



Code of Conduct for School Children Travelling on Buses

Effective from 4 October 1999



1. Introduction

A significant number of school students in Queensland travel on buses to attend school each day. The behaviour of some school students travelling on public transport is of concern to those involved in the administration and operation of public transport.

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework to assist bus operators in the management of situations where students misbehave on buses. It also outlines the roles of students, parents/carers, conveyance committees (where kilometre-based school bus services operate), school principals and Queensland Transport. The framework identifies categories of misbehaviour and establishes periods where bus operators may refuse travel in response to breaches of the Code of Conduct.

This framework has been developed in cooperation with the Department of Education, Queensland Police Service, Brisbane City Council, Queensland Rail, Catholic Education Commission, The Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc., Bus & Coach Association (Qld), Bus Operators Association (Qld), Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations and the Federation of Parents and Friends Association.

This document has been approved by the Chief Executive, Queensland Transport as a Code of Conduct applying in relation to school children travelling on buses, in accordance with section 62A of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 1994*. The Code applies to all students attending primary and secondary schools in Queensland who use buses either to travel to and from school or for other school related activities. The Code and its associated procedures also apply to bus drivers and operators. In this code, 'buses' means any forward control passenger vehicle, off-road passenger vehicle, light bus or heavy bus as defined in Schedule 7 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 1994*.

The specific requirements of students with disabilities means that the application of the Code of Conduct may not be appropriate for this group of students. Liaison between bus operators, schools and parents/carers should occur on an individual case management basis for these students.

Queensland Transport will support actions taken in line with the procedures outlined in this document.

2. Previous Arrangements

Prior to the introduction of the Code of Conduct in 1998, effective arrangements were already in place between bus operators, conveyance committees and school principals to ensure cases of misbehaviour on school buses were dealt with promptly and appropriately.

These arrangements for the management of misbehaviour may continue provided they are consistent with the principles of these guidelines.

3. The safe travel of students to and from school: Who is involved? What are their roles and responsibilities in managing cases of student misbehaviour on buses?

Parents/Carers

The behaviour of students is primarily the responsibility of parents/carers. Accordingly, parents/carers should ensure their children are aware of the Code of Conduct for travel on buses.

Parents/carers may be responsible for the payment of the costs of repair of damage caused by their children.

Parents/carers should cooperate with the bus operator, conveyance committee (where kilometre-based school bus services operate), and the school principal in the management of student behaviour.

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

Students

Each bus service conveying school students has a set of rules or code of conduct that all school students are expected to adhere to. To make clear to students the standards of behaviour expected of them when travelling on buses, Queensland Transport has developed in consultation with bus operators, school organisations and parent groups, a Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct will apply to all students travelling on buses throughout Queensland. Inappropriate behaviour by a student at a bus interchange may also be regarded as a breach to the Code of Conduct.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STUDENTS

BEHAVIOUR	EXAMPLES OF HOW TO MEET THE CODE
Respect other people and property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Treat other people and their possessions with respect. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow the bus driver's directions without argument. <input type="checkbox"/> Do 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wait well back from the bus until it stops and allow other passengers to leave the bus first. <input type="checkbox"/> Stand quietly without calling out or shouting. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not push other people in the line.
Whilst on the bus, conduct yourself in an orderly manner	<p>Students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> always follow instructions from the driver about safety on the bus <input type="checkbox"/> show their bus pass, ticket or ID upon request <input type="checkbox"/> sit properly on a seat if one is available (in an allocated seat if directed by the driver) <input type="checkbox"/> if standing, remain in the area designated by the driver <input type="checkbox"/> store school bags under the seat or in appropriate luggage areas <input type="checkbox"/> speak quietly and not create unnecessary noise. <p>Students must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> bully other students <input type="checkbox"/> place feet on the seats <input type="checkbox"/> fight, spit or use offensive language <input type="checkbox"/> throw any article around or from the bus <input type="checkbox"/> consume food or drink, or play music without permission of the driver <input type="checkbox"/> smoke (prohibited on all buses) <input type="checkbox"/> allow any portion of their body to protrude out of the bus windows <input type="checkbox"/> stand forward of the front seat
Use designated stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It is the responsibility of students to disembark at their correct designated stop.
When alighting from the bus, do so in an orderly manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wait until the bus stops before standing to get off. <input type="checkbox"/> Alight from the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion. <input type="checkbox"/> Never cross the road in front of the bus, wait until the bus has moved away and it is safe to do so. <input type="checkbox"/> use crossings or traffic lights if available.
In case of an emergency or a breakdown, follow the driver's directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wait until the bus stops before standing to get off. <input type="checkbox"/> Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion. <input type="checkbox"/> Wait in the area indicated by the driver.

