

Home to School Transport Policy for Compulsory Aged Pupils

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1. Introduction

This document sets out West Berkshire Council's (the Council's) Home to School Travel Policy and describes how the Council fulfils its duties and exercises its discretionary powers under the Education Act 1996.

This policy:

- explains the criteria for eligibility for travel support for pupils to their school for children and young people of compulsory school age (5-16 years old), young people in further education between the ages of 16 and 19 and young people with an Education, Health, Care Plan (EHCP) in further education between the ages of 16 and 25
- explains how parent/carer(s) can apply for travel support and how decisions are made
- sets out how parent/carer(s) may appeal against decisions that they believe do not comply with this policy.



2. Policy Statement

West Berkshire Council (the Council) is committed to ensuring that all pupils have a great start to life, are safe and healthy, and have access to high quality education so that they can achieve their full potential. The Children and Families Act 2014 commits partners to work together to develop services which strengthen the abilities and resilience of children and young people, and their families to be independent. Our approach helps to deliver the objectives of our Council Strategy, which are:

- Services we are proud of
- A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
- Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency
- A Prosperous and Resilient West Berkshire
- Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice

The Council is also committed to meeting the educational needs of as many children and young people as possible within local schools. In many cases, this will mean a child/young person can walk or cycle to school with their parent/carer(s). This policy sets out how we will help the small number of pupils who find it difficult to travel to school without some support.

The Council will continue to deliver its statutory responsibilities to meet the travel needs of children and young people, enabling them to access their place of education. This support will be targeted at those children and young people who have significant additional needs or are deemed extremely vulnerable. This includes encouraging partners to work together to increase the independence of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We want to support parent/carer(s) to fulfil their responsibility to ensure their school-aged child or young person attends school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to enable them to do so. Those children and young people not in receipt of travel support from the Council can use a wide range of forms of travel in West Berkshire, accompanied as necessary, including bus, train, concessionary fares, walking and cycling. We also want to support schools to promote safe routes to school and safe travel skills through their regular curriculum.

The Council has a duty under Section 508a of the Education Act 1996 to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport. This is reflected in the Council strategy to tackle the climate and ecological emergency and to promote these modes of travel with the aim of achieving Net zero by 2030.

The Education Act 1996 defines sustainable modes of travel as those that the local authority considers may improve the physical well-being of those who use them, environmental well-being, or a combination of the two. This may include walking and cycling, as well as other types of travel. Alternative formats of this policy and application form are also available in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Equality and Diversity objectives.

3. Aims and Objectives

Aligned with the Council's [SEND Strategy](#) the service aims to provide support for all children and young people with special education needs and disabilities so that they have the:

“Right support and opportunities at the right time so that they become resilient, happy adults”.

This vision and its principles underpin this policy in relation to the assessment of travel needs and any necessary travel support that is subsequently provided, these principles include:

- All our plans, services and policies are co-produced with families.
- Children and young people with SEND feel safe and protected from harm.
- A person-centred approach to service delivery.
- A focus on inclusive practices, removing barriers to learning and high-quality teaching.
- Systematic, proactive, and appropriate early identification and early help and provision made available locally within supportive communities.
- Children, young people, and their parents are enabled to plan and make choices about their support as much as possible in decision making.
- Greater independence, choice and control for young people and their families over support.
- Successful preparation for adulthood, including supporting independence, independent living and training and employment.
- Integrated, evidence based, high quality services, interventions, and approaches – local as far as possible.
- Funding and support are allocated fairly and openly.

The policy will also contribute towards the delivery of the Council's aim, to be carbon neutral by 2030.



4. Eligibility

Parent/carer(s) have a legal duty to ensure that their compulsory school-aged child/young person (age 5-16) attends school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they do so.

The Council has a duty under the Education Act 1996 (section 508B) to ensure that suitable Travel Assistance is provided, for eligible children, to facilitate their school attendance.¹

The Council also has discretion to make transport arrangements, to subsidise travel costs, and to make appropriate charges for children who do not meet the criteria set out in the Act.

This policy applies to those who are resident in West Berkshire. If you reside outside of West Berkshire but your child/young person(s) attend a West Berkshire school, then you must apply to the local authority where you reside to request assistance with travel.

A child/young person is of compulsory school age from the start of term (Autumn, Spring and Winter) after their fifth birthday up until the last day of the academic year in which they are in year 11. This applies to both children/young people with and without an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

There are four core categories to determine eligibility for free home to school transport:

- statutory walking distances
- unsafe walking routes
- extended rights
- special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems

Children below statutory school age will not be eligible for free travel support between their home and school.

