

Needs Assessment

Introduction

Buckinghamshire County Council is committed to providing a sustainable model of transport provision in Buckinghamshire. This includes ensuring that there are effective transport arrangements for sixth form age students attending schools, colleges and other educational establishments.

Context

All Local Authorities must prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement. The statement must specify the arrangements for the provision of transport, or otherwise, that the authority considers necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all students of sixth form age receiving education or training. This responsibility is extended up to age 25 for students who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and have commenced a course of study before their 19th birthday.

Over the last 5 years the total number of children and young people (0-25) living in Buckinghamshire with an EHCP has increased by 28.2% (895) to almost 4,000. During the same period the school population in Buckinghamshire has increased by 7.7%.

Part of the increase in SEND numbers since 2014 can be attributed to the new EHCP legislation increasing the age range of EHCPs to 0- 25 from 0-19 for statements of SEND.

Assessment of travel needs: The needs of those for whom it would not be reasonably practicable to access education or training provision if no arrangements were made

Buckinghamshire has a range of travel options for students of sixth form age, including concessionary fares on buses and trains and arrangements made by local colleges. In addition, the Council seeks to encourage students to travel to school independently and to use sustainable modes of travel, such as walking or cycling. These travel options meet the needs of the vast majority of the Post 16 population.

Buckinghamshire is a mix of urban and rural areas. The proposed changes to home to school transport aim to ensure that the transport offer to families in rural areas is improved through widening access to routes and integrating them with the local bus services. These changes will ensure that all residents in rural areas, including Post 16 students, will have increased access to bus services, enabling them to use public transport to travel independently to their educational establishment.

However, it is recognised that young people with SEND or a disability are more likely to have to travel further to a school or college offering a suitable course due to the number of available appropriate education establishments, and are therefore more likely to have difficulties accessing transport arrangements.

This section provides information on the needs of students with SEND or a disability.

For the current cohort of children and young people with SEND who have EHCP at Post 16, the primary SEND need has been recorded as follows:

Primary Need (Post 16 students)

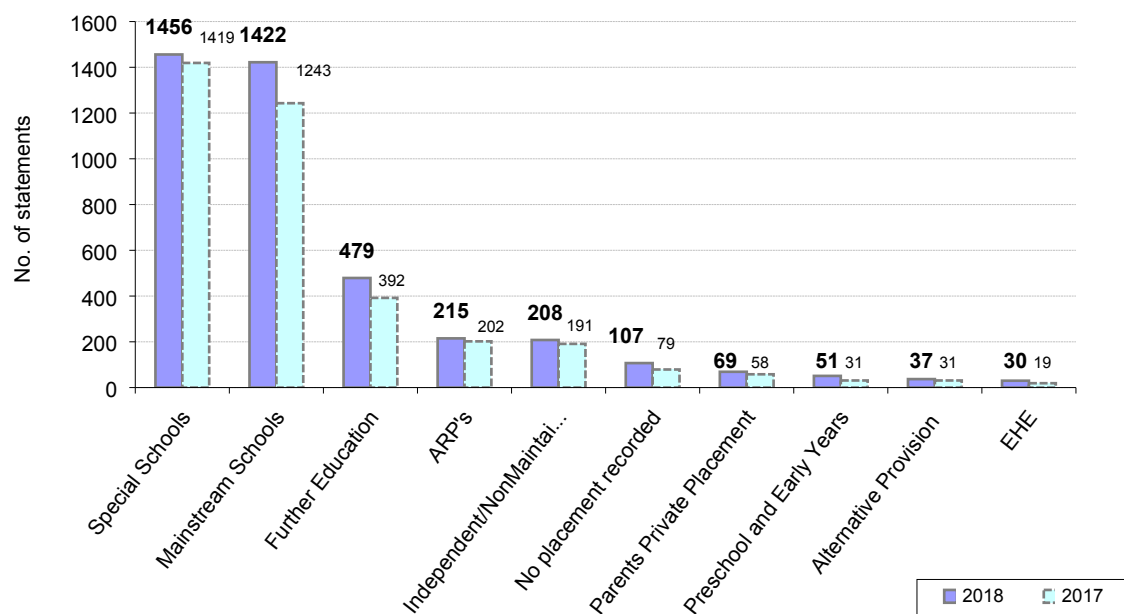
| Primary need of Post 16 Pupils | Dec-18 | Dec-17 | Dec-13 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Moderate Learning Difficulties | 205 | 182 | 63 |
| Speech, Language and Communication Needs | 117 | 109 | 67 |
| Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs / Social, Emotional & Mental Health | 111 | 77 | 31 |
| Specific Learning Difficulties | 34 | 20 | 16 |
| Severe Learning Difficulties | 53 | 49 | 29 |
| Autistic Spectrum Disorder | 277 | 252 | 71 |
| Physical Difficulties | 66 | 56 | 19 |
| Hearing Impairment | 24 | 19 | 5 |
| Visual Impairment | 7 | 12 | 7 |
| Multi-Sensory Impairment | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Profound and Multiple | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 899 | 780 | 312 |