As part of the process following a breach of the Code of Conduct, students may be refused travel for a temporary period or in some cases permanently.

Bus Operators

A bus operator is a person (including a company, local authority or other organisation) carrying on the business of providing a public transport service. Bus operators are responsible for providing their drivers with training in managing the behaviour of children on buses and for ensuring they know of the policies and procedures to be followed when a student breaches the Code of Conduct. Where a bus driver reports a breach of the Code of Conduct, the responsibility for follow-up with the parents/carers, school principal, and conveyance committee (if applicable) lies with the bus operator. Bus operators have the authority to refuse a student travel when this is done in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6 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.

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 a student breaches the Code of Conduct, the driver will be responsible for following procedures as outlined in Sections 4 and 6. Depending on the nature of the breach, this may involve simply cautioning the student or recording the breach as part of the driver's own record, or reporting the incident to the bus operator for follow-up.

In addition, drivers whilst in charge of a bus must:

- hold appropriate Driver Authorisation;
- not use abusive or offensive language;
- not leave the bus while students are being carried except in cases of emergency or when the bus is stopped (engine off with key removed and hand brake on);
- maintain a written record of student misconduct and report to the bus operator as required in accordance with the operator's quality assurance system;
- generally maintain personal standards of behaviour in keeping with other professionals who are responsible for the care of children;
- advise dangerous occurrences to appropriate agencies, e.g. Police.

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

School Principals

School principals play a key role in advising their students of 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 the operator, parents/carers and conveyance committee (if applicable).

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 the bus operator and school principal to ensure that appropriate behaviour standards are maintained on the service.

Queensland Transport

Queensland Transport has overall administrative responsibility for public transport in Queensland. Queensland Transport has responsibility for developing, in consultation with school organisations, transport operators and parent groups, both the Code of Conduct for students travelling on public transport and the broad framework for managing instances of misbehaviour on buses.

Queensland Transport is also responsible for

- the investigation of complaints concerning operators and/or drivers who have not acted in accordance with the Code of Conduct guidelines.
- monitoring and reviewing bus operators' compliance with the Code of Conduct as part of the regular quality and contract review processes.

4. Responding to Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Working with the Procedures and Refusing Travel to a Student Principles for Drivers and Operators to Observe

The procedures for responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct provide a framework within which operators should act to manage cases of misbehaviour on buses. In all cases, consultation with parents/carers must take place. School principals and conveyance committees (if applicable) must also be consulted in determining the approach to be taken by bus operators in managing breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The response in each case of misbehaviour must include consideration of the circumstances surrounding the event, and in particular the extent to which the safety, security and well being of other passengers and the driver 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. Where an operator considers some other arrangement would be the most appropriate course, as opposed to refusing travel, the parent/carer must be fully consulted and in agreement with any arrangement concerning their child. While other such arrangements may be an alternative to refusing a student travel, operators can only make such arrangements after the parent/carer has given written agreement to the operator.

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 articles from or around the bus than would be required if students were eating on the bus.

The decision by a bus driver to refer a breach to the 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.

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

Only bus operator management will make the final decision to refuse travel to a student. This will be done only after the matter has been discussed with the school principal, parents/carers and conveyance committee (if applicable). It may be considered, following such discussion, that some form of 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.

A decision to refuse travel on all bus services operated by the same bus operator can only be made by the operator after consultation with the parent/carer, school principal and conveyance committee (if applicable).

Refusal of travel is normally limited to scheduled bus services (i.e. services to and from school and general services). A student can not be refused travel on journeys directly involving school excursions, sport, etc., if:

1. The student is not currently being refused travel because of a previous breach to the Code of Conduct on a similar type of journey; and
2. The school can provide adequate close supervision of the student during the journey. In most cases, this will require that the student sit next to the teacher or supervising adult.

The operator must notify the parents/carers before refusing travel so that alternative travel arrangements can be made. Any verbal advice to parents/carers must be followed in writing by the bus operator. The school principal should be advised of the details. The local office of Queensland Transport is also to be notified in cases where students eligible for transport assistance are refused travel.

