

Home to School Transport in the Royal Borough

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead provides some help and support with home to school transport.

This policy applies from September 2023 and covers:

- Home to school transport for children aged 4 to 16.
- Home to school transport for children with special educational needs.

Home to school and college transport for young people aged 16 and over is detailed in the separate Post 16 Policy Statement

This policy sets out:

- The rules for deciding who gets help with transport.
- How to apply for assistance.
- What type of transport might be provided.
- Special circumstances when more help may be available.

Welcome

Children and young people arriving at school or college in the morning will best achieve their potential if they are on time and ready to learn. For most families, this means that they make their own arrangements to get the child or young person to school or college and pupils are encouraged to engage in active travel to school such as walking or cycling, accompanied as appropriate.

Some children and young people can get help with their journey to and from school from the Royal Borough if they live more than a certain distance from their nearest school, or if they have special educational needs that mean that they can't safely walk to school. We provide this help in line with national guidelines and legislation, which means that some children and young people are eligible for free home to school transport. This guide sets out who is eligible for this help.

As a child gets older it is likely that they will start to travel more independently, walking to school or using the bus, perhaps with friends. This helps them to gain useful skills and confidence, equipping them for self-sufficiency as an adult. We are keen to foster this independence in the assistance we provide to children and young people who are eligible for free home to school transport.

Many families will be considering a new school for your child or young person to start in September 2023, and we encourage you to read this guide before making an application.



Cllr Stuart Carroll

**Deputy Chairman of Cabinet & Cabinet Member
for Children's Services, Education, Health, Mental
Health, & Transformation**



Lin Ferguson

**AfC Director of Children's Services (Windsor &
Maidenhead)**

Introduction

The Royal Borough's home to school transport policy

The [Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead](#)'s home to school transport policy sets out what help and support we give to children and young people who are travelling between [home](#) and [school/college](#). The policy covers the assistance available for:

- Children of statutory school age (aged 5 to 16).
- Children of statutory school age (aged 5 to 16) with special educational needs, a disability or other mobility difficulties.
- Young people aged 16 to 18.
- Young people aged 16 to 18 with special educational needs, a disability or other mobility difficulty.
- Young people aged 19 to 25 with high needs.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to children and young people in school or college from September 2023 who are residents of the [Royal Borough](#) and attending a [school](#) or [college](#). Children and young people who are not resident in the Royal Borough but attending a school/college in the borough will need to contact their home local authority.

Changes to the policy

Any changes are listed, for reference, in [Changes to the policy from 2022](#), starting on page 35.

Definitions

When a word or phrase is underlined and in blue, this means the full definition of that word/phrase is set out in [Definitions](#), starting on page 36. If you are viewing an electronic version of this document you should be able to click on the phrase to take you to the definition.

Responsibility for the policy

Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and the Head of Support Services.

Responsibility for administering this policy lies with the School Transport Team, which since 1 August 2017 has been part of Achieving for Children, a Social Enterprise Company owned by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. Achieving for Children provides childrens services to all three authorities.

Any questions or queries relating to this policy as a whole should be addressed to the Service Leader for School Support Services, Achieving for Children, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, SL6 1RF or by email at transport@achievingforchildren.org.uk.

At a glance

A child may be eligible for free home to school transport if:

Age	School	Distance	Further information
They are aged 5 to 8 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They live more than 2 miles from school by the shortest available safe walking route	See page 8
They are aged 8 to 16 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They live more than 3 miles from school by the shortest available safe walking route	See page 8

A child from a low income family may be eligible for free home to school transport if:

Age	School	Distance	Further information
They are aged 5 to 10 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They live more than 2 miles from school by the shortest available safe walking route	See page 9
They are aged 11 to 16 years old	They attend one of the three nearest appropriate schools	They live more than 3 miles from school by the shortest road route	See page 9

A child with [SEN](#) may also be eligible for free home to school transport if:

Age	School	Distance	Nature of SEN	Further information
They are aged 5 to 8 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They live less than 2 miles from school	They have a special educational need that means they cannot walk that distance to school	See pages 8
They are aged 8 to 16 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They live less than 3 miles from school	They have a special educational need that means they cannot walk that distance to school	See pages 8

Age	School	Low income	Nature of SEN	Further information
They are aged 16 to 18 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They qualify under the low income criteria	They have a special educational need that means they cannot walk that distance to school	See pages 10
They are aged 18 to 25 years old	They attend their nearest appropriate school	They qualify under the low income criteria	They have a special educational need that means they cannot walk that distance to school	See pages 11

An Application and Eligibility Checker has been developed to help parents and carers check if their child may be entitled to home to school transport assistance, and to guide them to the correct application form. A link to the checker can be found on the [School Transport](#) web pages or at <https://forms.gle/k331MNEUzM58iWAW9>

Criteria for children aged 8 to 16 years old from [low income families](#) are slightly different, further details can be found on page 9

Information on the [Exceptional Circumstances](#) we may be able to take into account when assessing a child's eligibility for free home to school transport can be found on page 11

If a child is not entitled to free home to school transport we may be able to offer a 'paid for' seat; further information can be found on page 14

Contents

Welcome.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The Royal Borough’s home to school transport policy	3
Who does this policy apply to?	3
Changes to the policy	3
Definitions	3
Responsibility for the policy	3
At a glance	4
Entitlement to Travel Assistance	8
Non-statutory school aged children (0-4 years old).....	8
Statutory school aged children (5-16 years old).....	8
Extended rights for pupils from low income families.....	9
Attendance at after-school clubs	10
Non-statutory school age (Ages 16-19 Mainstream and SEND).....	10
Exceptional circumstances	11
Attendance at a residential school.....	14
Concessionary Seats	14
General Guidance	17
Calculation of distances and available routes	17
Pupils whose route is unsafe	17
Age and National Curriculum Year Groups.....	17
Review of home to school transport arrangements	17
When transport is not provided	18
To addresses other than the home address.....	18
When the child changes home address and/or school	18
To meet parental preference	18
To enable attendance at a particular school on specific grounds.....	19
Outside the normal start and finish to the school day.....	19
To locations other than the main school.....	19
To nursery schools and pre-school settings	20
To enable education other than at school	20
To meet the needs of parents/carers.....	20
Types of Transport and their operation	20
Providing appropriate home to school transport.....	20

Types of home to school transport available	20
Passenger Assistants.....	21
Meeting the duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children.....	22
Review provision of travel assistance.....	22
Travel training for students with SEND	22
Personal Transport Budgets	23
Roles and Responsibilities	23
Additional standards of service for contracted vehicles	26
Withdrawal of home to school transport assistance	28
How to apply.....	29
Accepting and understanding the policy.....	29
Siblings.....	29
Applications for free home to school transport, aged 5 to 16 (including those under the low income criteria)	29
Applications for home to school transport assistance, aged 16 to 18	30
SEND post-16 transport eligibility	30
Applications for home to school transport assistance, aged 19 to 25 with SEND	30
Decisions, Reviews and Appeals.....	31
Decisions.....	31
Home to school transport appeals process.....	31
Appeal stage 1: review by a senior officer	31
Appeal stage 2: review by an independent appeal panel	32
Further avenues for appeal - Judicial review	33
Complaints.....	33
Local Government Ombudsman.....	33
Other complaints.....	34
Changes to the policy for 2022/23 academic year	35
Definitions	36
Descriptions of common terms used in the Home to School Transport Policy.....	36

Entitlement to Travel Assistance

Non-statutory school aged children (0-4 years old)

Children under statutory school age are not automatically entitled to transport to an early years setting or school. Statutory school age begins on the first day of the term following the child's 5th birthday.