The table above shows the scale of the increases in the SEND population and the increase in complexity of demand. Demonstrating those children with the highest level of need, there is a 247% increase in pupils with physical difficulties since 2013. The provision of transport for this group is inevitably more complex. Based on this, we need to ensure that our policy and transport services are both appropriate to meet the specific travel needs of the students and sustainable to meet predicted levels of need in the future.

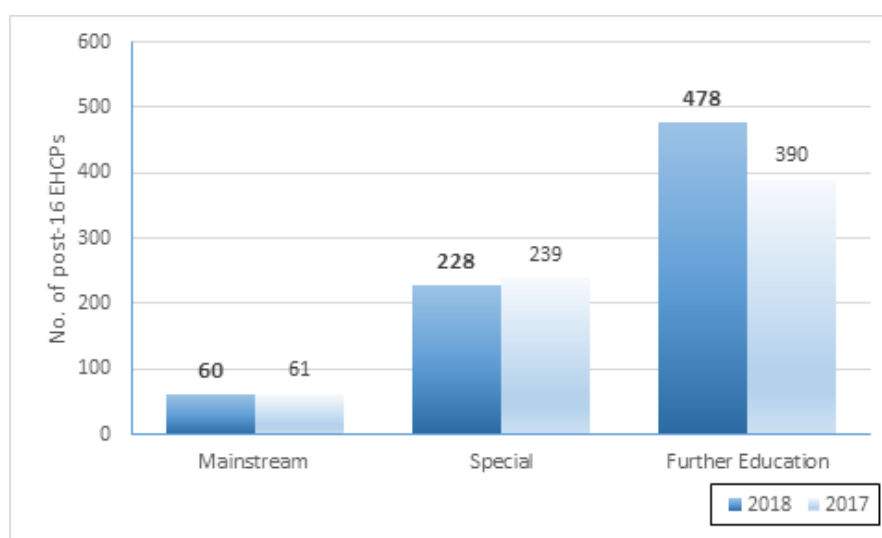
Educational provision for students with SEND

The percentage of children with EHC plans recorded as attending special school placements and independent or non/maintained schools has decreased from December 2017, while mainstream school placements (including pre-school) and the proportion of Further Education placements has increased. However, the overall number of students within each provision has increased due to the overall increase of students with SEND. There are more FE colleges locally than special provisions, so journey times for some students may be shorter.

Summary of placements at 31 December 2018 - All ages



Summary of Post 16 placements at 31 December 2018



Post 16 placements have increased in further education, but decreased in mainstream and special schools. The increase in the size of the cohort means there are more students attending overall.

In the current year, 400 students with EHCPs are being transported to 6th form, both within and outside the Local Authority, in special schools and FE colleges. In addition, there may be students without an EHCP who are unable to access a viable public transport option due to their needs, disabilities or mobility issues. The extension of the age range of learners through the establishment of EHCPs to 25 (from 19) has resulted in an increase in the numbers of students attending FE colleges and this is likely to continue across the next five years.

The following table provides information on the current modes of transport used by Post 16 SEND students.