Where a student utilises more than one bus company (or bus operator) to travel to school, there may be circumstances where the student is refused travel on the bus services of one of the companies. In these situations the student is not automatically refused travel from other bus companies. However, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to make alternative transport arrangements including their associated costs for the student over the portion of the trip provided by the operator who has refused the student travel.

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.

(1) Nuisance and Offensive Behaviour – This includes behaviours which may be irritating, unpleasant but not physically dangerous behaviours.

- failing to show a bus pass where required
- eating on the bus (unless for medical reasons or with the permission of the driver)
- spitting
- using offensive language

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

- distracting the driver by persistent noise
- allowing any part of their body to protrude from the bus
- grabbing trees through the windows
- harassing and bullying other passengers
- stopping others from disembarking at their stop
- verbally threatening the driver
- standing on steps
- pressing the stop button continually
- swinging on bus handrails

(3) Very Destructive and Dangerous 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, etc.)
- repeated occurrences of dangerous behaviour

(4) Highly Dangerous Life Threatening Behaviour – This includes highly dangerous behaviours.

- physically attacking the driver or other passengers
- pushing students out through the doors or windows
- lighting a fire on the bus
- interfering with the safe mechanical operation of the bus
- threatening physical harm with a dangerous weapon

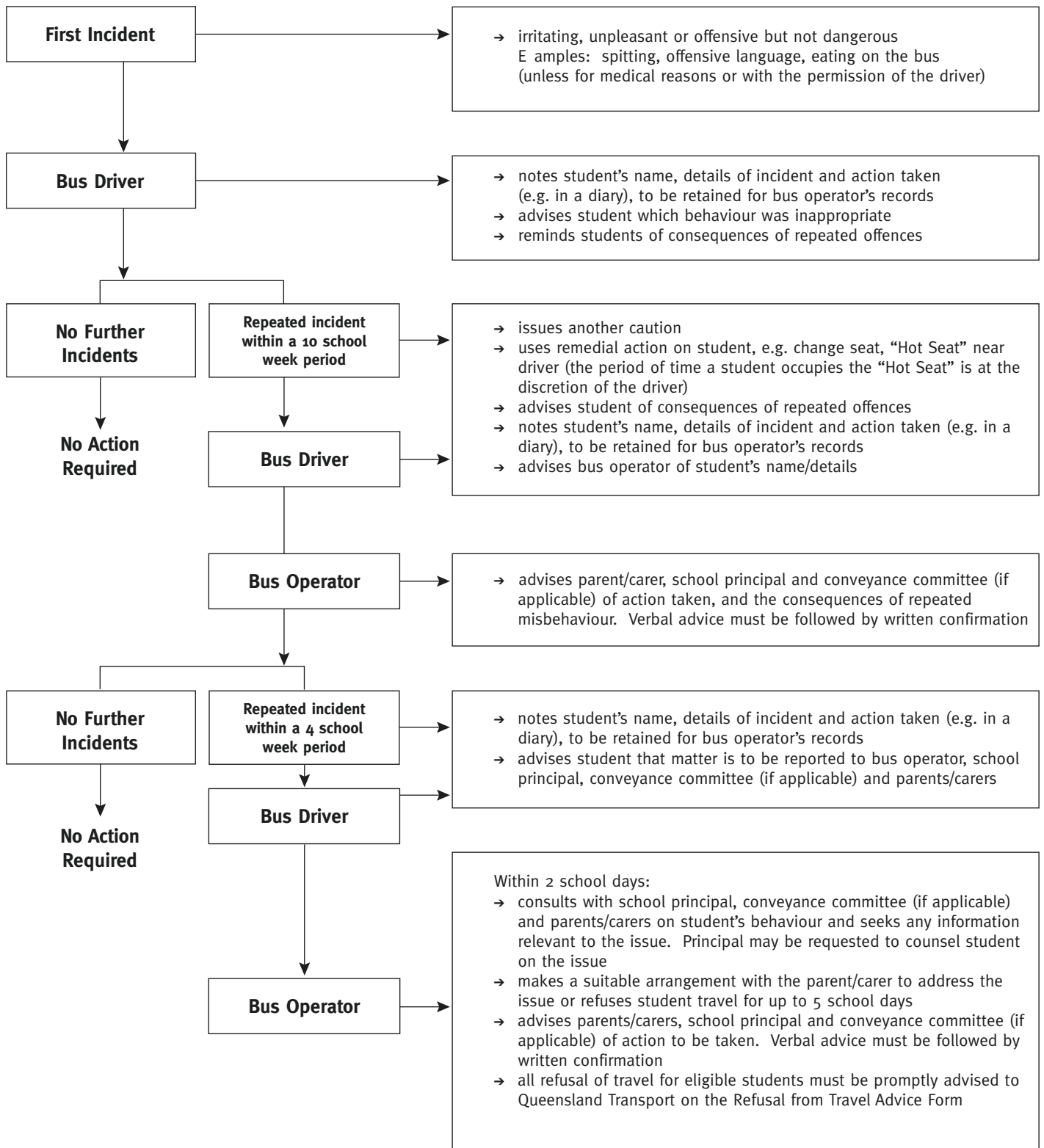
Should a parent/carer have any question about decisions taken by an operator, in responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct, they should take the matter to the operator concerned. If a parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the operator's decision they may contact the nearest Queensland Transport Office. Section 7 of this document details the process for complaints.