Parents of 4 year old children may be able to purchase a seat on school transport under the 'paid for' seat scheme. Further information can be found on page 14. A discount of 50% of the normal concessionary seat cost is given if the child is from a [low income family](#).

Statutory school aged children (5-16 years old)

Statutory school age begins at the start of the term after a child's 5th birthday and ends on the last Friday in June in the school year in which they turn 16.

Children of statutory school age need to attend a school or educational setting on a full time basis; this is defined as 190 days (or 380 sessions) each academic year.

There are 4 categories of students of statutory school age living in the [Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead](#) and attending their [nearest appropriate school](#) who are eligible for free travel assistance:

- Children who live beyond the [statutory walking distance](#);
- Children from [low income families](#) (where extended rights apply – see page 9);
- Children whose [walking route to school is unsafe](#);
- Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), a disability or a mobility difficulty.

The [nearest appropriate school](#) is defined as 'the nearest qualifying school with available places that provides education appropriate to the child's age, gender and ability and any special educational needs they may have'. A qualifying school is:

- a maintained school or nursery, or a [special school](#) approved under s.342 of the Education Act 1996;
- a pupil referral unit or alternative provision academy;
- an academy.

When applying for school places [parents/carers](#) should consider the nearest schools to their home address, if parents/carers opt not to apply to any of the nearest schools the child may not be entitled to free home to school transport assistance. There is a [parental responsibility](#) to ensure a child attends school¹.

In some cases a child's designated school may not be the nearest school to their home address. If, however, the [designated area](#) school is farther than the [statutory distance](#) then the child will be eligible for free home to school transport to the designated area school. The child will also be eligible for free home to school transport to the closer school, if that is also farther than the statutory distance.

If it is not possible to offer a place at the nearest appropriate school then free home to school transport will normally be provided to the next nearest appropriate school with places, provided that it is farther than the statutory distance. The parents/carers will need to provide evidence that the more distant school is the nearest appropriate school with places available. This may be checked with the Royal Borough's School

¹ Section 7, Education Act 1996.

Admissions Team. The parents/carers may also be requested to lodge an admissions appeal for a place at the nearer school, with free home to school transport only being offered if the appeal is unsuccessful.

Parents/carers should note that siblings will only qualify for free home to school transport to that same more distant school if they also meet the criteria in the policy.

Extended rights for pupils from low income families

A pupil may be eligible for extended rights under the 'low income' provisions. To qualify under the '[low income](#)' criteria the parent/carer must receive one of the following:

- Income Support;
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- Child Tax Credit – provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190;
- Universal Credit - with an annual earned income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get);
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit;
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

If you are not entitled to free school meals, another benefit that is accepted is entitlement to the maximum level of Working Tax Credits. This means that there is no reduction due to income in the Working Tax Credits elements section of your HM Revenue & Customs award notice for the current tax year and your annual income is no more than £16,190.

Where extended rights apply, pupils aged 8 - 10 from low income families who live more than 2 miles by the shortest available [safe walking route](#) (rather than 3 miles by the shortest available safe walking route) from their nearest suitable school become eligible for free home to school transport from the Council.

Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home by the shortest [road route](#) will be eligible for free home to school transport even if the school they attend is not their nearest suitable school, providing it is one of the three nearest schools which the pupil is qualified to attend (e.g. a mainstream pupil is not qualified to attend a special school even if it is one of the 3 nearest schools and therefore it would be discounted).

Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend a school between 2 miles and 15 miles away from home by the shortest [road route](#) will be entitled to free home to school transport if their parents/carers have expressed a wish for them to be educated at that particular school based on the parents/carer's religion or belief and, having regard to that wish, there is no nearer suitable school. This applies to parents/carers with a particular religious or philosophical belief, including those with a lack of religion or lack of belief.

Where free home to school transport is given to children from low income families parents/carers will be asked to re-apply for transport each year, confirming each time that their child continues to be entitled. If free home to school transport is given part-way through the year, then the parents/carers will be asked to re-apply in time for the start of the following academic year. Assistance will only be granted or renewed once that evidence is received by the Royal Borough.

Attendance at after-school clubs

After-school clubs can be a valuable experience for any young person. In the case of a child with an [EHCP](#), the Royal Borough will consider free transport home from one after-school club per week, where that the club directly contributes to the educational outcomes in the child's EHCP. This transport will only be provided:

- If the child is eligible for [free home to school transport](#).
- From the child's main school to their [home address](#).
- After school. No transport assistance will be provided home from evening events.
- On a weekday in term-time. No transport assistance will be provided for weekend events.
- Home from one after-school club per week.

Transport home from additional after-school clubs, or from clubs that do not directly contribute to the educational outcomes in the child's EHCP, will be the responsibility of the [parents/carers](#).

Non-statutory school age (Ages 16-19 Mainstream and SEND)

Participation in Education or Training Post-16

The Government changed the law so that young people are expected to continue in education or training until their 18th birthday. This can mean:

- Full-time education, such as school, college or home education.
- Work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship.
- Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours per week.

Eligibility for free home to school transport nationally has not been extended upwards with these changes in the law.

There is no automatic continuation of any free home to school transport arrangements for young people aged 16. If a young person qualifies under the following criteria transport may be provided:

- They are aged 16 to 18 years old (normally in National Curriculum Years 12 to 13)
- They attend a [school](#), [special school](#), [college](#) or other institution for education or training, and that is the nearest appropriate school, college or institution.
- They have an [EHCP](#) and special educational need, disability or mobility issue that means that they cannot reasonably be expected to walk or take public transport to that school, college or institution.
- They are from a [low income family](#).
- They pay the contribution to the cost of the transport, equivalent to 50% of the [concessionary fare paying seat](#) cost.

For students not entitled to school transport assistance there are other possible sources of assistance listed in the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement, such as:

- National Rail 16-17 Saver Scheme
- Paid for seats on transport operated by the borough (providing a route already exists and there is capacity)
- Transport routes operated by individual schools and colleges

- Bursary funding provided by individual schools and colleges

The full [Post-16 Transport Policy Statement](#) can be found on the council's website.