For pupils with an EHCP in year 12 and above (post-16-year-olds), there is a separate policy, which can be found on our website:

www.westberks.gov.uk/post-16-sen

Travel Assistance is only arranged for the normal start and finish times of schools/colleges and is not tailored for individual courses, work experience, examination timetables or any other similar situation. Similarly, transport will not be arranged for travel in between institutions during the school day, to offsite locations or to enable children to attend extra-curricular activities and other commitments outside of school hours.

The Council has considered relevant Statutory Guidance issued by the Department of Education.

4.1 Home address

A child or young person's home is the place where they are habitually and normally resident, with their legal parents/carers. When assessing eligibility and making travel arrangements this will be the primary home address as defined in the School Admission Guides, used when applying for a Primary or Secondary School place.

Where parents/carers are separated or divorced, entitlement is assessed in terms of the home where the child spends most of their time. Where a child spends equal amounts of school days with parents/career at separate addresses, eligibility for travel assistance will be evaluated from what was deemed the main parent address from which the school admissions team evaluated the nearest suitable school. Where a child spends equal amounts of school days with each parent, travelling from two addresses to school, entitlement may be assessed from both addresses. Evidence will be required to support this assessment in the form of a Court Order or Social Care Order.

¹Section 508B of the 1996 Education Act

4.2 Statutory walking distances

The Council will provide free home to school travel support for children and young people of compulsory school age to the nearest suitable school from their home address who meet the 'qualifying distance' criteria which is:

- 2 miles or more for children below the age of eight, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school.
- 3 miles or more for children and young people aged 8 and above, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school.

Children and young people who live between 2 and 3 miles from their school will cease to be entitled to free travel from the start of the term following their eighth birthday.

If the child/young person or family qualify for free school meals or they are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, then please refer to the 'Extended Rights' section below.

Further details on how eligibility is dealt with is in the application section below.

4.3 Unsafe walking routes

The Council will provide travel support if it determines that a child/young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk. The Council regularly assesses walking routes in conjunction with local context and knowledge and using the [Road Safety GB Guidelines on Assessment of Walked Routes to School](#) and the DfE Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance. Routes that have been determined to be unsafe will be kept under review and support will be withdrawn when the walking route is no longer deemed to be unsafe. The Council will expect a parent/carer to accompany the child along a route which would otherwise be classified as being available and will not provide travel support if this accompaniment will make the route available.

Where a parent/carer believes the assessed walking route to be unsafe, they should write to the Council via pupiltransport@westberks.gov.uk outlining the aspect of the route they believe to

be unsafe. Where a final decision is made on the safety of a walking route then this would be addressed through our complaints process

4.4 Extended rights

Children and young people from low-income families are entitled to additional support in certain circumstances. This applies to pupils who are entitled to free school meals, or those families who are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

Children and young people above the age of 8, but under the age of 11, (usually within Primary School or National Curriculum Years 3-6) from low-income families will be entitled to travel support to their nearest suitable school if the shortest walking distance between their home and the school is more than two miles.

Children and young people aged 11 and over (years 7 – 11) from low-income families will be entitled to travel support if they attend one of their three nearest suitable schools where they live between two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) and 6 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their school.

Low income children are also entitled to free travel if 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, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home.

4.5 Special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems

Where a child/young person with special educational needs, a disability and/or mobility problems does not meet the other eligibility criteria but has identified specific needs/circumstances that may mean it is unreasonable to expect the child/young person to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then consideration based on their individual needs and circumstances will be undertaken to identify if support with travel is necessary in order to access their education setting.

In cases of Parental Preference, families are responsible for their own travel arrangements. A child will not be eligible for Travel Assistance if they have an EHCP and due to parental preference resulting in that school being named on their EHCP, they attend any school other than their nearest suitable school.

4.6 Not Eligible

The Council is required to provide free travel to children/young people who meet the stated eligibility criteria to support them to attend their education setting at the normal start and end of the day. The Council is not required to provide travel for:

- Site transfers during the day
- To and from work placements or other school activities
- Induction/open days/interview visits
- Medical and/or dental appointments
- Parent/carer attendance at school
- Exchange student travel
- To respite care
- To or from a venue that isn't the normal address
- If the child is unwell and needs collecting during the school day
- If the child is suspended during the school day
- If the child has missed the contracted transport
- If the child is withdrawn from school by the family and placed in an alternative setting
- To fall in line with family members/friends travelling in the same/similar direction
- Work commitments or domestic difficulties of families
- Where parents/carer are unwilling, or unavailable to escort their child to school or an allocated pick-up point.
- A family being unable to transport their child to school only on the sole grounds that they are a single parent family