Operators should note that Queensland Transport may issue an instruction that an operator's decision to refuse travel to a student be delayed while the matter is being investigated. The bus operator and/or driver must follow this instruction.

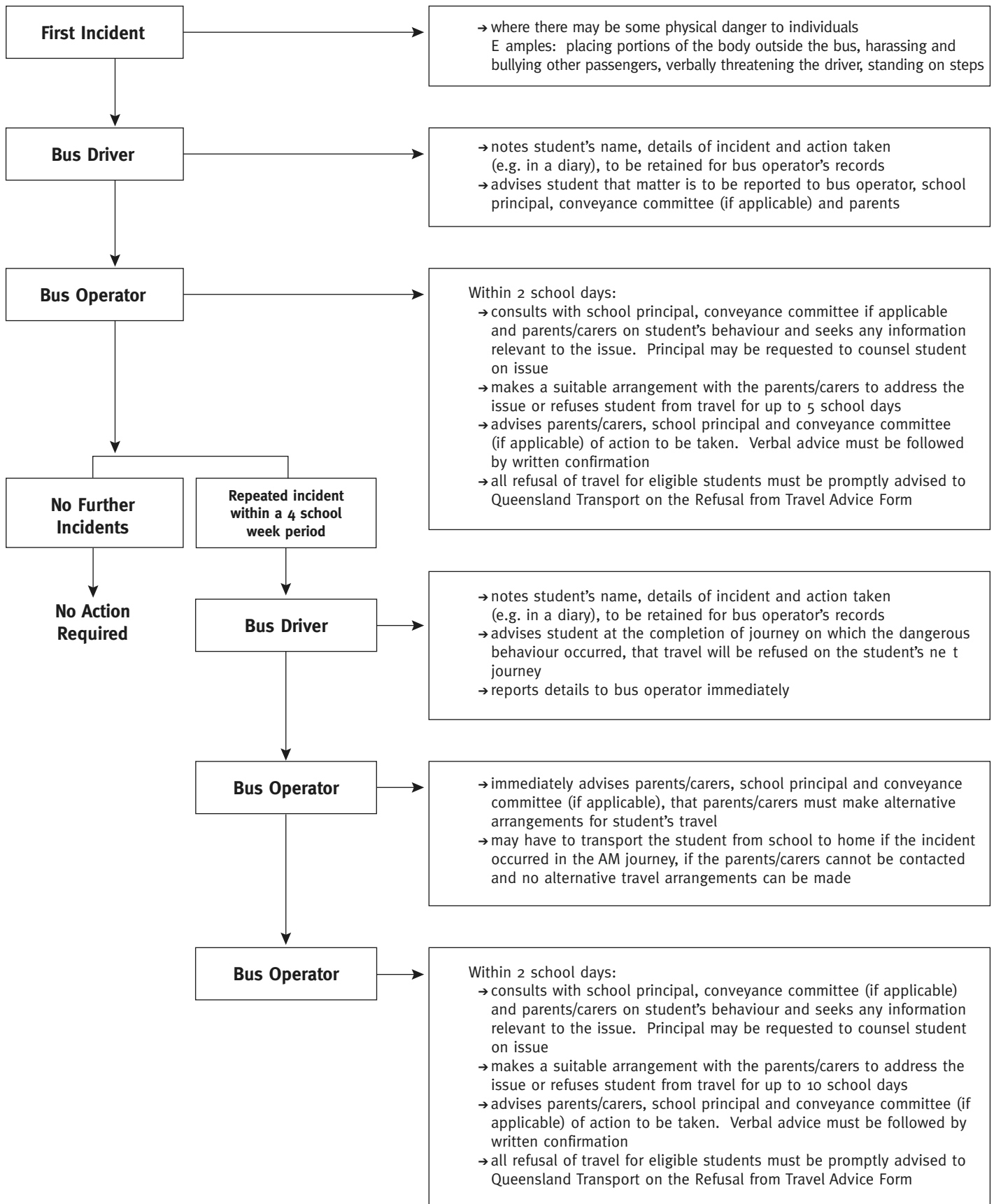
6. Procedures for bus drivers and operators for dealing with breaches of the Code of Conduct