Support for students with SEND 19-25 years

Young people aged 19 to 25 and with high needs may be eligible for assistance with transport if:

- They attend, on a full-time basis, an appropriate [school](#), [special school](#) or [college](#) offering the course being followed; are taking up an apprenticeship or are in part-time education or training when employed, self-employed or volunteering, and;
- They meet [national eligibility criteria](#) for access to adult care and support and for access to carer support.

Exceptional circumstances

The Royal Borough recognises that there may be additional circumstances which should be taken into account when assessing eligibility for [free home to school transport](#), even where a child or young person is not eligible under the policies set out above. [Parents/carers](#) and young people are able, therefore, to point out individual or extenuating circumstances.

The list below is not exhaustive, and there will be other circumstances in which the Royal Borough may agree to provide free home to school transport. Please note, however, that individual family work commitments, childcare arrangements and/or inconvenience to parents/carers is not normally taken into account when considering eligibility for travel assistance.

Where the Royal Borough does agree to provide free home to school transport, this is not to be taken as a precedent for any other child or young person, including a sibling of that child or young person.

Children unable to walk the statutory distance

In some cases, a child of statutory school age who has an [EHCP](#) who attends their [nearest appropriate school](#) and lives at or under the [statutory distance](#) from the school may not be able to use a walking route safely, even if accompanied, if, for instance, they:

- Are, on a long-term basis, physically unable to move around independently, due to:
 - A disability such as severe cerebral palsy that requires daily use of significant mobility aids (e.g. a wheelchair).
 - A disability such as severe visual impairment.
 - A medical condition such as juvenile arthritis resulting in severe persistent pain and/or extreme fatigue.
 - A medical condition such as intractable epileptic seizure disorders that result in a serious persistent health and safety risk.
- Have a lack of awareness of common dangers and a lack of age appropriate independence skills, due to:
 - Severely restricted communication skills, arising from, for example, profound hearing impairment, severe autism or severe language disorders.
 - Significant learning disabilities, where a child might be unable to assess risk and adapt to everyday situations. This might arise from severe learning difficulties, for example.

- Severe difficulties with interpreting complex social situations or being unable to cope with unexpected change. An example might be a child with Asperger's Syndrome who has very little awareness of personal danger.
- Severe behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties in comparison with other children of their age.

Where a child is unable to use a walking route safely, even accompanied, then [free home to school transport](#) will be provided if requested. This applies even if the distance to the school is equal to or less than the statutory distance.

A long-term restriction on a child's ability to physically move around independently is something that is likely to last for at least a year, and perhaps for the rest of their life. It can include intermittent or sporadic conditions such as epilepsy or multiple sclerosis.

Children in Care/Looked After Children

Where a child is placed in foster care for a temporary period, the Royal Borough will provide free home to school transport to the child's current school to enable them to continue to attend, if:

- That school is farther than the [statutory distance](#) from the temporary address.
- The foster carer can demonstrate that they cannot reasonably be expected to transport the child or young person to and from that school.

Where a young person aged 16 or above is placed in foster care for a temporary period, the Royal Borough will provide free home to school transport to the young person's current school or college to enable them to continue to attend, if:

- They have an [EHCP](#) and special education need, disability or mobility issue that means they cannot reasonably be expected to walk or take public transport to the school or college.
- The foster carer can demonstrate that they cannot reasonably be expected to transport the child or young person to and from that school.

This assistance will be provided for a period of up to one school term. If the above criteria are not met, then the arrangements for transport will fall to the foster carer.

Assistance will be for a period of up to one school term.

Children and young people in temporary residential circumstances

If a child is forced to relocate temporarily due to alternative accommodation due to circumstances outside their control, the Royal Borough may provide short-term free home to school transport if the school is more than the [statutory distance](#) from the home address. The distance criteria may be waived if the child is accommodated in a refuge, and whose safety would otherwise be at risk. Any temporary arrangements made would be subject to regular review.

No provision will be made for young people aged 16 and over in these circumstances unless they have an [EHCP](#) or statement, are from a [low income family](#) and have a special education need, disability or mobility issue that means they cannot reasonably be expected to walk or take public transport to their school or college.

Assistance will be for a period of up to one school term.

Children and young people excluded from school or at risk of permanent exclusion

If a child attends a Pupil Referral Unit or similar establishment because the child has been permanently excluded from their main school or college, then the unit will be considered to be their [nearest appropriate school](#). If the unit is farther than the [statutory distance](#) from the [home address](#) then the child will be eligible for [free home to school transport](#).

If a child is dually registered, i.e. attends more than one school, Pupil Referral Unit or similar establishment, either because they have been permanently excluded or because they are at risk of permanent exclusion, then both schools will be regarded as their nearest appropriate school. The child will receive free home to school transport to and from however many of the schools are more than the [statutory distance](#) from the [home address](#).

In exceptional circumstances, permanently excluded children who are eligible for free home to school transport may also be provided with transport at times other than the normal start and finish of the school day, if a child is attending the unit for only part of the school day.

Young people aged 16 and over and excluded from school or college are not eligible for free home to school transport to a Pupil Referral Unit or similar establishment, unless they have a [EHCP](#), are from a [low income family](#) and have a special education need, disability or mobility issue that means they cannot reasonably be expected to walk or take public transport to the Pupil Referral Unit or similar establishment.

Children placed in a school under the Fair Access Protocol

The Royal Borough operates a Fair Access Protocol to ensure that children without a school place, especially the most vulnerable, can be found and offered a place quickly. This includes children excluded from school and children moving into an area where there are no school places available.

Where a child has been placed in a school under the [Fair Access Protocol](#), that school will be considered the [nearest appropriate school](#). If that school is more than the statutory distance from the [home address](#) then free home to school transport will be offered.

The [Fair Access Protocol](#) does not apply to young people aged 16 and over.

Parents/carers with a disability or illness

If a child is attending their [nearest appropriate school](#) and lives at or under the [statutory distance](#) from the school then the Royal Borough may provide free home to school transport if no [parent/carer](#) is able to accompany the child on the walk to school because of a medical condition or disability. Evidence of this need must be provided.

It is expected that the parents/carers will have made every effort to secure other help, including (but not limited to):

- Assistance from immediate and extended family members, friends and neighbours.
- Assistance via the school's own School Travel Plan (e.g. a walking bus).

The Royal Borough may seek confirmation of this from the parents/carers, school or other agencies, and may also consider whether any disability benefits received could be used to help with home to school transport. Any arrangements made would be subject to regular, and at least termly, review.

No provision will be made for young people aged 16 and over in these circumstances unless they have an [EHCP](#) or statement, are from a [low income family](#) and have a special education need, disability or mobility

issue that means they cannot reasonably be expected to walk or take public transport to their school or college.

Attendance at a residential school

Some children will be attending a residential (boarding) school as their nearest appropriate school and will not require home to school transport at the normal start and end of the school day. If the child is eligible for free home to school transport and home to school transport is requested, [parents/carers](#) will be encouraged to transport the child themselves, e.g. using a [Personal Transport Budget](#) (see [Types of transport and their operation](#) starting on page 20). If the borough directly provides transport then this will match the young person's boarding arrangements.