- Children in temporary care, including foster care
- An inability to afford existing transport arrangements for example, resulting from loss of earnings
- Family breakdown & fragmentation
- Long-term or temporary medical conditions without sufficient medical evidence from an appropriate medical professional

Please note that travel assistance will not be provided if you apply for a place at schools which are not the nearest but don't get into those schools and are allocated a place at a school further way because there are no spaces left at the nearest suitable

***PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE**



5. The Application of Eligibility Determination Process

5.1 How we determine 'nearest suitable school'

In all cases, a child/young person must be attending the nearest suitable school (or one of the three nearest suitable schools under the extended rights eligibility). The nearest suitable school for the purpose of school travel will be measured by a straight line between the home and the school.

The nearest suitable school is defined as a school that has spaces available that provides education appropriate to the age, gender, ability, and aptitude of the child/young person. The nearest qualifying school may be in West Berkshire or in a neighbouring Local Authority area.

It should be noted that the distance measurement of a child's nearest school (straight line) and the distance measurement for school travel eligibility (shortest walking distance) are different.

Distances are measured on a computerised GIS mapping system.

Types of suitable schools considered under this policy are:

- community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- academies or alternative provision academies
- alternative provision academies
- community or foundation special schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- maintained nursery schools
- city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts
- independent schools where this is named on a child/young person's EHCP

For mainstream applications, a school will be determined as having a vacancy:

- If the parent/carer either made or could reasonably have made an application during the normal school admissions round and a place would have been offered, either on the national offer day or by 31 May (of that year) from the relevant waiting list.
- For applications made after the normal admissions round and for in year applications, if, at the point of processing (and after 31 May for normal admission point applications), the child/young person's school application, a place could have been allocated to the child/young person.

When a child or young person cannot be offered a place at the nearest school to the home address, the Council will, subject to the criteria set within this policy and the qualifying distance being met, provide support with travel to the next nearest school with space to admit. For travel arrangements to be provided in this instance the parent/carer(s) must provide evidence that they have applied for and been refused a place at the school which is the nearest school for their home address and any other schools closer than the school offering admission.

If a school decides to enable a child/young person(s) to be on dual roll or have commissioned an alternative location/setting to provide elements of the individual's education, then the school will be responsible for ensuring suitable travel arrangements are in place.

Where a school operates on multiple or split sites, the assessment of nearest qualifying school will take account of the sites used to prioritise admissions (as defined in each school's admission arrangements), regardless of which year groups are educated at which site or which site a child or young person might attend.

5.2 Named school in Education, Health and Care Plan

For a child or young person with special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems and who has an active Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) parent/carer(s) have the right to ask for a particular school to be named in their child/young person's plan.

During the process of naming the school and finalising the plan, the Council will consider whether the child will be eligible for school travel and how travel arrangements will be provided. The Council will also consider the impact of the journey and the child/young person's ability to learn upon arrival. If the journey may cause a negative impact on the child/young person, the Council will need to consider mitigations to minimise impact and whether the school remains appropriate for the child/young person due to the potential impact.

The Council will also consider the cost of travel when determining whether naming a particular school would be compatible with the efficient use of resources in accordance with the need identified in the Green Paper 'SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time' to ensure long-term financial sustainability of the Council's finances.

If it is identified that providing travel to the parent/carer(s) preferred school would be either unsuitable for the child (age, ability, aptitude, or special educational needs) or incompatible with efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources then the Council may name the nearer school (that can also meet the child/young person's educational needs).

If the naming of the parent/carer(s) preferred school is identified as an inefficient use of resources, then the Council may still name the parent/carer(s) preferred school but on condition that all the travel costs are paid by the parent/carer(s).

5.3 How walking distance is measured

Walking distances are calculated using the shortest available walking route from the home address to school using a computerised GIS mapping system. If families believe that the walking route measured is not available to walk, they should request a review of the route.

The legal definition of an 'available walking route' is a route along which a child or young person, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school. The route may include footpaths, bridleways and other permitted paths as well as recognised routes.

Where a school operates on a temporary site and that school's permanent/current site is deemed to be a child/young person's nearest qualifying school, the home to school walking distance will be measured to the school's temporary site to determine if the child or young person lives over the statutory walking distance and is eligible for travel support. Eligibility will be reassessed at the point a child or young person ceases to be educated at the temporary site.

Distances will be measured from the address point of the pupil's house to the nearest school gate available for pupils to use.

