

Home to School Transport Policy and Guidance Notes 2016-2017

School Services

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to explain the support available for pupils travelling to and from school. The aim is to encourage and enable independent travel for pupils whenever possible. For this reason all transport requests are reviewed at least once a year or as pupils' circumstances change.

2. General policy

Pupils of statutory school age attending mainstream schools are provided with a free travel pass or equivalent if:

- they live in the borough of Slough **and**
- they attend their catchment school or nearest school **and**
- they live more than 2 miles from school if they are aged under 8 (Reception and years 1 to 3) or more than 3 miles if they are aged between 8 and 16 (years 4 to 11).

The distance will be calculated by the local authority (LA) using the shortest available walking route from the child's home to the school. Catchment schools are those that serve the catchment areas as defined by the LA.

If the catchment school or nearest school is full, transport will be provided to the nearest school with a place available as determined by the LA. Parents may be asked to provide evidence that they have been unsuccessful in applying for a place at their catchment school or nearest school and any other schools.

Parents with children eligible for transport will be required to re-apply for transport if they choose to move house or their child (ren) change(s) school. Where the council moves the home of the parents with children eligible for transport this will not be the case.

Children under the age of five travel free on public transport buses therefore under this policy transport provision is not made for pupils in this age group.

(a) Pupils from low income families

Primary pupils:

Pupils aged eight to eleven years (years 4 to 6) who live more than two miles from their nearest qualifying school are provided with a free travel pass or equivalent if they are:

- entitled to free school meals **or**
- their parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

The two mile limit is measured as the shortest available walking route.

Secondary pupils:

Pupils aged eleven to sixteen years (years 7 to 11) who live between two and six miles from one of three "nearest qualifying schools" are provided with a free travel pass or equivalent if they are:

- entitled to free school meals **or**
- their parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

The two mile limit is measured as the shortest available walking route.

Pupils aged eleven to sixteen years (years 7 to 11) who live more than two miles but less than fifteen miles from the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religious belief, are provided with a free pass or equivalent if they are:

- entitled to free school meals **or**
- their parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

The two mile limit is measured as the shortest available walking route.

Publicly-funded local authority maintained schools and academies are deemed to be suitable qualifying schools, but not independent schools.

Parents applying under this criterion - a new application needs to be submitted every school year.

(b) Mileage reimbursement for parental transport

In some cases, where children are eligible for free transport, parents may wish to provide transport to and from school themselves. The council will reimburse mileage at a rate to be considered annually for the home to school journeys only, i.e. when the pupil is receiving transport. If there is a change of circumstances and parents wish to change this arrangement they must give two weeks notice to allow time for the council to arrange appropriate transport. The current mileage rate is 45 pence per mile.

(c) Parental duties and responsibilities

Even though the council offers transport assistance, it is still the responsibility of parents in all circumstances to ensure their children get to school. Even where transport is provided they still have a responsibility for the behaviour of their child when traveling to and from school.

(d) Parental preference

It is a requirement that parental preference is considered wherever possible in allocating school places, but this requirement does not extend to the provision of transport. If parents choose to send their child to a school which is not the catchment school or nearest school, free transport will not be provided by the council, even if the school is beyond statutory walking distance. Parents will be responsible for all arrangements and costs.

If parents later experience a change of circumstances, which prevent them from meeting their responsibility for transport, the local authority would expect the child to transfer to the nearest school or catchment school. The local authority will not assume responsibility for transport to the preferred school.

If parents request free transport to a preferred school at any time on the grounds that the nearest school or catchment area school is full, the council will not consider the request unless parents had applied for the nearest school or catchment school during the normal admission round. This also applies to parents of children with a Statement of SEN (Special Educational Needs) or an Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan).

(e) Alternative schools when preferences cannot be met

Where parents have made an application for a place at their catchment school or nearest school but the LA has been unable to offer a place, the LA will offer the next nearest school with places. In such cases the school will be treated as a qualifying school for transport assistance, providing it is beyond the statutory walking distance.

(f) Transport provided in error

Where free transport has been provided in error or where there have been material changes to the route to school, transport will be withdrawn. However, transport will continue until the end of the term in which the error was notified, in order to allow parents to make alternative arrangements.