Current transport provision for Post 16 SEND

| Transport Type | | 2018 Customer % | 2015 Customer % | 2013 Customer % |
|--|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Adapted - this is the most expensive form of transport | This is likely to be a shared or solo taxi/minibus that is wheelchair adapted. A PA may also accompany if loading/unloading help is needed. | 3 | 10 | 1 |
| Not Adapted but with a personal assistant (PA) – this is the second most expensive form of transport | This is usually a taxi or minibus with Passenger Assistant. The presence of a PA is established through a risk assessment and will be reviewed regularly. | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Not Adapted - this is the third most expensive form of transport | May be a school bus or a taxi. More likely to be a school bus if the student is at their nearest mainstream school setting. However for students with SEND attending specialist provision the type is most likely to be a taxi which may be shared but often is solo and door to door. | 53 | 22 | 45 |
| Rail Passes (this is the fourth most expensive form of transport) | Rail passes are only used if they are cost effective for the particular journey | 3 | 4 | 19 |
| Local Buses – economical method | Purchase of a bus ticket on a local bus – only a possible solution if buses travel the route required and child is capable to manage any changes required | 13 | 28 | 26 |
| Mileage Claim – economical method | Parents may claim mileage from the transport team. This is only a viable option if it is the least expensive one. | 7 | 10 | 2 |
| Other Reimbursement ^ Types - economical method | The most common form of this type of reimbursement is for colleges running their own buses. | 12 | 13 | 7 |
| Grand Total | % | 100* | 100* | 100* |

* may not total 100% due to rounding

^ e.g. reimbursement to college for their transport provision, commercial service provided on an invoice basis, or parent reclaiming taxi fares

The Council is arranging for independent travel training to be offered to Post 16 students who need help in accessing the public transport network or travelling to their educational establishment independently. This will provide valuable life skills for these students and enable them to develop independence as they transition into adulthood. Some Post 16 students with SEND or mobility difficulties will still need assistance with travel, either on a temporary basis whilst they receive independent travel training or on a longer term basis depending on their ongoing needs.

For students who require additional support travelling to and from their chosen place of study, arrangements will be made if they are unable to access public transport or transport provided by the educational establishments. This will be subject to an individual assessment taking the following areas into consideration:

- Mobility
- Medical
- Behaviour
- Vulnerability (including age, young parents, NEET)
- Practicality
- Training

The assessment will take into account any information provided by parents, the school, other professionals who know the child and, when appropriate, the student and will be reviewed regularly.

The need to ensure that young people have reasonable opportunities to choose between different establishments at which education and training is provided.

There is reasonable choice within the County, and there are also opportunities to attend schools and colleges in neighbouring authorities, and these are clearly shown in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 shows the locations of all the Special Schools with sixth forms in Buckinghamshire.

Students with SEND may find that there are less suitable courses offered within the county than for students without SEND. For this reason, students with SEND may need travel assistance to attend an establishment that is further away than their nearest school or college. Students with SEND should be supported with travel assistance in attending the nearest establishment that provides a full time programme of learning or work placement that they wish to follow.

In addition, there may be exceptional circumstances when it is reasonable for a student to choose an establishment that is not the nearest, but is still within a reasonable distance of the nearest establishment. This establishment may be outside of the county. If a student has an EHCP, the nearest establishment will be the establishment named in the EHCP and if two are named, will be the one which is nearest to the home address.

The distance from the learner's home to establishments of education and training

As demonstrated in Appendices 1 and 2, there is a reasonable spread of education establishments across the county. We have considered the distances for the current cohort of

SEND students for which we provide travel assistance to so that they can attend education. It is accepted that students with SEND may have to travel further to their educational establishment than students without SEND. It is also accepted that some students with SEND may have difficulty walking or cycling to school to a greater extent than students without SEND. Therefore, travel assistance may need to be provided for those students living within 3 miles of their educational establishment if they can demonstrate that they are unable to walk this distance.