5.4 What is Accompanied?

Parent/carer(s) are expected to accompany their child/young person to school. Assessments of routes will be undertaken on this basis. Parent/carer(s) will be expected to make suitable arrangements to accompany their child/young person or make alternative travel arrangements if a route is deemed available.

A child or young person will not be eligible for home to school travel solely because of parental/carer work or caring commitments that mean they are unable to accompany their child/young person themselves.

Where there are circumstances that may impact a parent/carer(s) ability to accompany their child/young person to school then the Council will consider these on a case-by-case basis (see extenuating circumstances). This may include the parent/carer having a disability or mobility problem that would make it difficult to accompany their child/young person.

5.5 What are Extended rights?

Parent/carer(s) who believe they meet the Extended Rights criteria and are therefore eligible for support with travel to school are asked to provide their national insurance number or NASS number. Where parents/carers are applying based on receiving the maximum level of working tax credit, a copy of all 6 pages of their most recent TC602, Tax Credit Award/Universal Credit Notice, with their application.

If the child or young person is applying for travel support to a school of faith under Extended Rights eligibility, then the parent/carer(s) must also provide supporting evidence regarding their genuine adherence to their religion or belief and asking their religious leader to confirm in writing.

5.6 Special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems

Where a child/young person with special education needs, a disability and/or mobility problems does not meet the other three eligibility criteria but has identified specific needs/circumstances that may mean it is unreasonable to expect the child or young person to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), consideration will be based on their individual needs and circumstances.

In determining whether a child or young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk between home and school, the Council will consider whether the child/young person could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child/young person's parent/carer(s) can reasonably be expected to accompany their child/young person. The expectation is that a child/young person will be accompanied by a parent/carer.

When considering eligibility for travel support for a child or young person with SEND or mobility problems, the Council will consider the individual needs of each child/young person. This may include taking professional advice from educational psychologists, medical professionals and teachers and consulting with parent/carer(s) before arriving at a final decision.

Consideration will also be given to the child/young person's physical and medical requirements including any disabilities they may have. The findings and decision will be shared with parent/carer(s).

The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing travel support entitlement:

- the age of the child or young person
- the distance of the child/young person from school to home
- whether the child or young person is physically able to walk the journey to school
- whether the walking route is appropriate for the pupil and their specific needs and allows them to arrive in a fit state to be educated
- whether a child/young person's emotional and behavioural difficulties will create a clear health and safety hazard to themselves or others on the journey to school
- the SEND of the child or young person
- the efficient use of resources
- any other individual circumstance

This is not an exhaustive list. It is not presented in any order and is for guidance only. Meeting one or more of the criteria does not automatically entitle a child or young person with SEND to travel support.

The fact that a child or young person has an EHCP or attends a special school does not automatically entitle them to travel support.

Eligibility for travel support is related to the child/young person's needs. Consideration may consider the need for travel supports due to some family circumstances. Factors identified in an application will be considered when determining eligibility for home to school travel support and deciding on the type of travel support to be provided.

Other family circumstances, such as parent/carer(s) attending work or looking after other children/young people will not normally be considered when determining eligibility.

5.7 Temporary (housing) local authority accommodation

Where a low-income family has been moved to temporary local authority accommodation within West Berkshire, such as bed and breakfast, they **may** be eligible for travel support for up to two terms.

This is to facilitate attendance at the child/young person's same school while arrangements are made for transition to the nearest suitable school. For support to be provided the child/young person's "new" temporary accommodation must be located at least 2 miles if aged 8 or over, from their existing school, and it must be the nearest school to their previous home at the time of securing a school place and moving into temporary local authority accommodation.

Children and young people in key stage 4 (years 10 and 11) at the time of being moved will be supported in their current school until the end of key stage 4 if the school remains beyond 3 miles from the child/young person's temporary local authority accommodation. In this instance the award of support will not be limited to two terms or subject to moving to the nearest available suitable school.

5.8 Support for children who are in care

Children and young people in the care of the Council (Children in Care) and children/young people who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to child arrangements order or special guardianship order) will be assessed against the eligibility criteria details in this policy.

- If the child or young person is not entitled to free travel support, it is the carer's responsibility to ensure that they are able to get to and from school.
- Where exceptional circumstances exist, the professionals working with the individual child/young person would review the child/young person's needs and, if appropriate, make a case for travel support, which would be considered jointly by the Pupil Transport Team and Children's Social Care.



6. How to apply

All requests for travel support must be made through submission of an online application form available [here](#).