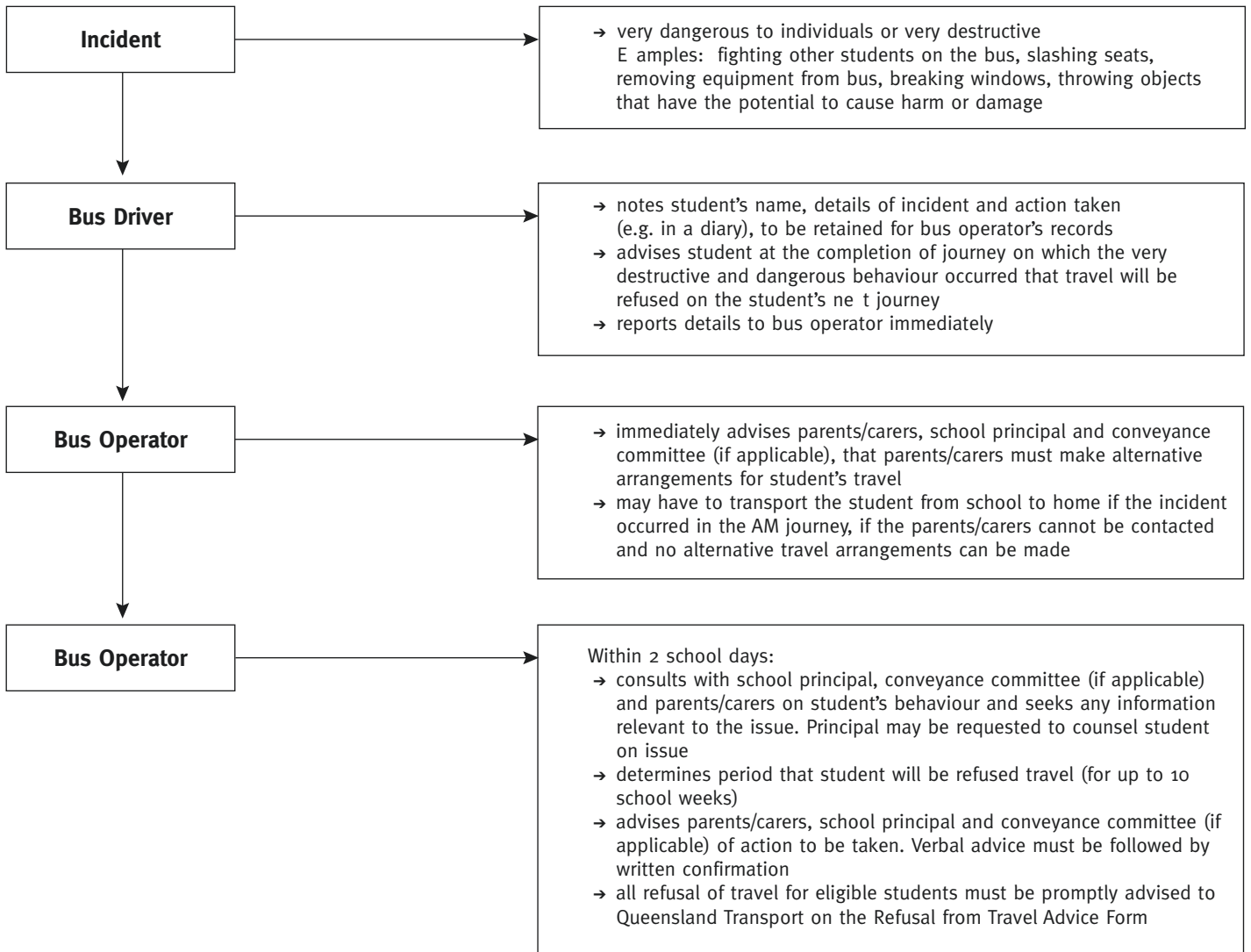
Category 1 Nuisance and Offensive Behaviour