Within Buckinghamshire there are the following specialist provisions for Post 16 SEND Pupils:

Post 16 specialist provision within Buckinghamshire

| Name of school | Designation | Age of pupils | Area | Latest OFSTED |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Furze Down | A range of needs | All through | Aylesbury - Winslow | Outstanding (October 2018) |
| Pebble Brook | MLD | Secondary | Aylesbury | Good (September 2018) |
| Stocklake Park | A range of needs | Secondary | Aylesbury | Good (November 2014) |
| Chiltern Way Federation | SEMH/ASD | Year 6/6 and secondary | Aylesbury - Wendover | Good (June 2018) |
| Alfriston | MLD (Girls) | Secondary | Chiltern & South Bucks – Beaconsfield | Outstanding (January 2018) |
| Heritage House | SLD | All through | Chiltern & South Bucks – Chesham | Good (July 2018) |
| Stony Dean | MLD/ASD/SLCN | Secondary | Chiltern & South Bucks –Amersham | Outstanding (November 2014) |
| Chiltern Wood | MLD/ASD/SLCN | All through | Wycombe | Good (January 2019) |

Provision is spread throughout the county, and across the three administrative districts (Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chiltern / South Bucks). There is little specialist provision in the far north or far south of the authority, with the majority of specialist schools based near to the largest population centres.

Due to the locations of specialist provision and the different range of needs as detailed in the above table, a student may have to travel further to their nearest appropriate school due to their identified SEND. For example, a pupil with Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) needs that lives in Wycombe may have to travel to Wendover, as this is the only school designated to support these pupils.

Pupils within Buckinghamshire can also access a variety of college provision. The Buckinghamshire College group has campuses in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Amersham. Course options vary between campuses.

The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that SEND pupils are placed within the nearest setting which can meet their identified needs, but is restricted to the locality of special schools and the college campus' which offer specific courses.

There is no evidence that young people in rural areas are more disadvantaged in attending education than young people in more urban areas, as there is a reasonable distribution of educational establishments across the county and on the borders of our most rural geographical areas. Pupils are entitled to apply for bursaries to assist with funding transport and other expenses.

The journey time to access different establishments

It is accepted that students with SEND are more likely to have to travel further to their educational establishment than students without SEND and as such routes via public transport may exceed 75 minutes each way. As a general rule if a transport route exceeds this time, the Council accepts that it may need to provide alternative travel assistance. The Council also regularly reviews local bus routes to ensure ease of travel for students.

The cost of transport to schools and colleges

Students without SEND are currently responsible for funding their travel to school or college by accessing concessionary fares and in appropriate cases bursaries. Whilst students with SEND may have to travel further to their educational establishment or need assistance with transport, they can still access the same financial support as students without SEND.

It is recognised that transport arrangements for students with SEND may be more expensive than for students without SEND and the current average cost for students who receive support from the Council is £3,500 per annum. The current charge for students (academic year 2018-19) without SEND is £660 (subject to annual review) and therefore it is reasonable to require a financial contribution from students with SEND that broadly reflects the cost of transport for students without SEND, but also takes account of the distance travelled, as this increases the cost of transport. The introduction of charging Post 16 SEND students will ensure the following:

- The contribution is broadly in line with the cost of travel for students without SEND;
- The contribution is affordable for learners and their parents.

Families with students who have SEND and plan to continue in education would be able to apply for financial support to assist with the cost of travel. Bursaries of up to £1,200 a year are available for the most vulnerable groups.

Bursary support is not restricted to SEND students, as those who live in areas where there are no viable transport links would also be supported to attend education or training.

The County Council publishes its Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy each year. This initiative supports the council's vision in relation to sustainable transport options in particular projects such as walking bus, independent travel training, revised safe walking and cycle routes.

Details of the current strategy can be found here:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/transport-and-roads/transport-plans-and-policies/getting-to-school-strategy-smots/>

Alternative means of facilitating attendance at establishments

In line with the principle of increasing independence during the journey to adulthood, it is anticipated that students should be developing skills to enable them to use public transport. We appreciate that this will not be possible in all cases due to the additional identified needs of some students.

There are a number of travel assistance solutions that may assist students who have additional needs, such as:

- Independent travel training
- Offer of passenger assistant
- Specialised transport
- Mileage allowance

Preference based on religion

The Council has no information to show that students with or without SEND have difficulties accessing educational establishments chosen based on their religion or belief.