The Council will look to complete the assessment of applications in a timely fashion, aiming to put in place travel arrangements for those entitled at the earliest opportunity. However, it may take up to 6-weeks to process and families should be prepared to make their own interim travel arrangements if necessary.

While an application is being processed parent/carers will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements, the Council will not compensate parent/carers during the assessment process for any costs incurred until point of assistance being offered.

During periods of high demand, such as the build-up to the new academic year, timescales for processing applications may be extended. Families are advised to apply for support with travel at the earliest opportunity to ensure arrangements are in place when they are required.

To try and reduce any disruption to the service and inform effective planning, the Council are implementing cut off dates for applications made for arrangements to begin for the next academic year. The beginning of the academic year is the most critical time with regards to school travel and we aim to promote continuity in the service we provide the children.

Late applications will still receive travel assistance; however, this may be delayed for the start of the academic year. The arrangements may be interim or temporary solutions that have been sought in the short term and will be subject to review/change.

Cut-off dates will be published well in advance via the Council's local offer, which is available on the Council's website. Where possible, we will also correspond with parent/carers in writing via mail/email informing them of the exact dates. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application with an explanation of the reasoning of the decision in accordance with this policy.

6.1 Extenuating circumstances

Recognising that the Council's discretionary powers should not be restricted by its general policy, the Council will consider and may agree requests for home to school travel support where there are extenuating circumstances that prevent a child or young person accessing their school unless travel support is put in place. If the parent/carer(s) believe extenuating circumstances exist and support with travel is necessary, then information and evidence must be provided when applying for support for this to be considered.

The overriding expectation is that parent/carer(s) should undertake their legal responsibility to get their child(ren)/young person(s) to and from school and as such the Council will need to be satisfied that the parent/carer(s) have demonstrated why they, for social, medical, financial, or personal reasons cannot undertake this duty.

A decision will be based on evidence received to support the case as to whether travel support is necessary for the child or young person to receive an education. Consideration will be given as to whether the circumstances could have reasonably been foreseen by the parent/carer. For example, moving to temporary accommodation owing to flood damage cannot be foreseen, whereas choosing a school other than a child/young person's nearest school and realising following this decision that support with travel is not available could be foreseen.

Where it is decided that a child or young person does not qualify for support with travel based on the presented needs/circumstances then it remains the parent/carer(s) responsibility to ensure school attendance or consider transferring the child/young person to a more local school.

In all cases the decision whether to exercise discretion will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

6.2 Special consideration and appeals

Parent/carer(s) of children or young people who live in West Berkshire and who wish to appeal a decision about one of the following, may apply for their case to be considered:

- the travel arrangements offered.
- their child/young person's eligibility
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances
- the safety of the route

During the appeal process about an application for travel support, travel arrangements will not be provided to the child/young person. Where the appeal concerns a change to existing travel arrangements, then the previously agreed travel arrangements will continue until the review is complete.

The Council operates a two-stage appeal process as detailed below:

Stage one: Review by a senior officer

- Parent/carer(s) have 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school travel support decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- The written request should detail why the parent/carer(s) believe the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent/carer(s) believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent/carer(s) written request, a senior officer should complete a review of the original decision and send the parent/carer a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review.

Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel

- Parent/carer(s) have 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent/carer(s) request an independent appeal panel considers written and verbal representations from both the parent/carer(s) and officers involved in the case and gives a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days).

6.3 Change of child/young person's circumstances

It is the responsibility of parent/carer(s) to inform the Council immediately of any changes in circumstances which the original application was based on. Failure to do so may result in existing travel support being suspended/terminated.

The Council will also perform routine checks throughout the year and if it is identified circumstances have changed without parent/carer(s) informing the Council then any existing support may be stopped immediately if the change in circumstances mean that the child or young person no longer meets the agreed eligibility criteria.

Change in circumstances about extended rights and family financial situation will not normally result in an instant removal of support, at the point of change in relation to the family's financial circumstance and no longer meeting the eligibility threshold then assistance will only remain until the end of the current School year.

If a family moves home, a new assessment will be undertaken to establish if eligibility criteria continue to be met. The outcome of the assessment will come into immediate effect.

6.4 Review of child/young person's needs and ongoing support suitability.

The Council will undertake regular reviews of support and individual eligibility to ensure any provision continues to be appropriate for the individual passengers, is financially sustainable for the Council, and supports the development of independence.

Where a change to existing travel arrangements is identified as necessary the Council will inform parent/carer(s) of any proposed changes and timescales as well as the reasons for the decision. The Council will aim to provide a suitable time frame to support individual transition to the new travel arrangements for each child/young person. Each transition period will reflect the individual needs, circumstances of the child or young person, and the significance of the change.

