers have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure students travel in a safe environment • inform students on the rules of the bus and the Code of Conduct • ensure they follow the Code of Conduct procedures and directives • utilise preventative and reasonable behaviour management strategies where needed • use non-discriminatory and appropriate language and practices at all times • treat students with courtesy.

Stakeholders	Rights	Responsibilities
Bus operators	Bus operators have the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be treated with courtesy and respect free from physical and verbal abuse • receive accurate reports from drivers about behaviour of students • receive assistance and support when required from drivers, parents/carers and schools as required • seek assistance from the Department of Transport and Main Roads when needed on the operation of the Code of Conduct. 	Bus operators have a responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure their drivers know the company policies and procedures to be followed when students breach the Code of Conduct • ensure all Code of Conduct procedures are followed • provide drivers with training in the management of the behaviour of students • treat students, parents/carers and schools with courtesy • use non-discriminatory and appropriate language and practices at all times • work in partnership with schools to implement the Code of Conduct • ensure students and drivers travel in a safe environment.
Conveyance committees (where applicable)	Conveyance committees have the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect safe and comfortable travel for students • receive accurate information about behaviour of students when discussing issues of concern • their members being treated with respect and free of physical and verbal abuse. 	Conveyance committees have a responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treat all discussions confidentially • adhere to the Code of Conduct processes and procedures • encourage students to adhere to expected behaviours when travelling on buses.
Schools/principals	Schools/principals have the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect safe and comfortable travel for their students • raise student travel issues directly with bus operators, parents/carers and students • be informed about the Code of Conduct and its associated procedures. 	Schools/principals have the responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure effective communication between students, parents/carers and bus operators is maintained • promote appropriate behaviour on buses with students, teachers and parents/carers • include school bus behaviour within the school's behaviour management policy • support bus operators in the application of procedures and processes of the Code of Conduct.
Department of Transport and Main Roads	The Department of Transport and Main Roads has the right to expect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safe and comfortable travel for students • the implementation of the Code of Conduct by bus operators and drivers • cooperation between all parties to resolve issues of misconduct. 	The Department of Transport and Main Roads has the responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide advice to bus operators in the implementation of the Code of Conduct • investigate complaints about bus operators and/or drivers who have allegedly not acted in accordance with the Code of Conduct guidelines • refer school-related issues to the relevant education authority • monitor and review bus operators' compliance with the Code of Conduct • review a bus operator's decision to refuse travel under the Code of Conduct.

4. Roles of those involved with students travelling on buses

4.1 Students

Each bus service conveying school students has a set of rules or code of behaviour that all school students must follow.

Students are expected to:

- take responsibility for their own behaviour
- follow the requirements set out under the Code of Conduct in order to ensure safe and enjoyable travel to and from home and school, and whilst on school excursions, camps, sports and study trips.

Expected behaviour of students

Expected behaviour	Examples of how to meet the code
Respect other people and property	<p>Students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treat other people and their possessions with respect • follow bus drivers' directions without argument • not interfere with bus property, equipment, shelters and signs by marking or damaging them in any way.
Wait for the bus in an orderly manner	<p>Students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wait well back from the bus until it stops and allow other passengers to leave the bus before boarding • stand quietly without calling out or shouting • not push other people in the line.
Whilst on the bus, conduct yourself in an orderly manner	<p>Students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • always follow instructions from the driver about safety on the bus • show their bus pass, ticket or ID upon request • sit properly on a seat if one is available (in an allocated seat if directed by the driver) • if standing, remain in the area designated by the driver • store school bags under the seat or in appropriate luggage areas • speak quietly and not create unnecessary noise • wear a seat belt where fitted. <p>It is not appropriate or acceptable for students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bully or harass other students or the driver • place feet on the seats • fight, spit or use offensive language • throw any article around or from the bus • consume food or drink, or play music without permission of the driver • smoke (prohibited on all buses) • travel under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or volatile substances • allow any portion of their body to protrude out of the bus windows • stand forward of the front seat • use a mobile phone to send threatening messages or photograph others without consent • distract drivers through use of mobile phones or hand-held computer games.
Use designated stops	It is the responsibility of students to disembark at their correct designated stop.
When alighting from the bus, do so in an orderly manner	<p>Students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wait until the bus stops before standing to get off • alight from the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion • never cross the road in front of the bus. Wait until the bus has moved away and it is safe to do so • use crossings or traffic lights if available.
In case of an emergency or a breakdown, follow the directions of drivers	<p>Students are required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow instructions of drivers at all times • wait until the bus stops before standing to get off • leave the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion • wait in the area indicated by the driver.