Concessionary Seats

Please note – there are separate arrangements for children under the age of 5 years that are from a low income family, see [Non-statutory school aged children \(0-4 years old\)](#) starting on page 8.

Please Note – there are separate arrangements for students ages 16-18 who have an EHCP and are from a low income family, see [Non-statutory school age \(Ages 16-19 Mainstream and SEN\)](#) starting on page 10.

Please Note – applications for concessionary seats for September will be processed at the end of August once all students entitled to free home to school transport have been assigned seats on transport. Parents/carers applying for a concessionary seat should make arrangements to take their child to and from school until they have received confirmation of a seat from the Transport Team.

The concessionary fare paying scheme allows parents/carers/young people to buy an annual pass for a spare seat on an operating Royal Borough home to school transport route, when they are not otherwise eligible for free home to school transport. The availability of concessionary seats should not be relied upon, and availability in one school year does not guarantee a seat will be available in following school years.

Eligibility for the concessionary fare paying scheme

A child or young person aged 4 to 19 can buy a pass for a seat on a home to school transport route if they:

- Are not already eligible for free home to school transport, and;
- Are seeking places on a route that has been contracted by the Royal Borough for home to school transport, and;
- Are seeking places on a route that has spare seats, once all children or young people eligible for free home to school transport have a place (assignments are usually made around 31 August), and
- Are attending a school or college to which the home to school transport route already goes.

Concessionary seats can be bought for children and young people who live inside or outside the borough (at a slightly higher cost for non-borough residents).

Concessionary seats cannot be bought on local public transport. Concessionary seats also cannot be bought on routes contracted by the Royal Borough for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan or statement unless the Royal Borough's Children and Young People Disability Service (CYPDS) agrees that it would be appropriate.

Places are usually offered on a first come, first served basis. If there are more applications for concessionary places than there are seats available, then seats will be allocated on in the following priority order:

- Children aged 4 to 8 (normally in national curriculum years R to 3).
- Children aged 8 to 16 (normally in national curriculum years 4 to 11).
- Young people aged 16 to 19 (normally in national curriculum years 12 and 13).

If there are still more applicants than places then priority will be given to the applicant(s) with the shortest distance between their home address and their nearest current pick-up point on the route, measured along the safe walking route.

Cost of concessionary fare paying seats

The cost of concessionary fare paying seats for applicants is set out in the Royal Borough's Fees and Charges document. This is updated by the full Council annually, and the charges for the 2023/24 academic year have now been set:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • Annual concessionary seat for Royal Borough resident (4 to 19 years of age) | £738 |
| • Annual concessionary seat for non-Royal Borough resident | £1100 |

These were agreed by Council on 22 February 2023.

The average actual cost to the local authority of a concessionary fare paying seat for a school year is:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| • For children without SEN | £1,370 |
| • For children with SEN | £6,855 |

The cost of the concessionary seats will be waived for children and young people of [statutory school age](#) from [low income families](#) that are resident within the Royal Borough. For children under 5 years of age from a [low income family](#) and those young people aged 16-19 who have an [EHCP](#) and are from a [low income family](#) a 50% discount to the usual concessionary seat cost is given.

Withdrawal of concessionary fare paying seats

The Royal Borough reserves the right to withdraw a concessionary seat at any time. This will usually be because a seat is needed for a child or young person who is eligible for [free home to school transport](#), or because the vehicle is being replaced by a smaller vehicle. There may be other reasons.

The Royal Borough will try to give as much notice as possible, with a minimum of 7 calendar days. Notice can be given during term time or school holiday time, by email to the address supplied by the parent/carer or letter sent by post to the parents/carers last known address. Payment for the concessionary seat will be adjusted to reflect the actual time the child or young person has used the seat, and refunds issued on a pro-rata basis.

Parents/carers and young people are advised, therefore, not to rely on the availability of a concessionary seat when considering home to school transport arrangements. In addition, the offer of a concessionary seat does not set a precedent for the future provision of home to school transport for the child or young person, their address or their circumstances.

Using concessionary fare paying seats

Children and young people using concessionary seats will be expected to use existing stops and routes. The Royal Borough is under no obligation to provide extra or larger vehicles to maintain or create concessionary seats.

Refunds

If a young person no longer requires the concessionary fare paying seat or it is withdrawn for any reason then a refund will be issued. Refunds are calculated on the number of remaining days the fare paying seat is valid on.

General Guidance

Calculation of distances and available routes

Please Note - the calculation of distances relating to entitlement to home to school transport differ from the methods used for School Admissions purposes. The nearest school defined by School Admissions guidance will not necessarily be the same under transport guidance.

For transport eligibility purposes, the [statutory walking distance](#) will be measured by the [shortest available safe walking route](#) (accompanied as necessary) between the [home address](#) and the [school](#), [special school](#) or [college](#). A route might include footpaths, bridleways and other tracks which are not passable by motorised transport.

For pupils who fall within the '[Extended Rights](#)' eligibility criteria the 6 mile and 15 mile upper limits are not walking routes (see page 9). These routes are those which are passable using a suitable motorised vehicle; in short, the two upper limits will be measured along road routes.

Pupils whose route is unsafe

If a route is judged as being unsafe it is discounted when assessing an application for home to school transport assistance. If there are no [safe walking route](#) to the [nearest appropriate school](#) the pupil will be entitled to free home to school transport assistance to that school.

The safety of walking routes is assessed in accordance with the Road Safety GB guidance.

Age and National Curriculum Year Groups

The policy outlines how eligibility for free home to school transport changes, according to age, as a child gets older. For the purposes of the policy, that change of age will be regarded as taking effect from the start of the academic year immediately following the academic year in which the child reached that age.

If a child is being taught outside the normal National Curriculum Year group for their age, they will still be considered for home to school transport according to their age, not their year group.

Review of home to school transport arrangements

The child will usually remain eligible for free home to school transport to the school until:

- They reach one of the age thresholds for eligibility, and are no longer eligible on distance.
- They leave the school.
- They move to a new address.

The Royal Borough reserves the right to review the eligibility of any child receiving free home to school transport at any time. Eligibility may change if a place becomes available at a school closer than the one the child attends.

When transport is not provided

To addresses other than the home address

The Royal Borough will not provide free home to school transport to or from any address other than the child or young person's main [home address](#).

When the child changes home address and/or school

If a child or young person changes address or school/college then their eligibility for [free home to school transport](#) will be re-assessed on the basis of the standard policies set out above. This may well mean that the child or young person is no longer eligible for free home to school transport.

If a child or young person changes address, the Royal Borough will not provide free home to school transport in order to maintain a place at that their current school. The child or young person will be re-assessed on the basis of the standard policies. This may well mean that the child or young person is no longer eligible for free home to school transport.

If a child or young person moves into an address in a different local authority area, then the Royal Borough will cease to provide home to school transport. The [parents/carers](#)/young person should contact their new local authority for further assistance.