6.5 Withdrawal of support provided in error.

Where a child or young person has been awarded travel support in error, West Berkshire Council has the right to withdraw this after first considering the circumstances of each case to determine whether there are exceptional reasons for provision to continue.

Consideration cannot be given to those who simply cannot meet their parental/carer responsibility to get their own child/young person to school following the removal of support.

This would have been expected to have been considered at the time of admitting the child or young person into school, as would have been the case had the error not been made. Where it is decided to withdraw travel support, a minimum of one month's notice is given.

6.6 Provision of false or inaccurate information

When applying, the parent/carer(s) will sign a declaration confirming the accuracy of the information. The parent/carer(s) are also under a duty to notify the Council of any changes in circumstances. If it later transpires that the information is incorrect or updated information has not been provided, then notice will be given, and then travel support will cease. The Council will also take steps to recover the cost of travel support provided because of this inaccurate information. If the information has been provided fraudulently, the Council's corporate anti-fraud team will investigate to determine whether a criminal prosecution should be commenced.

Once your application has been considered (including the use of the Appeals process, where applicable), we will not accept a further application for transport for the same child and same school unless:

a) Your circumstances have materially changed (i.e. change of address, exceptional circumstances) OR

b) You believe you are now entitled because the Council's policy has been amended.

7. Travel Support Options

The Council will assess the travel needs of all eligible children/young people and decide the most appropriate form of support that will be provided. In accordance with the Council's strategic aims and objectives outlined earlier in this policy.

In accordance with national guidance, a journey to school for eligible children and young people should be suitable, safe and reasonably stress free to enable a child or young person to arrive at school ready for a day of study. To this end it is considered reasonable that maximum journey times each way for children and young people are normally as follows:

- 45 minutes for primary aged pupils
- 75 minutes for secondary aged pupils

However, it is recognised that adhering to journey times may not always be possible due to the distances travelled and complexities of specific journeys. It may be deemed acceptable for a trip to exceed these journey times if it is considered that the additional time does not place undue stress, strain or difficulty on the child/young person, which would prevent them from benefitting from the education.

Where children and young people with special educational needs, disability or mobility problems are present, then journey times may sometimes need to be longer and more complex, although the Council will ensure that it does not extend routes for such children/young people unnecessarily with appropriate measures in place to address any implications for doing so.

Subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of this policy, the following support will be considered (in the following order):

1. bus or train pass for the pupil (including accompanying parent/carer where necessary).
2. independent travel training.
3. provision of a personal travel budget (PTB);
4. payment of car mileage/travel reimbursement for the pupil's parent/carer(s).
5. Provision of a cycling allowance
6. Provision of a suitable passenger assistant to enable a pupil to walk a short distance.
7. provision of shared transport (using collection point if appropriate).
8. Individual transport

The provision of individual transport, such as a taxi, with or without escort should be exceptional and only where it has been demonstrated that other modes of support are not suitable.

Other travel options may be considered and offered where individual needs enable travel, and the development of travel skills and independence.

7.1 Provision of passenger assistant

A passenger assistant will only be provided following the outcome of an assessment of the child/young person's Special Educational Needs and/or medical needs to meet the needs of the children/young people travelling to and from school. This determination will be made by the Council considering:

- Where an individual child/young person's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle.
- Where an assessment of the children/young people on the vehicle and the journey to be undertaken highlight a clear danger or health and safety risk to all passengers on the vehicle.

The consideration for passenger assistants will be made based on evidence received from all relevant parties and will be reviewed regularly, where appropriate and whenever a contract is re-tendered.

All travel support will be reviewed as part of the annual review of needs and if appropriate as part of an early review. Travel support may be withdrawn or amended if circumstances change, or the Council considers the withdrawal appropriate as an encouragement to independence or the offer is no longer the most economical mode of travel.

7.2 Times of travel (school times)

Schools are responsible for deciding when their school day will start and end. The Council will make necessary travel arrangements for eligible children and young people to enable them to attend at the beginning and end of the 'normal' school day.

Where classes, year groups or pupils have a start or finish time that is different for most pupils at the school, it will not normally be possible for the Council to make separate travel arrangements. In this event Schools may be required to make their own travel arrangements to accommodate these pupils.