4.2 Parents/carers

Parents/carers have responsibility for the behaviour of their students. Accordingly, parents/carers should ensure their students are aware of the Code of Conduct for travel on buses.

It is expected that parents/carers will cooperate with bus operators, conveyance committees (where kilometre-based school bus services operate), and school principals in the management of student behaviour.

Parents/carers who have an issue to raise with drivers must contact the bus operator. It is not appropriate for parents/carers to approach drivers on an issue whilst the bus service is in operation.

In reported cases of misbehaviour, consultation about the behaviour and its consequences will normally occur. The involvement of parents/carers in this consultation is essential to ensure a satisfactory resolution.

4.3 Bus drivers

Drivers of buses have the important role of driving the bus in a safe manner as well as ensuring the safety and security of all passengers. Drivers are also required to issue directions to ensure the safety of all passengers. Consequently, it is important that all passengers respect the authority of drivers while they are in control of a vehicle.

Bus drivers are responsible for the day-to-day management of the behaviour of students travelling to and from school. In cases where students breach the Code of Conduct, drivers will be responsible for following procedures as outlined in Sections 6 and 7. Depending on the nature of the breach, this may involve simply cautioning students or recording the breach as part of the driver's own record, or reporting the incident to the bus operator for follow-up.

It is critical that drivers take action as close to the time of the incident as possible (that is, informing the bus operator and student), thereby ensuring an informed decision and a reasonable resolution to the problem may be made. Leaving a gap of time between an incident and a resolution can often complicate a potential satisfactory outcome for all.

Drivers need to maintain ongoing communication on issues related to student behaviour with their bus operator, in order to support the bus operator's ongoing relationship with schools when following up on incidents.

In addition, it is expected that bus drivers must:

- hold appropriate driver authorisation
- use appropriate language
- ensure they remain with the bus while students are being carried except in cases of emergency or when the bus is stopped (engine off with key removed and handbrake on)
- maintain a written record of student misconduct and report to the bus operator as required in accordance with the bus operator's procedures
- generally maintain personal standards of behaviour in keeping with other professionals who are responsible for the care of students
- advise of dangerous, destructive and life-threatening occurrences to appropriate agencies, for example, police.

Serious cases of failure by drivers to comply with the guidelines in this Code of Conduct may lead to driver authorisation being suspended or cancelled.

4.4 Bus operators

Bus operators carry on the business of providing a public transport service. Bus operators are responsible for providing their drivers with training in managing the behaviour of students on buses and for ensuring they know the policies and procedures to be followed when students breach the Code of Conduct.

In the TransLink area, bus operators should be aware that TransLink Transit Officers are not responsible for the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

Positive and collaborative partnerships between bus operators and schools ensure the Code of Conduct is effectively and promptly implemented when handling students' inappropriate behaviour on school buses. Through such cooperation students become aware that bus operators and schools are dealing with behaviour issues in a consistent way.

Where bus drivers report a breach of the Code of Conduct, the responsibility for follow-up with the parents/carers, school principals, and conveyance committees (if applicable) lies with the bus operator. Bus operators have the authority to refuse a student travel in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 7 of this document.

Serious cases of failure by bus operators to comply with guidelines in this Code of Conduct may lead to operator accreditation being suspended or cancelled.

4.5 Conveyance committees

Conveyance committees have an important role in the administration of kilometre-based school bus services. Their role in assisting bus operators in maintaining the discipline of students on services is essential to the effective management of these services.

Conveyance committees should cooperate with bus operators and school principals to ensure that appropriate behaviour standards are maintained on services.

4.6 School principals

School principals play a key role in advising their students about the Code of Conduct and the consequences of breaching the Code. School principals may provide valuable assistance in suggesting approaches to managing breaches of the Code of Conduct in consultation with bus operators, parents/carers and conveyance committees (if applicable).

Principals play a key role in maintaining positive partnerships with bus operators. This ensures appropriate processes are in place and provides a link between the school's behaviour management plan and the Code of Conduct. This also ensures that students receive fair and consistent handling of their breach by both bus operators and schools.

4.7 Department of Transport and Main Roads

The Department of Transport and Main Roads has overall administrative responsibility for public transport in Queensland. The Department of Transport and Main Roads has responsibility for developing, in consultation with school organisations, the bus industry and parent groups, the Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads' role is to review a bus operator's decision to refuse travel under the Code. This process is outlined in Section 8.

5. Categories of breaches of the Code of Conduct

To promote consistency in responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct, behaviour problems have been divided into four categories.

The lists below are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to be used as an indicator of the types of behaviours under each category. They are intended to be used as a guide by drivers and bus operators in relation to management of behaviour on their buses.

(1) Unacceptable behaviour – this includes behaviours which may be irritating, unpleasant but not physically dangerous behaviours.