(g) Change of home address

Where a pupil is receiving free transport and parents change address, so that their school is no longer the catchment school or nearest school or, 'qualifying school' under the definitions set out within this policy, transport will cease and responsibility for the child's transport arrangements becomes the responsibility of the parents.

Where a pupil is not receiving transport and parents change address, they will be required to meet any transport costs arising from the decision to change address, even in cases where the new catchment school is full.

3. Exceptions to the general policy

Slough residents may also be provided with transport to maintained schools as below.

(a) Medical needs

If a child has a medical need which prevents them making their own way to school, when accompanied if appropriate, transport will be provided to their catchment school or nearest school providing their application is supported by both their GP and consultant. All applications made on medical grounds will be considered by the transport medical panel. The medical panel will examine each case individually. The distance criteria in the general policy above do not apply. Appropriate transport will be provided for a limited period based on the medical information available, and then reviewed taking account of any new medical information and with a view to promoting independent travel.

If the child attends a school which is not their catchment school or nearest school, parents will be responsible for transport arrangements and costs.

(b) Pupils with a statement of SEN (Statement of Educational Needs) or an Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan)

There is no automatic entitlement to free school transport on the grounds that a pupil has a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan. It is important to bear in mind that the decision to provide transport will be based on the needs of the pupil and **not** the parents/carer's needs. The LA will seek to promote independent travel wherever possible in order to develop independence in children and young people. Therefore some children may be offered independent travel training rather than transport.

Appropriate transport will be provided for pupils attending the nearest suitable school.

To be eligible for transport the pupil must attend the nearest suitable special school or resource base attached to a mainstream school and either:

- (i) meet the distance criteria in the general policy or
- (ii) have a medical or physical condition that prevents them walking or using public transport

Pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan attending a mainstream school, not as a pupil of a special resource base, will not be eligible for free transport unless they meet the criteria in the general policy.

Parental preference, statement of SEN or an EHC PLAN

A parent who has exercised their preference for their child to attend a school that is further away from the child's home than another school that, in the authority's view, would be suitable to meet the child's statement of SEN or an EHC Plan, is responsible for arranging and funding the transport to that school. Where the LA agrees to meet parental preference in naming such a school on a child's statement of SEN or an EHC Plan, it may do so on condition that the parent takes responsibility for any transport arrangements.

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities team (SEND) will consider whether transport is necessary using the criteria above and allocate transport from the categories below, using the highest appropriate category on the list, taking into account the needs of the pupil. Generally the cost of transport increases from 1 to 8 below.

1. Provision of independent travel training
2. Provision of a travel pass for the pupil
3. Payment of car mileage for the pupil's parent(s)
4. Provision of a travel pass for pupil and parent

5. Provision of a shared vehicle without escort
6. Provision of a shared vehicle with escort
7. Provision of an individual vehicle without escort
8. Provision of an individual vehicle with escort

All transport provision will be reviewed as part of the annual review of needs and if appropriate as part of an early review. Transport provision may be withdrawn or amended if circumstances have changed or the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Panel considers the withdrawal appropriate as an encouragement to independence.

(c) Transport for statutory aged pupils on assessment places

In exceptional cases pupils who are at a school on assessment, may be offered transport on a temporary basis. Parents should note that once the statement has been finalised, transport will be reviewed and only continue if the pupil meets the criteria in the transport policy.

(d) Transport for pre-school pupils with a statement of SEN or EHC Plan

Transport will be provided for pupils below statutory school age if they have a statement of special needs and they are attending the nearest suitable school, providing this is a special school or resource base and it is more than two miles from their home. In addition, transport will be provided for children attending an assessment centre, providing it is the nearest suitable school and more than two miles from home.

(d) Safety of the route

A travel pass will be provided if the route is considered to be unsafe in terms of traffic and highway conditions. Routes where there is a footpath of reasonable width and condition are considered to be safe. It is assumed that pupils are accompanied to and from school as appropriate. The safety of a route where there are no footpaths will be assessed by a road safety officer.

(e) Post 16 transport

Pupils and students without a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan, aged between 16 and 19 and attending a full-time course at a maintained school or college may be entitled to apply for assistance for travel. For further information pupils and students should contact Transport on 01753 875729.