7.3 Passenger code of conduct

It is expected that all children and young people using the service display appropriate behaviour whilst using the services provided by the Council. More information is available in the Council's Home to School Transport Behaviour Code: [here](#)

Children and young people with special educational needs, disability or mobility problems may demonstrate behaviours as part of their additional needs, for example it may be a consequence of frustration because of communication difficulties. These needs and circumstances will be taken into consideration in the event of an incident taking place and as part of any investigation or review.

In the first instance it is expected that the Council, School, and parent/carer(s) would work together to identify suitable strategies of support to effectively manage any challenging behaviour that may be presented whilst children/young people travel to school.

If the behaviour of a child or young person becomes unmanageable or presents significant and "real" safety risks, then travel support may be withdrawn. This will only be undertaken as a last resort, if an incident occurs then a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) or alternative form of travel may be offered, this will be assessed, reviewed, and decided on a case-by-case basis.

To mitigate potential triggers that may influence changes in behaviour the Council will aim to provide consistent travel arrangements, and if any change can be identified in advance, then it will try to inform everyone affected at the earliest opportunity. It is important to acknowledge that some changes are unavoidable and may take effect with minimal advance notification.

The types of behaviours typically identified as unacceptable include (but not limited):

- being rude
- pushing and kicking
- bullying
- distracting the driver
- refusing to wear a seatbelt or remain seated.
- endangering the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others

The Council will work with schools, transport providers, children/young people, and their families to ensure appropriate measures are in place to manage unacceptable behaviour where it occurs. This may include the introduction of seating plans or other support strategies for the child/young person.

7.4 Travel training

Local authorities have a duty to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities up to the age of 25 in education and training. Independent travel training aims to achieve this.

Where it is safe, appropriate, and reasonable to do so, children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities will be expected to walk, accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult, to and from a common pick-up point near their home.

To better support children and young people to travel independently, the Council may offer Independent Travel Training in their Travel Assistance offer. The training will support the child to learn the necessary skills to allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport, such as:

- Timetables (including time management)
- Orientation
- Road Safety
- Accessibility (access to transport, exits and purchasing tickets)
- Communication
- Personal Safety
- Travel Planning and preparation

Independent travel training teaches children / young people a valuable skill to prepare for adulthood, an essential employability skill, and provides greater opportunities for young people, not least increasing confidence in their abilities and reducing their sense of reliance on family members.

The Council will work in partnership with education establishments and other individuals to identify young people who could benefit from Independent Travel Training (ITT) and contact their families to invite them to take part in ITT.

Further information on Independent Travel Training, how it is assessed, delivered, and the benefits it provides children/young people can be found by contact the Home to School Transport Team.

Once a child is deemed as capable of independent travel no further Travel Assistance will be offered except in exceptional circumstances.

7.5 Personal Travel Budgets

A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is a payment from West Berkshire Council to parent/carer(s) of children and young people who are eligible for travel support. A PTB gives families the choice and control to make their own travel arrangements for the child/young person to access education. The PTB is usually paid in advance every 4-weeks into the bank account of the parent/carer.

The PTB is based on the child/young person's attendance and payments may be withheld if a child/young person does not attend regularly. Where two or more children/young people live at the same address and attend the same school and the PTB has been agreed for one child/young person, additional PTB payments will not be provided for the other children/young people, as all children/young people would be expected to travel together.

Any arrangements made by the parent/carer(s) using the PTB are the responsibility of the parent/carer(s).

Information on PTB's, including how to apply for a PTB and how they work, can be found [here](#).

If the Council become aware of a change to the child/young person(s) circumstances that effect the individual's eligibility or value of the PTB, then the Council will claim back any over payment from the date the change in circumstances took effect.

7.6 Payment of Mileage allowances

These will be paid in arrears following completion of a claim form and confirmation of attendance from the school. Mileage will normally be paid at 40p/mile for the journeys where the young person is in the vehicle i.e. one way to school, one way home per day.

7.7 Collection points

The Council will identify pick-up and drop-off locations for pupils to meet the bus or taxi rather than offering a door-to-door service. This reduces the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils and supports them to become more independent and better prepares them for adulthood.

Using a collection point will not be possible for some children and young people with the most complex SEND needs, and in some cases parent/carer(s) own mobility or disability may impact on them being able to accompany their child/young person to a collection point. An assessment will be conducted to determine if the use of a collection point is a reasonable expectation.

Where a collection point is allocated, it is the parent/carer(s) responsibility to make sure that their child/young person travels to and from the collection point and transfers to and from the vehicle safely.

For parent/carer(s) who are temporarily unable to take their child/young person to a collection point, no temporary support will be provided in those circumstances. This is because the child/young person's special educational need or disability has not changed and the travel support service from the collection point is still available.