If a child or young person is withdrawn from one school or college and placed in another by their [parents/carers](#), then their eligibility for free home to school transport to the new school or college will be re-assessed on the basis of the standard policies. Where there is no change of address, it may be that the child or young person will no longer be eligible for free home to school transport because the [nearest appropriate school](#) would still be the original school where the child or young person had a place.

The Royal Borough may offer to move the child or young person to a nearer suitable school with places, bearing in mind any special circumstances, such as examinations and length of time in current school. This could mean that the child or young person is no longer eligible for free home to school transport.

To meet parental preference

If [parents/carers](#) choose a school, college or other institution for their child that is not the [nearest appropriate school](#) with places (or for those on a [low income](#), not one of their 3 nearest appropriate schools/nearest preferred school on the grounds of religion or belief with places for those aged 11-16, see page 9 for further details) to the [home address](#), then the Royal Borough will not provide free home to school transport.

If parents/carers of a child or young person with an [EHCP](#) or statement choose a school or college that meets the needs of their child but is not, in the Royal Borough's view, the closest school or college to the home address that could do so, then the Royal Borough will not provide free home to school transport.

When considering a place at a school that is not the [nearest appropriate school](#), [parents/carers](#) are strongly advised to consider whether they will be able to provide/pay for transport themselves to that school for the whole duration of their child's attendance at that school. This includes places at [schools](#), [special schools](#), [colleges](#) or other institutions for post-16 education.

To enable attendance at a particular school on specific grounds

The Royal Borough will not take the following into account when identifying the [nearest appropriate school](#) or college to a child or young person's [home address](#):

- Religious or philosophical beliefs (or lack of), except in one specific circumstance, where a child is from a [low income family](#), as set out from page 9.
- Preference for single-sex or co-educational education. A girls' school will not, however, be considered the nearest appropriate school for a boy or vice versa.
- Preference for selective education.
- Preference for a residential school.

Outside the normal start and finish to the school day

Free home to school transport will only be provided at the normal start and end of the school day. Transport at other times will remain a parental responsibility, including where a child or young person is:

- Attending extra-curricular activities, including after-school sports or non-sports clubs and societies.
- Starting school late or finishing school early to attend dental, hospital or other appointments.
- Unwell, and has to be collected from school early.
- In detention.

Transport may be arranged at times other than the normal start and end of the school day for a child or young person eligible for [free home to school transport](#) if:

- A permanently excluded child or young person is attending a Pupil Referral Unit for only part of the school day (see page 13).
- A child or young person with an [EHCP](#) or statement is attending an after-school club (see page 10).
- A child or young person is attending a residential school (see page 14).

To locations other than the main school

The Royal Borough will not generally provide free home to school transport to or from any address other than the child's or young person's main school or college. Transport to and from other locations will remain a parental responsibility or, in some circumstances, the responsibility of the school. This includes where a child or young person is:

- Attending lessons or other activities at another school during the school day. The organising school or institution will be responsible for these transport arrangements.
- Where a school has outsourced part or all of its education to another provider located at a different site.
- Attending work experience.
- Accompanying a friend home.

[Free home to school transport](#) may be provided to more than one school if a permanently excluded child or young person, or a child or young person at risk of permanent exclusion, is dually registered (i.e. attends more than one school or Pupil Referral Unit). Free home to school transport will only be offered, however, to those schools that are farther than the statutory distance (see page 13).

To nursery schools and pre-school settings

The Royal Borough will not generally provide [free home to school transport](#) to or from nursery schools or any other early years settings for children under the statutory school age. A [concessionary fare paying seat](#) may be purchased and a discount of 50% of the usual cost is given if the child is from a [low income family](#).

To enable education other than at school

A small number of children and young people receive their education outside schools. If [parents/carers](#) decide to educate their child other than at school (e.g. at home) then no free home to school transport will be provided by the Royal Borough. If the Royal Borough has arranged for a child or young person to be educated other than at school, then free home to school transport may be provided.

To meet the needs of parents/carers

Parents/carers are reminded that [free home to school transport](#) is provided to meet the needs of the child, not the [parents/carers](#). So, for example, difficulty in getting a child to school because of work commitments will not make that child eligible for assistance with home to school transport.

Types of Transport and their operation

Providing appropriate home to school transport

When a child or young person is eligible for [free home to school transport](#), the Royal Borough will consider the most appropriate home to school transport assistance, taking into account the child's individual needs and cost effectiveness. The transport will be designed to allow the child to travel in reasonable safety and in reasonable comfort. As children get older, more priority will be given to transport arrangements that help develop independent travel, so that they are better equipped to lead independent lives.

Types of home to school transport available

The types of assistance offered can be divided into three main groups, and it is generally expected that the assistance given to a child or young person will be in one of the first two groups below:

- Independent travel, including:
 - Personal Transport Budget for the parents/carers.
 - Mileage allowance for the parents/carers.
 - Independent Travel Training for the child or young person.
- Travel on Public Transport, including:
 - Travel pass for use on public transport (bus or train).
 - Travel pass for use on public transport (bus or train) for both child and a parent/carer.
- Travel in a vehicle on a route that the Royal Borough has arranged, including:
 - A shared vehicle (e.g. coach or minibus) to a drop-off point.
 - A shared vehicle (e.g. a coach or minibus) door to door.
 - An individual vehicle (e.g. a car) to a drop-off point.
 - An individual vehicle (e.g. a car) door to door.
- Personal Transport Budget

Travel in a vehicle on a route that the Royal Borough has arranged (contracted) may include a Passenger Assistant (i.e. an escort). See [Passenger Assistants](#) for more details.

The type of home to school transport offered to eligible children and young people will be appropriate to their needs, not the needs of the parents/carers.

Passenger Assistants

Passenger Transport Assistants (PTAs) are sometimes used on shared or individual vehicle routes to monitor the well-being and conduct of children and young people and ensure their safety while the journey is in progress.

When Passenger Assistants are used

PAs are generally only provided on routes contracted by the Royal Borough for children and young people with an [EHCP](#) and it is considered that the health and safety of the child, driver or anyone else travelling in the vehicle would be at risk if not provided. Usually, this would be where one or more of the children or young people on the route has:

- A severe physical condition.
- A medical condition that could require immediate referral to emergency services.
- Severe behavioural difficulties.

Except in exceptional circumstances, PAs will not be provided for:

- Children attending mainstream schools.
- Hearing impaired children.

A PA may be provided on a mainstream route in some exceptional circumstances. A PTA may also be provided for any child aged up to 6 years old (i.e. in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2) receiving free home to school transport who is not travelling with their parent/carer.

Parents/carers as Passenger Assistants

In some circumstances, if a PA is necessary, and is not already provided, a parent or carer may be asked to act as a PA for their child.

Roles and responsibilities of the Passenger Assistant

PAs are given basic passenger training, including safeguarding and child sexual exploitation awareness training. This training is kept under review to ensure that the needs of all children and young people on the route can be met.