- fare evasion
- failing to show a bus pass where required
- eating on the bus (unless for medical reasons or with the permission of the driver)
- using offensive language
- inappropriate interactions by students with bus drivers
- inappropriate use of mobile phones or cameras on the bus
- excessive movement from seat to seat.

(2) Dangerous behaviour – this category includes behaviours where there may be some physical danger to individuals.

- distracting drivers by use of persistent noise
- allowing any part of their body to protrude from the bus
- grabbing trees through the windows
- spitting
- harassing and bullying other passengers
- pushing and shoving when boarding or exiting the bus
- stopping others from disembarking at their stop
- verbally threatening drivers
- standing on steps
- pressing the stop button continually
- swinging on bus handrails
- repeated failure to wear a seatbelt where fitted
- smoking
- distracting drivers through use of mobile phones or hand-held computer games
- using a mobile phone to send threatening messages, photographing others without consent.

(3) Dangerous and destructive behaviour – this category includes behaviours which are very dangerous to individuals, or very destructive.

- throwing objects that have the potential to cause harm or damage
- fighting

- marking or damaging bus property (breaking windows, slashing seats)
- using a seat belt as a weapon
- destruction of bus property
- being under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or volatile substances
- repeated occurrences of dangerous behaviour (see Category 2 examples).

(4) Life-threatening behaviour – this includes highly dangerous behaviours.

- physically attacking drivers or other passengers
- pushing students out through the doors or windows
- recklessly or negligently endangering the safety of other passengers or themselves
- lighting a fire on the bus
- interfering with the safe mechanical operation of the bus
- threatening physical harm with a dangerous weapon.

If appropriate, bus drivers/operators should report any incident involving dangerous, destructive or life-threatening behaviour to the police for appropriate action.

6. Responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct

6.1 Procedures and principles for bus operators and drivers to observe

The procedures for responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct provide a framework within which bus operators should act to manage cases of misbehaviour on buses. In all cases:

- consultation with parents/carers as outlined in the procedures, must take place
- school principals and conveyance committees (if applicable) must be consulted to determine the approach to be taken by bus operators in managing breaches of the Code of Conduct
- consideration should be given to the circumstances surrounding the event and in particular the extent to which the safety, security and well-being of other passengers and drivers are threatened by the behaviour.

When the Code of Conduct has been breached action may range from a caution to refusal of the student's future travel on the bus. Students may be refused travel for a temporary period or in some cases permanently. Where bus operators consider some other arrangement would be the most appropriate course, as opposed to refusing travel, parents/carers must be fully consulted and in agreement with any arrangement concerning their students. While other such arrangements may be an alternative to refusing student travel, bus operators can make such arrangements only after the parents/carers have given written agreement to the bus operator.

6.2 Guidelines for responding to breaches

Specific factors to consider as part of determining the appropriate response to a breach of the Code of Conduct include:

- the threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident
- the age of the student
- whether the breach was a first or one of a series of repeated incidents about which the student has been previously cautioned
- the extent to which the breach distracted the driver.

For example, it would be expected that a more serious response would be required where students are throwing objects from or around the bus than would be required if students were eating on the bus. The lists in Section 5 provide an indication of the seriousness of the various types of behaviours.

The decision by a bus driver to refer a breach to the bus operator for further action will finally depend on the driver determining that such action is required to ensure the ongoing safe operation of the bus and the well-being and security of other passengers. This may mean, for example, that repeated attempts by the driver to control the behaviour have been unsuccessful or the nature of a single breach of the code has been severe enough to warrant further action.

Drivers must record Code of Conduct offences in a diary or log book and notify the bus operator for further action if and when required. The bus operator will determine the category of misbehaviour.

Bus operators should ensure that they retain a written record of actions taken when a breach of the Code of Conduct is referred by a driver for further action.

Bus operators will make the final decision to refuse travel to a student. This will be done only after the matter has been discussed with school principals, parents/carers and conveyance committees (if applicable). It may be considered, following such discussion, that some form of reasonable action other than refusal of travel is appropriate.

A student may be refused travel from:

- (a) the individual bus service on which the student was a passenger at the time of the misbehaviour; or
- (b) all bus services operated by the same bus operator.

Refusal of travel is normally limited to scheduled bus services. A student may be refused travel on journeys directly involving school excursions, sport, study trips, courses at other campuses if:

- the student is currently being refused travel because of a breach to the Code of Conduct on a similar type of journey; and
- the school is unable to provide adequate close supervision of the student during the journey.

However, where a teacher or supervising adult can provide close supervision, the student may be able to travel. In most cases, this will require that the student sit next to the teacher or supervising adult.