All collection points will reflect the specific needs of the individual, each collection point will be assessed in advanced for their suitability.

- wherever a bus stop can be legally used as a collection point, it will be
- minibuses can stop to collect and drop off on yellow and double yellow lines;
- vehicles cannot stop on white zig zags (near a zebra crossing) nor school keep-clear hatchings

- the driver always plans not to cause obstructions to other road users while making a drop off or collection and will try to stop in parking areas or bays
- collections or drop-off are always made kerb side
- each collection point is physically assessed before being used in service; a driver will go out and assess to see if the location is safe (for example, a well-lit public location, not too close to a junction or on the brow of a hill)
- the drivers complete dynamic risk
- assessments at the time of collections or / drop offs in the eventuality of any changes (new road layouts, another road user in the stopping space) and will slightly adjust the collection point if it is unsafe to stop

7.8 Weekly/Fortnightly boarding placements

Travel support will be provided to take children/young people to school at the beginning and end of the school week.

7.9 Termly residential placements

12 single journeys from home to school and school to home will be provided each academic year. This will consist of trips required at the start and end of each term, and at other school closure times, i.e., half term breaks.

7.10 School activities or respite care

Children/young people who are eligible for assistance with travel to school under this policy are not entitled to transport for after school activities or respite care.

The Council will, however, endeavour to assist with transport for after school activities or respite care if this can be offered.

Appendix 1- Glossary – Home to School Transport Policy

Alternative Provision (AP) – Education arranged by the local authority or a school for pupils who are unable to attend mainstream school due to exclusion, illness, or other reasons.

Compulsory School Age – The age range during which a child is legally required to receive full-time education, typically from the term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June of the school year in which they turn 16.

Discretionary Transport Assistance – Transport support provided at the local authority’s discretion for pupils who do not meet the statutory eligibility criteria but may have exceptional circumstances.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – A legal document outlining the special educational needs (SEN) of a child or young person and the support required, which may include transport arrangements.

Eligible Child – A child who meets the statutory criteria for free home-to-school transport, based on factors such as distance, SEN, disability, or unsafe walking routes.

Home Address – The primary residence of the child, where they live with a parent or legal guardian. The address must be permanent and not a temporary or business address.

Independent Travel Training (ITT) – A programme designed to help young people with SEN or disabilities develop the skills and confidence to travel independently.

Children in Care (CIC) – A child in the care of the local authority, either through a voluntary agreement or legal order, who may require specific transport arrangements.

Mainstream School – A general education school that caters to children without requiring specialized SEN provision.

Nearest Suitable School – The closest school to the child’s home that can meet their educational needs, as determined by the local authority.

Parental Preference – The legal right of parents to express a preference for a particular school. However, choosing a school further away than the nearest suitable school may affect transport eligibility.

Personal Transport Budget (PTB) – A financial allowance provided to parents or carers to arrange their own home-to-school transport for an eligible child, as an alternative to local authority-provided transport.

Post-16 Transport Assistance – Support provided to students aged 16-19 (or up to 25 with an EHCP) who require transport to further education institutions, often on a discretionary basis.

Public Service Vehicle (PSV) – A bus or coach used for transporting students, which may be contracted by the local authority or a commercial service.

Reasonable Adjustments – Modifications made to transport arrangements to accommodate children with disabilities, ensuring they have equal access to education.

Safe Walking Route – A walking route assessed by the local authority to determine if it is reasonably safe for a child to walk to school, accompanied if necessary.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – A term covering a wide range of learning difficulties, disabilities, and health conditions that may affect a child’s ability to access education and transport services.

Statutory Walking Distance – The legal distance beyond which free home-to-school transport must be provided:

- 2 miles for children under 8 years old
- 3 miles for children aged 8 and over

Travel Assistance Review – A reassessment of a child’s eligibility for transport support due to changes in their circumstances, school placement, or local authority policy.

Travel Pass – A permit issued to eligible students allowing them to use designated public transport services for their school journey.

Appendix 2- Complaints process

If you are complaining about policy or a member of the team, please see

www.westberks.gov.uk/complaints

Local Government Ombudsman

www.lgo.org.uk

You can apply for a review of the decision through the Local Government Ombudsman if you think that:

- the rules haven’t been followed
- it’s taken too long to reach a decision
- the way that your appeal has been handled has been irregular or unfair
- if you feel the decision of the independent panel is flawed on public law grounds

Appendix 3- Privacy Policy

www.westberks.gov.uk/privacypolicy



www.westberks.gov.uk

WBC/TR/MP/0225