PAs will have had an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check for people working with children before taking up any duties. They will display their ID badge at all times when on duty.

PAs will ensure good behaviour on the routes, although parents/carers are reminded that an acceptable standard of behaviour is expected from all children and young people receiving free home to school transport.

In the event of a medical emergency, the PA will request assistance from the emergency services. The PA will not administer any medication or first aid, unless specifically trained and registered by the Royal Borough to carry out the particular procedure required.

PAs have a responsibility to report any accidents, incidents, near misses or illness that occur in transit, to the Royal Borough. The PTA will write down the particulars of any such incident, provide any necessary care and report to the borough, who will then inform the parents/carers and school as appropriate.

The Royal Borough tries to ensure continuity of service by providing the same vehicle, driver and passenger assistant for a period of time. This cannot be guaranteed, however, and changes may be needed at short or no notice.

Meeting the duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children

If a child or young person is eligible for [free home to school transport](#), and the Royal Borough has provided any one of the solutions listed in [Types of home to school transport available](#) above, the borough's duty to provide free home to school transport will be deemed to have been met.

Review provision of travel assistance

The child will usually remain eligible for free home to school transport to the school until:

- They reach one of the age thresholds for eligibility, and are no longer eligible on distance.
- They leave the school.
- They move to a new address.

The Royal Borough reserves the right to review the eligibility of any child receiving free home to school transport at any time. Eligibility may change if a place becomes available at a school closer than the one the child attends. Eligibility will usually be reviewed at the following points:

- end of year 3 in which the pupil attains 8 years of age;
- year 6;
- following Independent Travel Training;
- At the annual review meeting if pupil has an [EHCP](#)
- Following a change in address
- Following a change in circumstances

Travel training for students with SEND

Independent Travel Training helps give a young person the skills and confidence to travel to school or college more independently, by foot, bus or train. Over time, a young person may progress from travelling to school in a taxi everyday, to using a public bus. This gives the older student the flexibility to travel at times that fit in with their timetable, whilst younger children may, after training, be able to travel to school with their friends.

Independent Travel Training is delivered on a one to one basis and is tailored to meet the needs of the young person.

The Royal Borough will be developing Independent Travel Training with a small number of young people with statements of SEN or an [EHCP](#) who are eligible for [free home to school transport](#). If the scheme is successful then it will be rolled out further. More details about the scheme will be published on the Royal Borough's website.

Personal Transport Budgets

Personal Transport Budgets involve giving the parents/carers of an eligible child or young person a budget to enable them to make their own arrangements for home to school transport. This allows families to choose the most appropriate arrangements for their personal circumstances, and can also assist with older children moving towards independent travel.

Roles and Responsibilities

The parents'/carers' responsibilities

Parents/carers have responsibilities to ensure the safe, efficient and cost effective transport of their child or young person receiving home to school transport from the borough. They must:

- Confirm they have read and understood the [Home to School Transport Code of Conduct](#) (see page 23).
- Ensure that the child or young person is [ready for transport](#) (see page 24).
- Ensure that the child or young person [has their travel pass](#) (see page 24).
- Inform the Royal Borough of [changes in circumstances](#) as soon as possible (see page 24).

The Royal Borough's responsibilities

The Royal Borough aims to provide safe, efficient and cost-effective travel assistance for children and young people entitled to transport. To do this, the Royal Borough will:

- Arrange [reasonable pick-up and drop-off points](#) on routes (see page 25).
- Arrange [reasonable pick-up and drop-off times](#) (see page 25).
- Limit, as far as possible, [maximum journey times](#) (see page 26).
- Provide [Passenger Assistants](#), where appropriate (see page 21).
- Ensure [additional standards of service](#) for vehicles on borough routes (see page 26).
- Only [withdraw transport assistance](#) on reasonable grounds and with notice (see page 28).

The Home to School Transport Code of Conduct

The behaviour of children and young people on home to school transport is the responsibility of parents/carers. For the comfort and safety of all passengers, any inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated.

The parents/carers of all children and young people travelling on either public transport or on a contracted vehicle are required to have read, understood and signed the Royal Borough's Home to School Transport Code of Conduct when applying for assistance with transport. This includes children and young people who are paying for concessionary seats. Having agreed the code of conduct, parents/carers become responsible for the behaviour of the child or young person on home to school transport.

The code of conduct, which is updated from time to time, is available on the borough's website here:

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport>

Unacceptable behaviour will be monitored and may result in an exclusion from transport. Parents/carers will then become responsible for home to school transport during the period of the exclusion from transport.

Where a criminal act is suspected, the police will be notified. Schools will assist with investigating unacceptable behaviour and may wish to apply their own disciplinary actions, in addition to any exclusion from the transport.

Ensuring the child or young person is ready for transport

Where home to school transport is provided to an eligible child or young person, it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure their child is at the specified pick-up point at the specified time. A contracted vehicle will only wait for a maximum of three minutes beyond the specified time. A public bus or train will not, of course, wait at all beyond the scheduled time for the stop.

If a child or young person misses their transport, either to or from school or college, the Royal Borough will not arrange an alternative and the parents/carers will need to make their own arrangements for getting the child or young person to school or college or back home.

It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure that their child or young person is safely taken to the pick-up point and home from the drop-off points. For younger children, or children and young people with specific needs, in particular, this may mean that a parent/carer or other responsible adult walks with the child to and from the pick-up/drop-off point.

The driver and any Passenger Assistant will know when a child or young person is generally met by a parent/carer at their drop-off point. If the parent/carer is not at the drop-off point as expected then the driver will deliver the child or young person into the care of Social Services. In the event that a child or young person cannot be taken to Social Services, then the driver will take them to a police station. The parents/carer will then need to collect the child or young person themselves. These measures will only be taken as a last resort and, at the same time, the vehicle operator or the local authority will attempt to contact the parent/carer by telephone.

Requirement to carry a travel pass

All children and young people receiving assistance with home to school transport on a public transport route or on a contracted vehicle are required to carry their travel pass with them on their route, if they have been issued one.

If a child or young person is unable to present a pass when requested by the vehicle driver, passenger assistant or officer of the Royal Borough, they may be refused entry to the vehicle. Drivers are given guidance and training on how to report these incidences.

A child or young person issued with a pass and persistently travelling without it could be breaching the Code of Conduct, which could lead to having their transport withdrawn.

If a travel pass has been lost, then the parent/carer should complete a Replacement School Travel Pass form (cost applies) via the Royal Borough's website at:

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport>

Changes in circumstances

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the Royal Borough as soon as possible if there is a significant change in circumstances.

Parents/carers will provide telephone numbers, including alternative numbers, to allow the vehicle operator and the Royal Borough to contact them quickly if required. The Royal Borough and the operator

will not be responsible for any interruption in the service provided to a child or young person, or for any other difficulties arising, as a result of not having an up-to-date telephone number and/or home address.