When student travel is refused bus operators must:

- notify parents/carers when travel is refused so that alternative travel arrangements can be made
- confirm in writing any verbal advice given to parents/carers

- advise school principals of the details
- notify the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office in cases where students eligible for transport assistance are refused travel.

Where a student uses more than one service provided by different bus operators to travel to school, there may be circumstances where the student is refused travel on one of the bus services. In these situations the student is not automatically refused travel from other bus operators' services. However, it is the parents/carers' responsibility to make alternative transport arrangements including their associated costs for the student over the portion of the trip provided by the bus operator who has refused the student travel.

6.3 Repeat offenders

Where a student has been a repeat offender, for example: three periods of refused travel off the bus under Category 2 offences within a 12 month period, the bus operator may deem it appropriate that the offences collectively warrant a refusal of travel under Category 3, page 12, that is 10 weeks.

The bus operator may need to consider the student's return to the bus is conditional on the parent/carer, student and bus operator signing a written behaviour management agreement setting out conditions for travel. It is recommended that the principal of the school be consulted in the drafting of this agreement. If the student breaches the agreement then refusal of travel is immediate under the higher category.

6.4 Review process for students refused travel

Should parents/carers have any question about decisions taken by bus operators in responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct, they should take the matter to the bus operator concerned. If parents/carers remain dissatisfied with the bus operator's decision, they may contact the nearest Department of Transport and Main Roads office and request a review of the decision. Section 8 of this document details the process for reviews.

Bus operators should note that the Department of Transport and Main Roads may issue an instruction that a bus operator's decision to refuse travel to a student be deferred while the matter is being investigated in consultation with stakeholders. The bus operator and drivers must follow this instruction.

6.5 Students with disabilities

Prior to students with disabilities travelling on buses, liaison between bus operators, schools and parents/carers should occur on an individual case management basis for these students. This liaison should result in bus operators having the appropriate support and information from parents/carers and the school to understand the disability and behaviour of students, and the appropriate travel strategies in place for them.

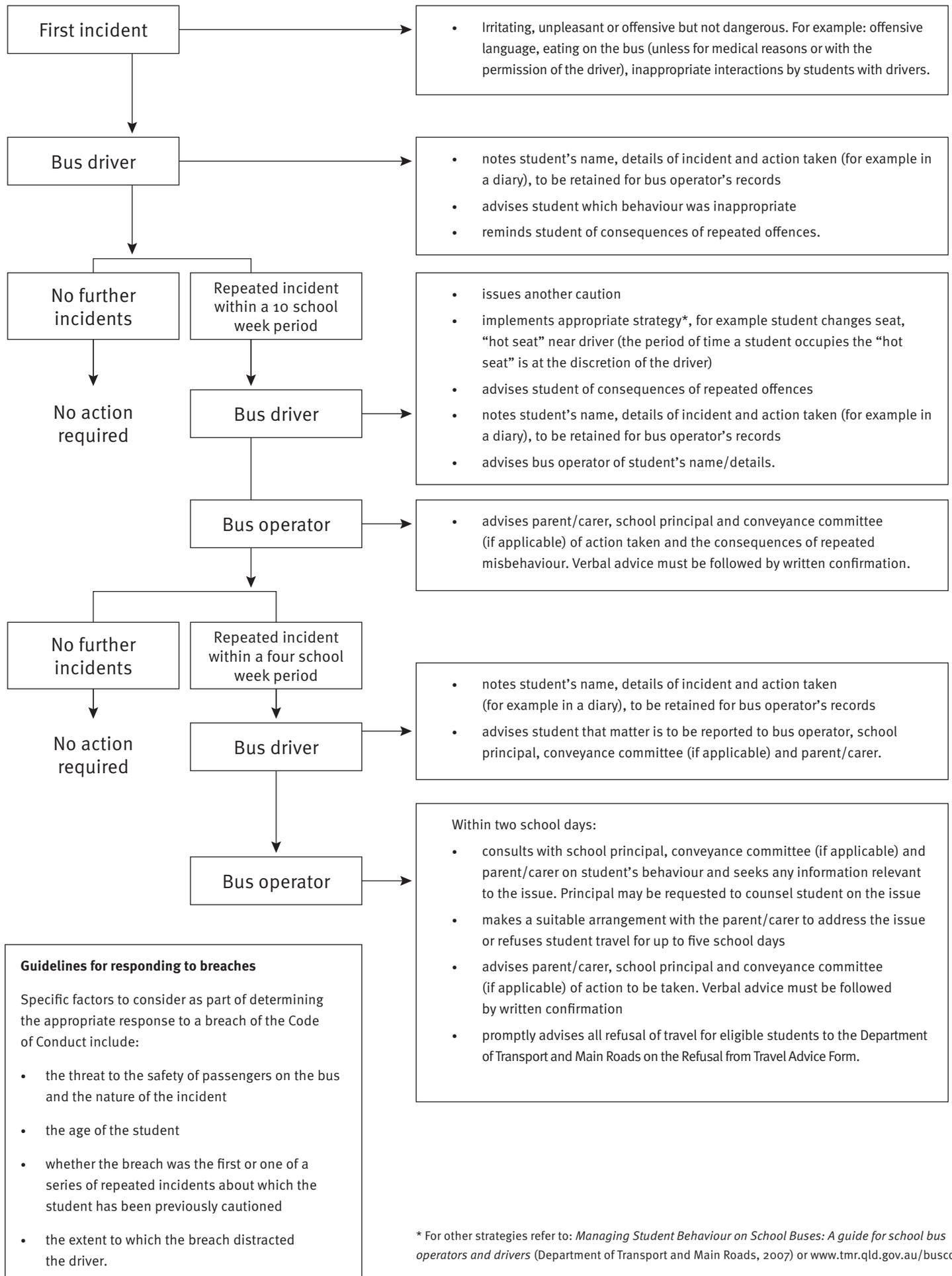
Whilst students with disabilities are covered under the Code of Conduct, it is important to recognise that the behaviour of these students may in fact be their way of communicating a need, and not one of misbehaviour. Bus operators need to take this into account when applying the Code to these students.