Students aged between 16 and 25 with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan continuing in education will be considered as below.

Young people aged 16-25 with special educational needs and disability

Most pupils of this age would be expected to use public transport and travel independently in view of the beneficial effects of developing their life skills.

The council accepts that for a small minority this may not be possible. Applications will be considered against the following criteria:

The student is aged between 16-25 and is on a course of further education at a school or designated further education college recognised by the Department for Education.

The course is deemed to be suitable and will provide an educational benefit to the student as assessed by the student's education health and care plan.

Where the need and reasons for specific travel assistance has been identified/evidenced in the student's statement of Special Educational Needs or transition plan.

Students must live more than three miles from school or college and be unable to undertake the journey on their own.

Applications for students who have a disability or learning difficulty that would make it not reasonable, practicable or introduce unreasonable levels of risk for them to undertake a journey to school or college of less than three miles will also be considered. Applications will be assessed on their own merits.

If a student has been provided with the highest rate of mobility allowance or the family has access to a mobility vehicle, then additional travel assistance will not be provided.

(f) Respite care

For pupils attending Slough special schools, transport will be provided to respite care at the end of the school day and from respite care at the beginning of the school day where there are no additional transport costs. If there are additional transport costs parents or the organisations providing respite care will be required to meet these costs.

(g) Part time provision

Haybrook College will manage all their pupils transport needs and transport will be provided by the college. Pupils will still need to apply in the normal way to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

(h) Appeals

Parents who are unsuccessful in applying for transport can appeal if they consider there are exceptional circumstances. This includes parents of pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan. The appeal panel will consider each case on its merits.

Appeals are arranged by Democratic Services who can be contacted on 01753 875317.

4. Procedures

All applications for transport, other than for children with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan, will be considered by the Transport Team (School Services) following receipt of the appropriate application form. For children with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan the provision of transport will be considered by the SEND Team. If the SEND Team consider transport should be provided a request will be forwarded to the Transport Team. Transport will be arranged in all cases by the Transport Team in conjunction with transport contractors.

(a) Replacement travel passes

If pupils lose their travel passes, a replacement pass will be provided by the LA at a cost of £15 plus an additional photo. Parents should contact the Home to School Transport Team on 01753 477240 for more information.

NB. A replacement travel pass will only be issued twice in any academic year.

(b) Damaged bus passes

If a pass is damaged and becomes difficult to read the bus company may refuse travel. In this case the normal fare will be required until a replacement pass is issued. There is no charge for replacement of a defaced bus pass providing the old pass is returned with the application for replacement and an additional photograph. Parents should contact the Home to School Transport Team on 01753 477240 for more information.

5. Guidance notes for parents

These notes should be read in conjunction with the policy above.

(a) Applications

All applications for transport, other than for children with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan will be considered by the Transport Team (School Services). Parents who need an application form or have any queries about transport should contact 01753 875729. The Transport Team will aim to notify parents of the outcome of their application within 10 working days of receiving a correctly completed form.

Applications from parents of children with a statement of SEN or EHC Plan will be considered by a transport panel. Parents will receive a letter notifying them of the outcome.

(b) General policy

Pupils without a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan, who are eligible under the general policy, will be provided with either a train or bus pass or their equivalent, not both. Pupils will be offered the most appropriate according to their home address and the location of their school.

Information on the catchment areas of schools in Slough is available from the Admissions Team and Slough Borough Council website. The Admissions helpline is contactable on 01753 875728 and is open Wednesday and Friday between 10am-5.30pm. You can also visit on Tuesday and Thursday at MyCouncil, High Street, Slough. If the school attended is closer than the catchment school but more than the qualifying distance in the general policy, transport will be provided.

(c) Pupils with a Statement of SEN or an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

The LA recognises the responsibility of all parents to ensure their child attends school regularly. The policy of Slough Borough Council LA is that, wherever possible, children with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan should be treated no differently from children who do not have a statement. This includes the provision of transport. *It is important to bear in mind that the decision to provide transport will be based on the needs of the pupil and NOT the parent/carer's needs.*

If transport is necessary, the LA will arrange transport in the most cost effective way bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the child. This may be by paying parents a mileage allowance to transport their child(ren) to school, or by issuing a bus pass or its equivalent, or by minibus or taxi.