If parents/carers feel that, as the result of an accident, planned surgery or illness the home to school transport arrangements made by the Royal Borough for a child or young person are no longer appropriate, a request for revisions to the arrangements must be made to transport@achievingforchildren.org.uk or by calling 01628 683800 at the earliest opportunity.

Reasonable pick-up and drop-off points

Children and young people on contracted vehicles will be picked up and dropped-off either from home or at a convenient point near to the home.

Whilst the duty to provide free home to school transport does not necessarily require a door to door service, arrangements will not expect a child to walk an unreasonably long distance to catch a public bus or contracted vehicle. A child or young person may be required to walk up to one mile from the home address to the pick-up point or vice versa, with or without a parent/carer as appropriate. The actual distances will depend on a range of circumstances, including the age of the child or young person, their individual needs and the nature of the route they are expected to walk to the designated pick-up point.

Unless the home address is directly on the route of a contracted vehicle, pick-up from the home address will usually only be provided in exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers may not vary the agreed pick-up and drop-off times except in exceptional circumstances, by agreement with the Royal Borough. Neither Passenger Assistants nor drivers are authorised to agree variations to the route. Any changes agreed with the borough in exceptional circumstances will not set a precedent for the future.

Reasonable pick-up and drop-off times

Children and young people on contracted vehicles will be picked up and dropped off at times that ensure that they reach school or college at the normal start time, and leave school at the normal finish time each day. These pick-up times will, as far as possible, take into account the [maximum journey times](#), set out in on page 26.

Parents/carers are reminded that a child or young person will not usually be [transported outside the normal school start and finish times](#) (as set out on page 19).

At the end of term, when some schools finish early, the Royal Borough may arrange for a contracted route to run at an earlier time, if practicable. If not practicable (for example, if a route serves more than one school) the school or parent/carer would be responsible for making alternative arrangements.

For children and young people attending residential (boarding) places and eligible for free home to school transport, parents/carers will be encouraged to transport the child or young person themselves, possibly using a Personal Transport Budget. If the borough does directly provide transport then arrangements will be made to reflect their attendance as follows:

- A weekly boarder will be:
 - Transported to the school at the start of the school week.
 - Transported home at the end of the school week.
- A fortnightly boarder will be:
 - Transported to the school at the start of the school fortnight.

- Transported home at the end of the school fortnight.
- A termly boarder will be:
 - Transported to the school at the start of the school term.
 - Transported home at the end of the school term.

Other patterns of attendance (e.g. half-termly; boarding for more than 38 weeks a year) will be accommodated along the same principles.

Where a termly residential school (with or without a half term break) is closed for a long weekend or similar break, known as an 'exeat', during term time, then free home to school transport will be provided around that.

Journeys from home to a residential school may be made the afternoon or evening before the first day of school, where this is more practicable (e.g. on a Sunday afternoon or evening, instead of a Monday morning).

The usual restrictions on providing transport to locations other than the main school, as set out on page 19 apply for children and young people receiving free transport to a residential school or college.

Maximum journey times

Best practice suggests that the maximum length of a journey for a child of primary school age might be up to 45 minutes each way. For a secondary age child or a young person aged 16+ the journey time might be up to 75 minutes each way. A child or young person's special education needs and/or disability might be such that it implies a shorter maximum journey time. The Royal Borough will take this best practice into account when considering what home to school transport provision to offer.

Journey times may exceed these limits in some circumstances, including:

- Exceptional traffic or weather conditions.
- Attendance at a special school.
- Attendance at a remote boarding school.
- Attendance at a remote school or institution in order to avoid exclusion.
- Attendance at an alternative school following an exclusion or managed move.

If a permanent change in road or other conditions makes it likely that a journey will permanently exceed the limits of 45 or 75 minutes (as appropriate), the difficulty will be discussed with the parents/carers.

Additional standards of service for contracted vehicles

The Royal Borough will carry out checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service for potential drivers and passenger assistants. All relevant offences will be considered, including driving convictions. Offences against children or young people, of violence and against traffic legislation will be among particular reasons for denying employment on a contracted route. Each case will be considered on its own merits and a right of appeal exists for drivers (and PAs) denied employment.

The driver and any PA will be required to carry identification at all times. If a parent/carer feels that their child would benefit from meeting the drivers (and PAs) on a contracted route before starting they can contact the School Transport Team to make arrangements for this to happen. This may not be possible in all cases, particularly if arrangements have had to be made quickly, or in the case of a substitute driver or

assistant. Parents and schools are asked to check the identification of any unfamiliar driver or PA before entrusting a child or young person to his or her care.

It is a requirement that drivers and PAs should have basic training in the requirements of the children they convey. In addition, the vehicle operator will be expected to carry individual information including schools' and parents/carers' contact details, and warnings of any relevant medical conditions. All such information held by the operator and the authority is subject to the GDPR and Data Protection Act.

The vehicle will also be expected to have an operational means of contact with its base, such as a mobile telephone or two-way radio. This will be used to communicate, amongst other things, any significant delay to a journey so that the parents/carers can be informed.

In some cases a vehicle may also be equipped with an on-board camera. These cameras are sealed to prevent tampering, and footage is recorded over on a loop and only viewed in the case of reports of behavioural issues by young people or concerns regarding the staff on the route.

If a child or young person on a contracted route is taken ill during the course of a journey, the vehicle will either proceed to the home or school, or will stop and summon assistance by dialling the emergency services. Arrangements for any other children or young people in the vehicle to complete their journeys will be made as quickly as possible.

The duties of the driver (and PA) are limited to the vehicle only. The parents/carers are expected to take the child to and collect the child from the vehicle at home or at the drop-off point as necessary. At school, a member of the school staff is expected to collect the child from the vehicle and take the child to the vehicle.

Monitoring transport provision

The Royal Borough will undertake regular checks to ensure compliance with service standards. These checks will include:

- Spot checks on equipment, vehicles and licenses.
- Checks to ensure all drivers and passenger transport assistants are authorised, carry identification and undertake duties in accordance with service standards and requirements.
- Checks to ensure that contracts are operating in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Variations to routes and route planning

As well as regularly reviewing whether children and young people receiving free home to school transport are still eligible and are receiving appropriate, cost-effective transport, the Royal Borough's School Transport Team keeps the routes and vehicles themselves under review. This helps ensure that home to school transport is delivered as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

Changes may include:

- A new pick-up and set-down point.
- A change to journey times.
- A change to the contractor employed.
- A change in the size/type of vehicle.
- Addition or withdrawal of a passenger transport assistant.

When reviewing the routes and vehicles, the Royal Borough will not normally consult with parents/carers, so that reviews can be carried out quickly and efficiently. Where, however, a child or young person's special educational needs indicate a sensitivity to change, the impact of the review will be considered and discussed with the school and parents/carers.

Where possible, notice of changes to routes will be given to parents/carers. In some cases, changes will be made at very short notice, particularly if these are temporary changes due to driver or passenger illness, road closures or termination of a contract with a vehicle operator.