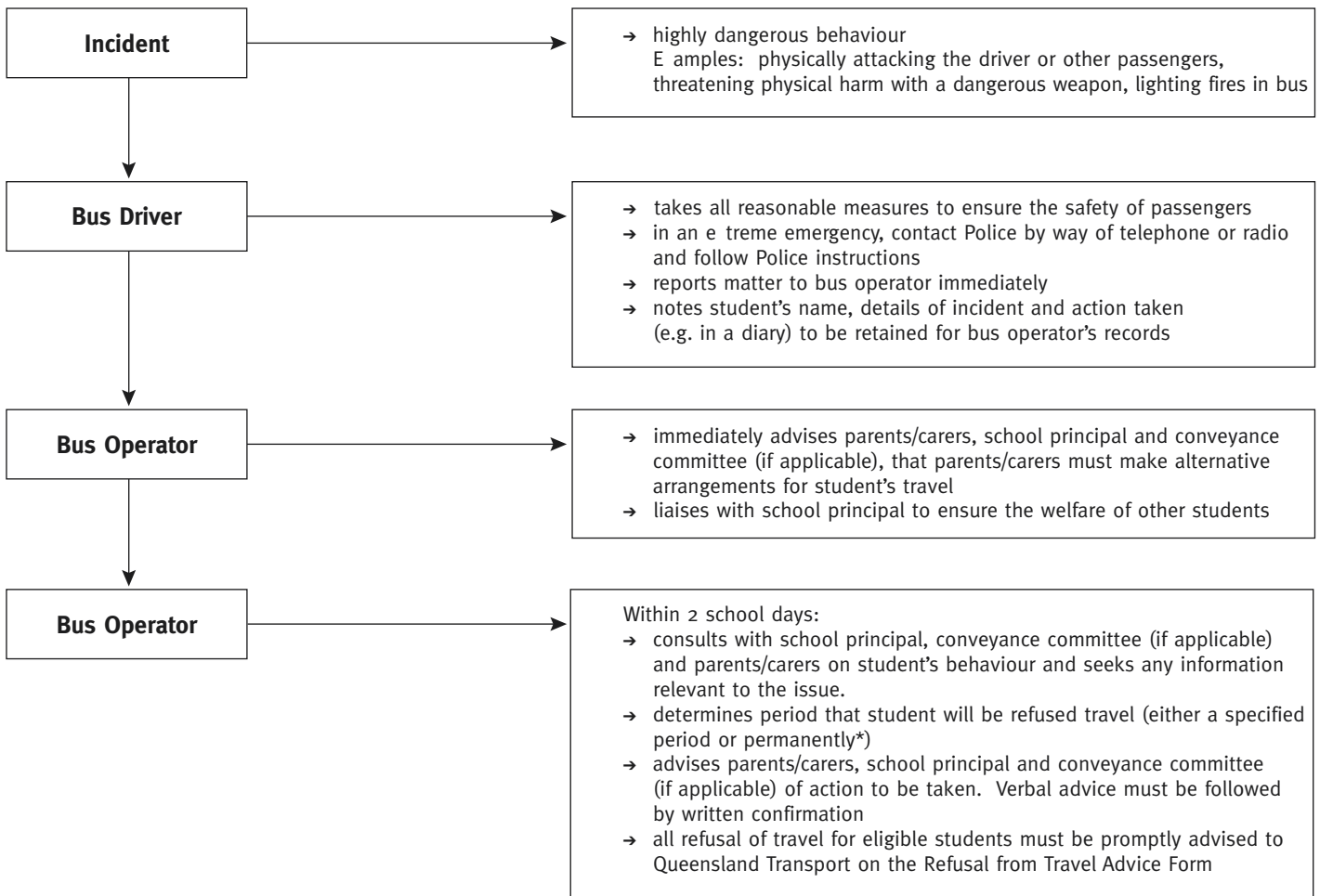
Category 2 Dangerous Behaviour



Category 3 Very Destructive and Dangerous Behaviour



Category 4 Highly Dangerous, Life Threatening Behaviour

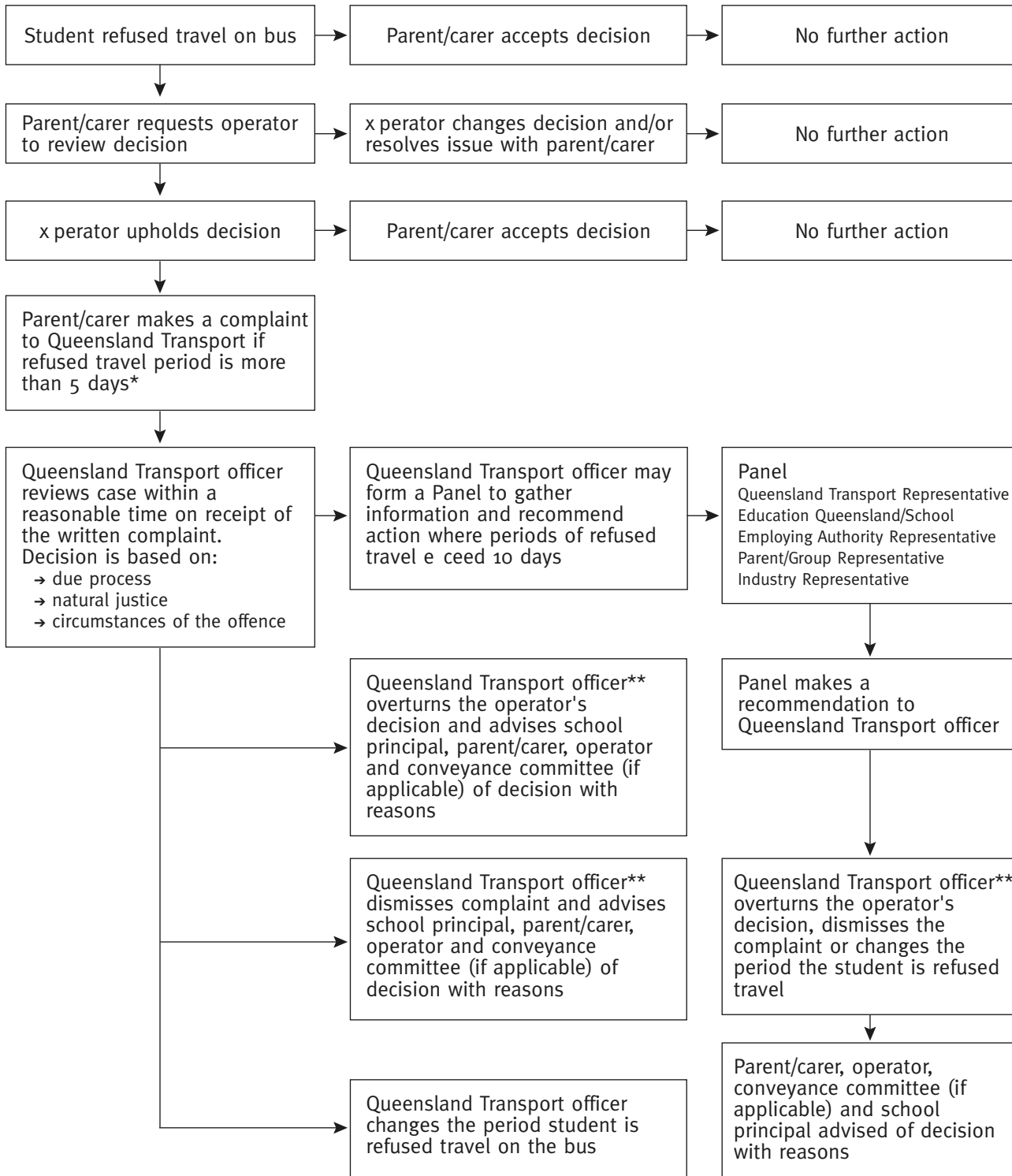


***Note:** Where a student has been permanently refused travel on a bus and there is a subsequent change in behavioural circumstances the parent/carer may request that the decision be reviewed by the operator. The operator may uphold the original decision or may impose special conditions on the student's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

7. Complaint Process for students refused travel



Complaint process for students refused travel



* May be less than 5 days in exceptional circumstances

** The Queensland Transport Officer does not have the power to vary the policy or guidelines of the School Transport Assistance Scheme or other approved government policies, which includes transferring eligibility to alternative bus services.