If transport is agreed but the school place is available before transport can be arranged parents/guardians may be asked to provide transport on a temporary basis.

It is recognised that transport requirements may vary as a child develops and a review of transport requirements forms part of the annual review of a pupil's EHC Plan and this will always seek to encourage a pupil's ability to travel independently.

Transport will be provided for children with a statement of SEN or an EHC Plan when the school recommended by the LA is beyond the statutory distance of the LA policy (see general policy).

Transport will be provided in the following circumstances:

- If the pupil fulfils the eligibility criteria.
- Pupils who are in care and have been accommodated by the LA outside the borough, and attend special school.
- Where pupils are placed in residential schools, term placements and weekly placements outside the LA. However parents are encouraged to take and collect their children from such provision as a means of establishing regular contact with the school.
- For pupils in term placements transport will only be provided to school and home at the beginning and end of the term and half term.
- For pupils in weekly placements transport will only be provided to school and home on the Friday and Sunday/Monday.
- In exceptional circumstances transport will be provided for pupils to return home, who become unwell and attend an out of borough school.

Where a child has been assessed as entitled to transport and a mobility car has been provided to assist in access for education purposes, parents may be asked to accept responsibility for transport to and from school, with the LA paying a mileage allowance.

Where possible we would expect parents of children with special educational needs to transport their child as an important means of communication with the school. When agreed they can claim mileage at the agreed rate of 45 pence which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Transport will not be provided in the following circumstances:

- If the pupil does not fulfill the criteria as stated in the general policy or the exceptions to the general policy of this document.
- If the parent/guardian request a place that is not the nearest appropriate school at which a place is available.
- For after school clubs or school trips.
- To work experience placements or other extra-curricular activities.
- To dental or hospital appointments.
- To clinical, medical or non-educational appointments.
- In the event of detention.
- To attend school meetings following exclusion from school.
- To attend open days and 'taster sessions' at school.
- Following persistent misbehavior occurring on transport. Transport may be withdrawn following written warning.

(d) Pupils from low income families

Parents need to make a new application at the beginning of every school year (autumn term).

Only children whose parents receive the following support payments are entitled to receive free school meals:

- Income Support (IS)
- Income Based Jobseeker Allowance (IBJSA)
- Employment & Support Allowance (Income Related) (ESA(IR))
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) that does not exceed the income threshold set by the Treasury. The HMRC will automatically issue a Tax Credit Award Notice (TC602) to you.
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

(e) Documentary evidence

Parents must provide clear proof of current (i.e. valid at the point of application/renewal) receipt of support by showing one of the following:

For Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance:

- Your benefit book
- A letter confirming that you are to receive this benefit
- A current GIRO payment which will state 'Inc Supp' or similar abbreviation

For support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999:

- A letter of confirmation from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS)

For Tax Credits:

- A TC602 Tax Award Credit Notice - issued by H.M Revenue and Customs (If you have lost your copy, please contact the Tax Credit Helpline 0845 300 3900)

For State Pension Credit:

- You Pension Credit M1000 Award Notice

6. Definitions

- Catchment or nearest school - all schools with the exception of grammar schools and faith schools. There is no guarantee of a place for pupils who are resident within a catchment area or for pupils who subsequently move at a later date. Living in a catchment area can give pupils a higher priority for admission to a school over pupils who live outside the catchment area.
- Preferred schools - parents have a right to state a preference for a school for their children, but that does not carry with it a right to free transport. The responsibility of getting the pupil to and from school will always be that of the parent or carer.
- Qualifying schools are:
 - Community, Foundation or Voluntary Controlled schools
 - Community or Foundation special schools
 - Non-maintained special schools
 - Pupil referral units
 - Maintained nursery schools; or
 - City technology colleges (CTC), City colleges for the technology of the arts (CCTA) or Academies.
- Low income families - children entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit.
- Home address - approved transport is normally from the pupil's permanent home address only.
- Travelling distance and nature of route - The traveling distance is the shortest available walking route which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school and is measured from your home to the nearest available school entrance. This may not necessarily be the same as the route driven by a vehicle.
- Statutory school age - commences the term after the child's fifth birthday.