7. Procedures for bus operators and drivers for dealing with breaches of the Code of Conduct

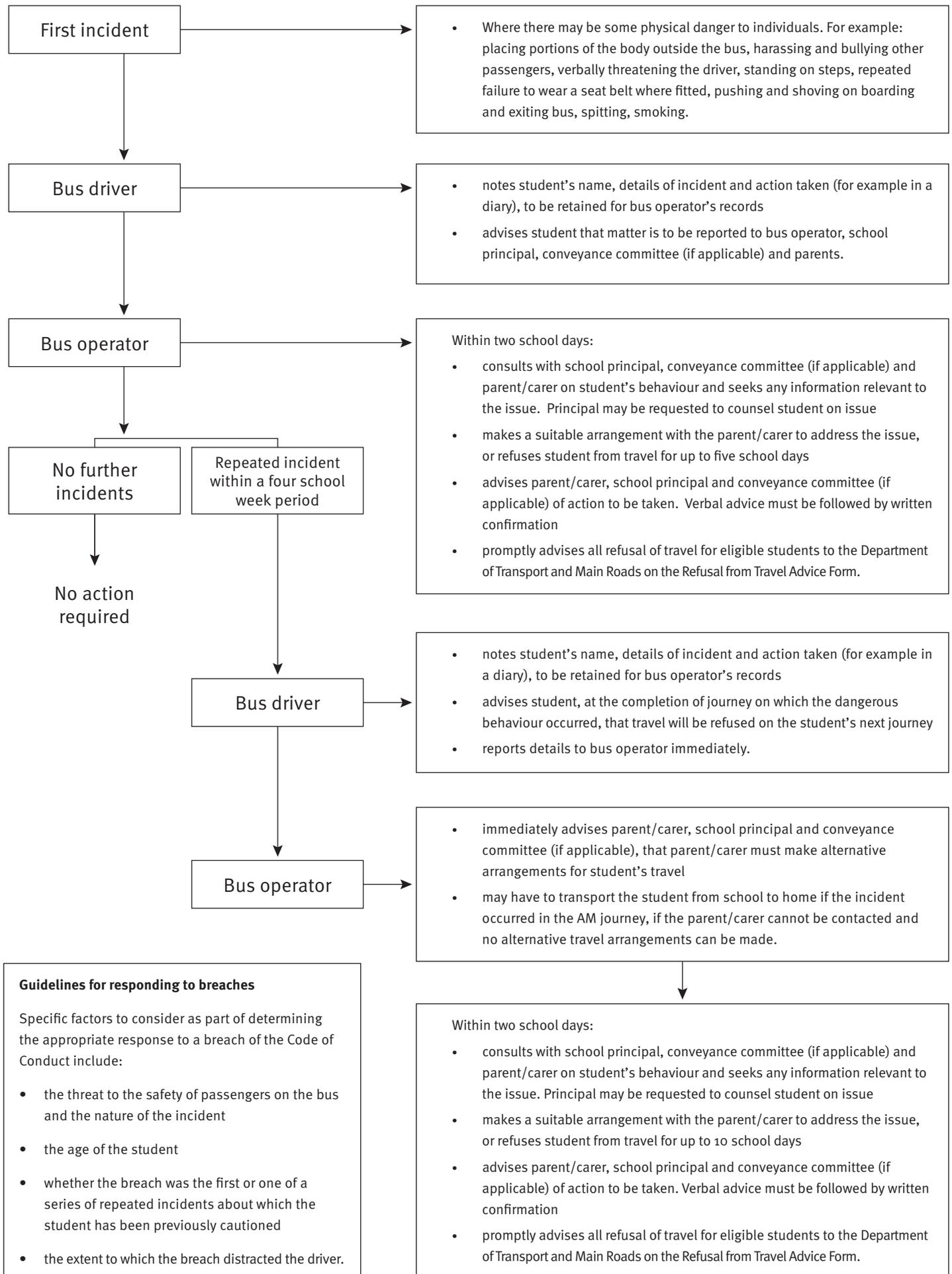
To support the effective implementation of the Code of Conduct and management of student behaviour, preventative strategies can be put into place by the bus operator and driver. For further information refer to:

- *Managing Student Behaviour on School Buses: A guide for school bus drivers and operators* booklet (Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2007)
- Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses/Managing student behaviour on buses CD/DVD
- www.tmr.qld.gov.au/buscode.

Category 1 Unacceptable behaviour



Category 2 Dangerous behaviour

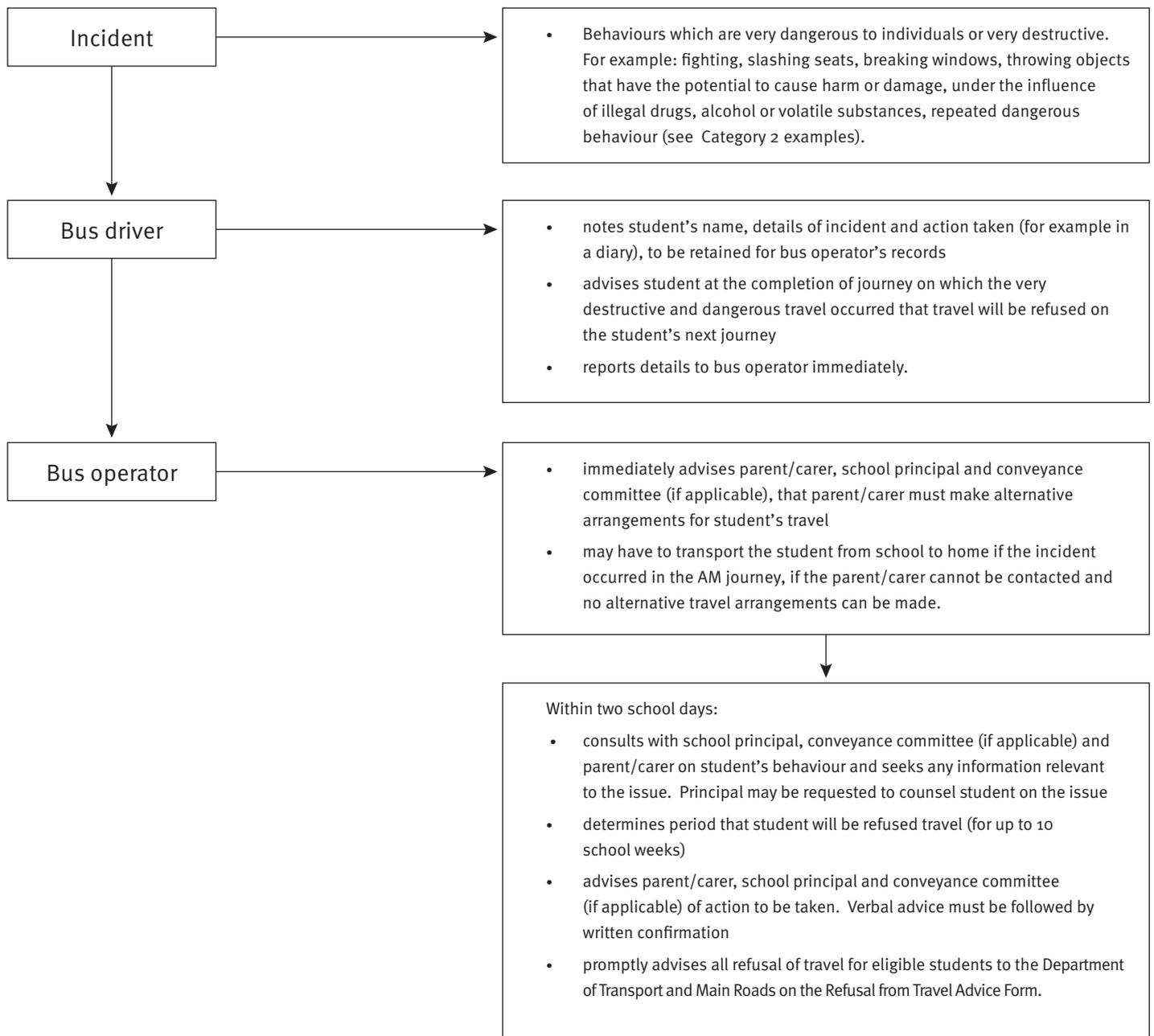


Guidelines for responding to breaches

Specific factors to consider as part of determining the appropriate response to a breach of the Code of Conduct include:

- the threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident
- the age of the student
- whether the breach was the first or one of a series of repeated incidents about which the student has been previously cautioned
- the extent to which the breach distracted the driver.