Non-transport solutions to facilitate learner access

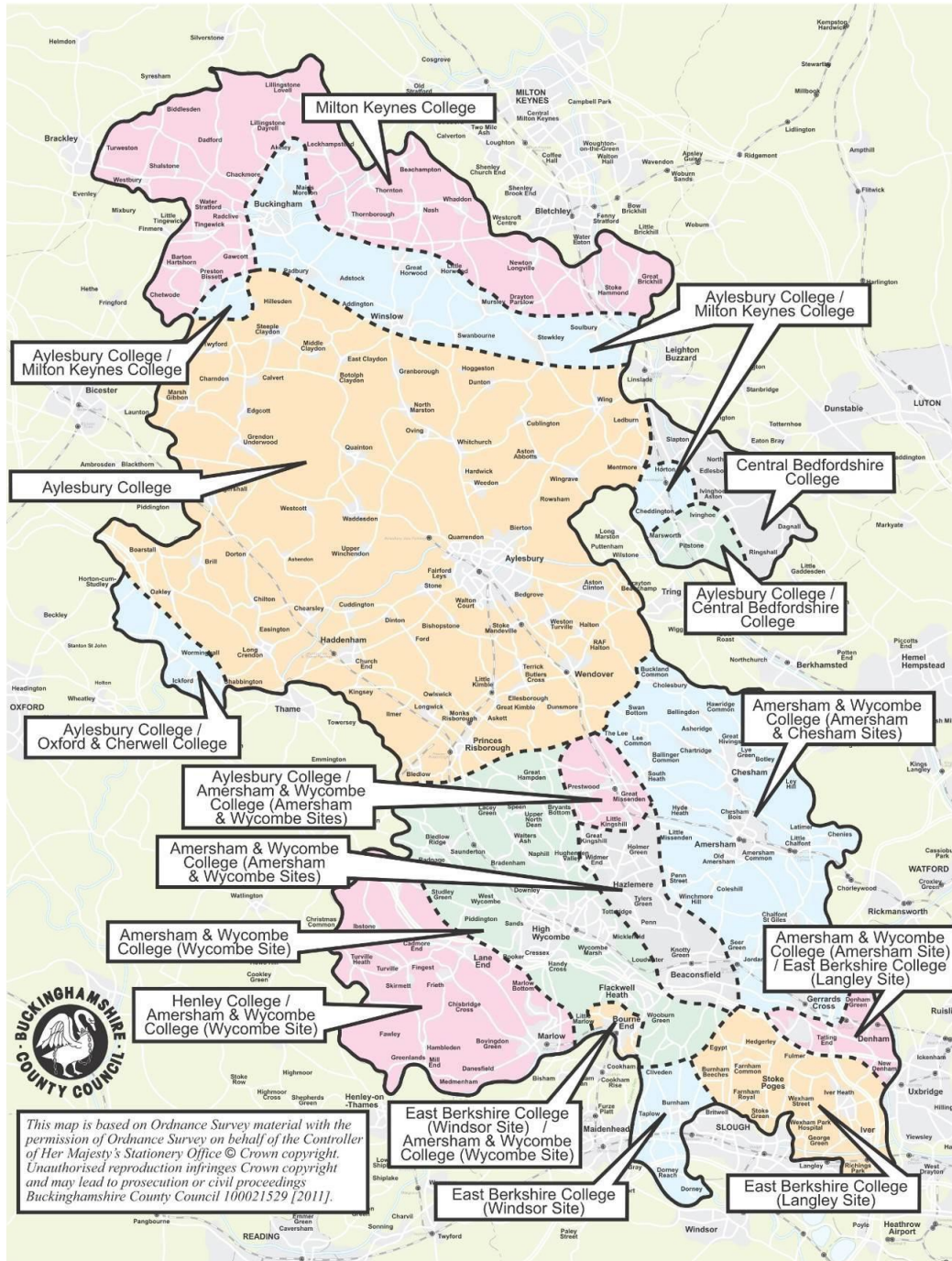
The EHCP will set out specific educational provision, which may include the offer of educational support outside a traditional college or school setting. If a student with or without SEND has a temporary mobility difficulty that causes difficulties with travel to school or college, then the establishment should be considering what reasonable adjustments could be made to allow the student to access the curriculum. Individual circumstances should be taken into account when assessing whether a student needs temporary assistance with travel or whether an alternative non transport solution could assist.

Conclusion

The Council has considers the needs of its local Post 16 population, the location of schools and colleges and the availability of transport networks in assessing what transport support and financial assistance should be offered to Post 16 students to facilitate attendance at educational establishments.