Category 3 Dangerous and destructive behaviour

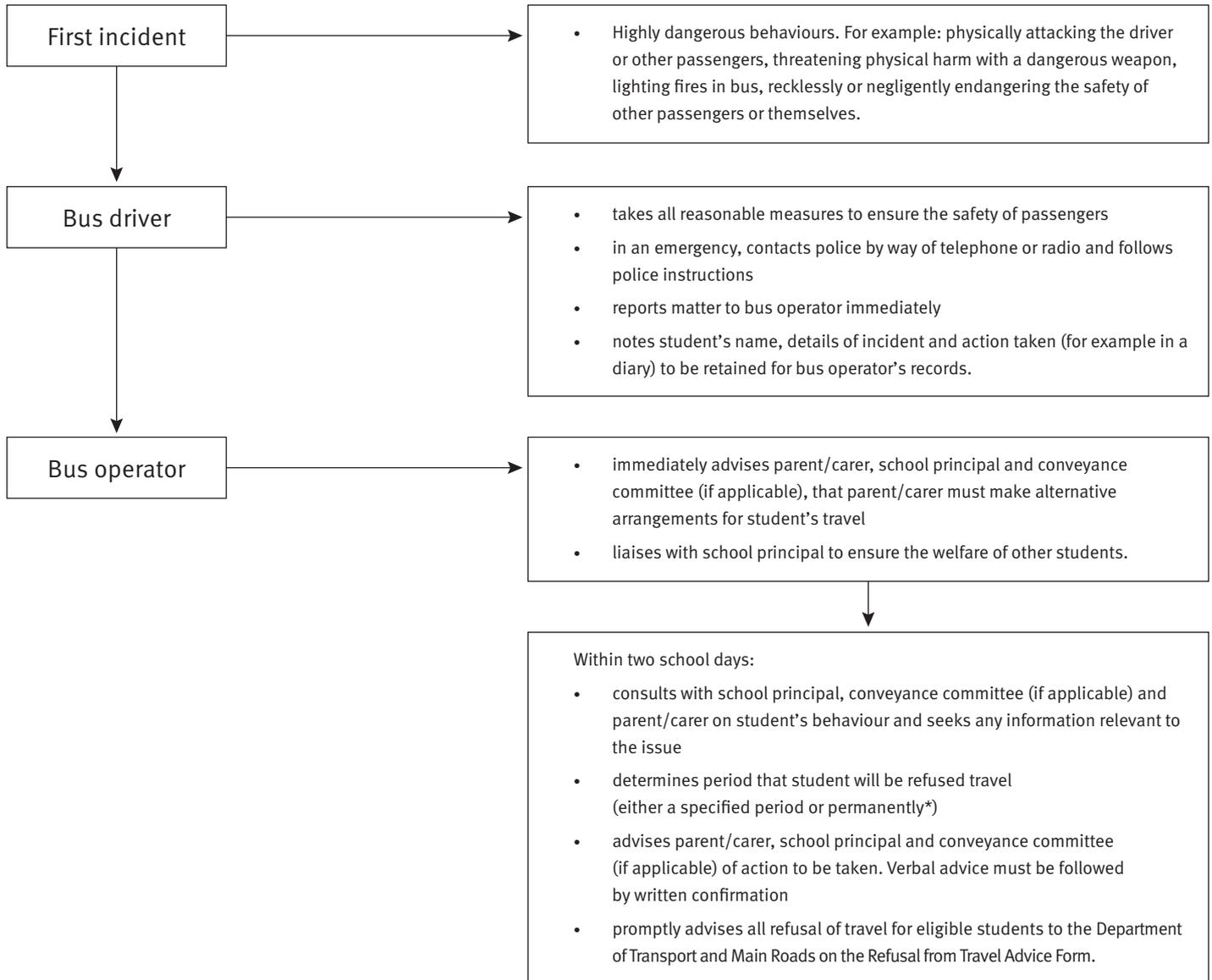


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- the age of the student
- whether the breach was the first or one of a series of repeated incidents about which the student has been previously cautioned
- the extent to which the breach distracted the driver.

Category 4 Life-threatening behaviour



Guidelines for responding to breaches

Specific factors to consider as part of determining the appropriate response to a breach of the Code of Conduct include:

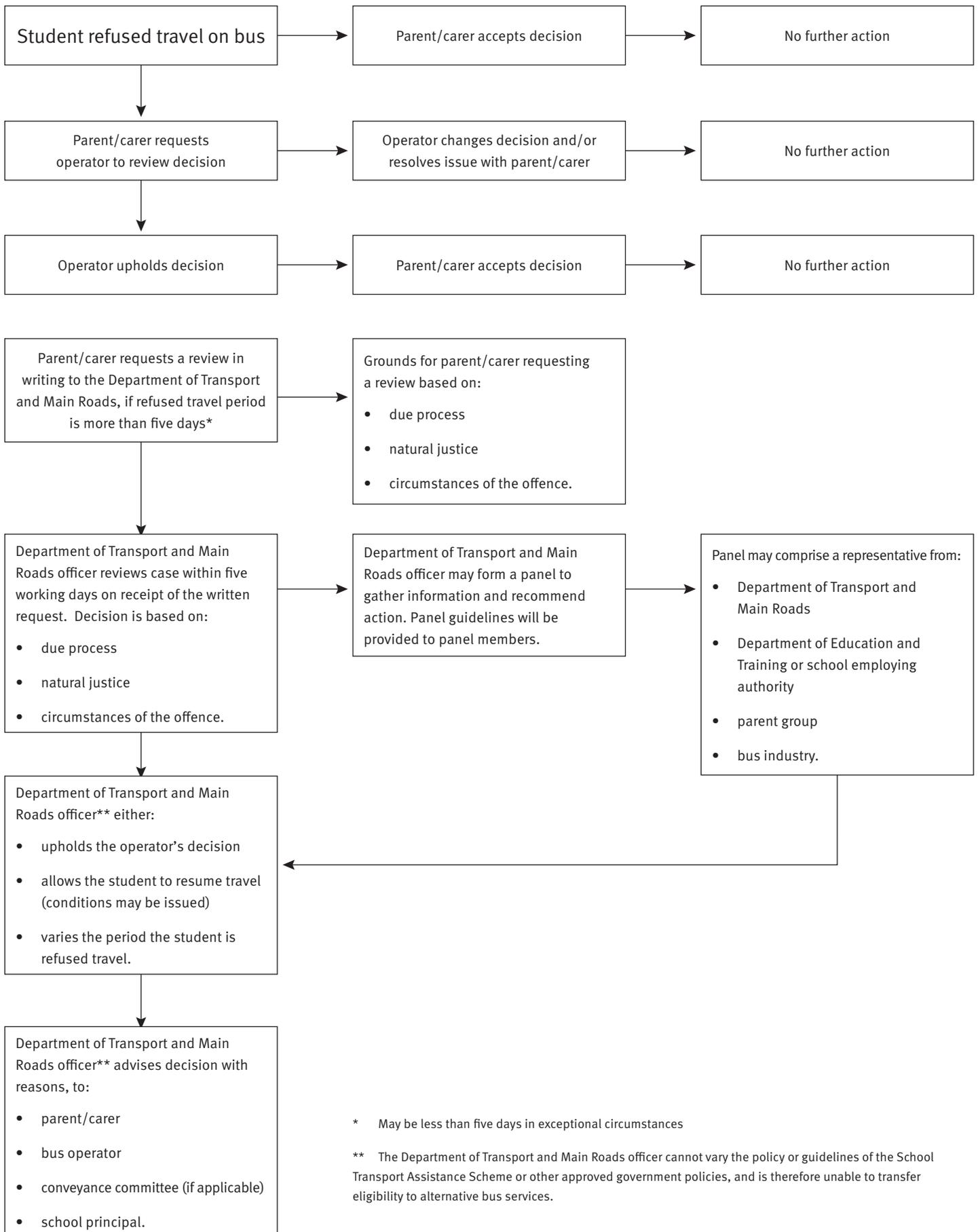
- the threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident
- the age of the student
- whether the breach was the first or one of a series of repeated incidents about which the student has been previously cautioned
- the extent to which the breach distracted the driver.

* NOTE: Where a student has been permanently refused travel on a bus and there is a demonstrated and ongoing change in student's behaviour the parent/carer may request that the decision be reviewed by the bus operator. The bus operator may uphold the original decision or may impose special conditions on the student's return to travel on the bus.

For example, the student's return to the bus may be conditional on the parent/carer, the student and the bus operator signing a written behaviour management agreement setting out conditions for travel. If the student breaches the agreement then refusal of travel on the bus is immediate.

8. Review process for students refused travel

Review process for students refused travel



Note

Note