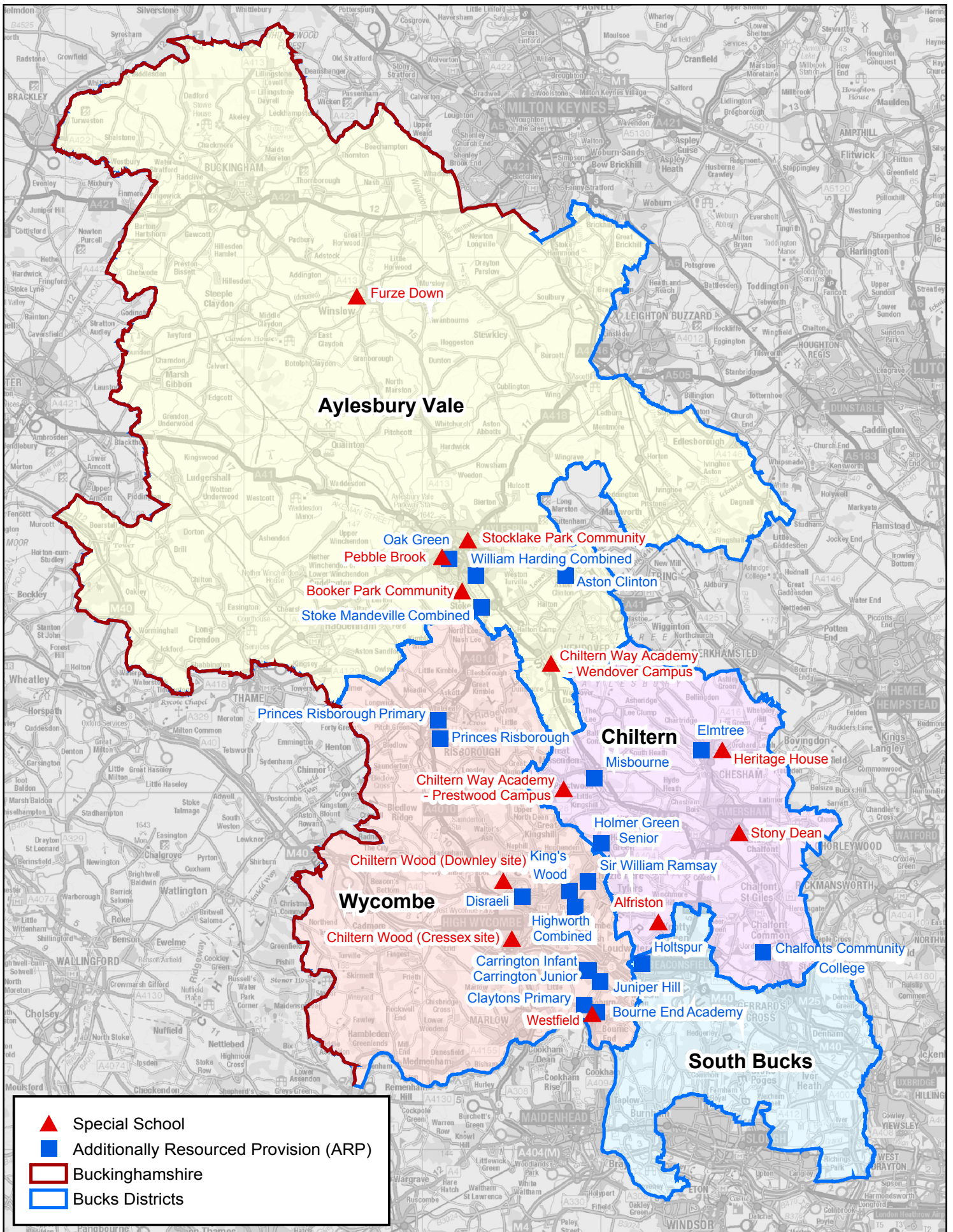
Appendix 1 – Map showing Nearest Colleges

Which Is My Nearest College For Travel Purposes?



Appendix 2 – Map of locations of Special Schools and Alternate Resourced Provision in Buckinghamshire

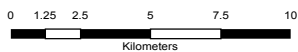
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Scale: 1:270,000 at A4

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Buckinghamshire Special Schools & Additionally Resourced Provision