Very rarely, it may be necessary to temporarily cancel a route taking a child or young person to school or college. This is most likely to be when bad weather including flooding or icy conditions makes it unsafe, or is expected to make it unsafe, for the vehicle to travel. If, in these circumstances, parents/carers decide to make alternative arrangements to transport their child to school, this will be entirely at the parents'/carers' own discretion and cost. The parents/carers will also be responsible for the return journey if conditions have not improved sufficiently for the contracted vehicle to make the journey safely.

In all circumstances, however, where a child or young person has been transported to school or college, arrangements will be made to return them home, to their designated dropping-off point, or to a place of safety.

Emergencies and changes at short notice

The Royal Borough will attempt to make arrangements at short notice, including emergencies, but this cannot be guaranteed, particularly if a child or young person is travelling on a contracted vehicle with other occupants. Parents/carers will probably, therefore, need to make their own arrangements at their own expense in the case of an emergency. The Royal Borough does not accept responsibility for any such arrangements made by parents/carers.

Withdrawal of home to school transport assistance

Home to school transport assistance can be withdrawn for a number of reasons. The most common will be:

- Changing eligibility, including age and income.
- Changes in the circumstances of the child or young person.
- Changes in the ability of a child or young person to travel safely to school or college.
- Re-measurement of home to school transport distances.
- Errors and applications based on false information.

Where a child or young person reaches one of the age thresholds set out in the Royal Borough's eligibility criteria (e.g. they reach the age of 8 or 16), then home to school transport assistance may be withdrawn at the end of the academic year in which the child or young person reaches that age.

Where a child or young person is eligible for free home to school transport because they are from a [low income family](#), parents/carers are asked to re-apply for home to school transport each year, providing evidence of their low income. In most circumstances, therefore, if a child or young person is no longer eligible on low income grounds their free home to school transport will be withdrawn at the end of the academic year.

Where a child or young person's circumstances change, such as a change of address or change of school, any home to school transport assistance will usually continue until the child or young person moves to the

new address or school. Assistance will only continue past that date if the child or young person is still eligible for free home to school transport in their new circumstances.

As a child or young person with special educational needs, a disability or mobility issue gets older he or she may become able to safely walk (and/or take public transport for post-16) to their school or college. This will be assessed annually as part of the annual review process and could mean that a child or young person will no longer be eligible for free home to school transport. Any resulting changes to free home to school transport will be implemented at the start of the first school term after the annual review date, or sooner, by mutual agreement.

In some circumstances a child or young person's eligibility for free home to school transport may change because the home to school transport distance has been re-measured. This could be because a new road or footpath shortens the safe walking route between home to school or because a more accurate measurement of an existing route has become available. If the child or young person is now closer than the statutory distance to their nearest appropriate school, then free home to school transport will be withdrawn. At least 12 weeks' notice will be given by the Royal Borough to the parents/carers.

Where travel assistance has been provided because of a mistake in assessing eligibility by the Royal Borough, home to school transport will be withdrawn. At least 12 weeks' notice will be given by the Royal Borough to the parents/carers.

Where travel assistance has been provided on the basis of false or misleading information provided by the parents/carers, home to school transport may be withdrawn immediately and with no more than 4 weeks' notice. This will apply in all cases except where the child or young person is still eligible for assistance. If the Royal Borough believes that the information from the parents/carers was deliberately false or misleading information, the costs of providing any assistance with transport may be sought from the parents/carers.

How to apply

Accepting and understanding the policy

When making an application for assistance with home to school transport, parents/carers will be asked to declare that they have:

- Read and understood the Royal Borough's Home to School Transport Policy.
- Read, understood and signed the Home to School Transport Code of Conduct.

Siblings

A separate application for home to school transport is required for each child living at an address, and each application will be considered separately by the Royal Borough. If free home to school transport is provided for one child living at a particular address, it does not necessarily mean that any of that child's siblings, or any other child living at that address, will also get assistance.

Applications for free home to school transport, aged 5 to 16 (including those under the low income criteria)

Applications for free home to school transport under the standard and low income criteria can be made via the Royal Borough's website at: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport>

In addition to your child's basic details, you will need:

- Documentary evidence (to be provided electronically), if you are applying for free home to school transport low income criteria, that:
 - The child is in receipt of free school meals (e.g. a letter from the school).
 - You are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit (e.g. the tax credit award notice) or other benefits.

If you are applying for free home to school transport to a school on the grounds of religion or philosophical belief (additional entitlement under [low income](#) criteria), you will be asked to contact the leader of the religious establishment your child attends to provide additional information to support your application. Full instructions are provided as part of the application process.

If a child is awarded free home to school transport under the standard criteria then they will continue to receive this until they leave the school or their circumstances (such as their [home address](#)) change. At this point a new application for free home to school transport will need to be made.

If a child is awarded free home to school transport under the [low income](#) criteria then they will be asked to re-apply each year, providing evidence of their low income. They will continue to receive the [free home to school transport](#) for the duration of the school year unless their circumstances (such as their [home address](#)) change. At this point a new application for free home to school transport will need to be made.

Applications for home to school transport assistance, aged 16 to 18

Applications for a National Rail 16-17 Saver Card can be made via the dedicated website at <https://www.16-17saver.co.uk/>

SEND post-16 transport eligibility

Most, if not all, young people aged 16 to 18 with special educational needs will already have an Education, Health and Care Plan ([EHCP](#)) or statement if they need one. If not, then the Royal Borough will need to consider whether an EHCP is required.

For 16 to 18 year olds, transport is only given if the young person is also from a [low income family](#) and has a special educational need, disability or mobility issue that means that they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to that school, as set out above. Qualifying young people will also need to make a contribution to the cost of their transport for the year.

You will need to submit a new application before the start of each school year the young person will continue to study. Applications can be made via the Royal Borough's website at: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport>

Any agreed home to school transport arrangements will continue to be considered via the annual review process.

Applications for home to school transport assistance, aged 19 to 25 with SEND

Where a young person with high needs is continuing their education past the age of 19, the [parents/carers](#) should submit a new application before the start of each school year the young person will continue to study. Applications can be made via the Royal Borough's website at: <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport>

Decisions, Reviews and Appeals

Decisions

Decisions in relation to home to school transport are taken by Royal Borough officers with authorisation to do so. This includes decisions on:

- Eligibility for free home to school transport or assistance with home to school transport.
- The type of transport offered (e.g. bus pass, place on a minibus or taxi).
- Any other practical matters of transport assistance.

[Parents/carers](#) and young people can challenge these decisions by contacting the School Transport Team at transport@achievingforchildren.org.uk. Details on why the parent/carer believes the decision should be reviewed should be included in the email, along with any further supporting information that may not have been provided as part of the original application.

Home to school transport appeals process

Appeals can be made against decisions by the Royal Borough in relation to:

- Eligibility for home to school transport.
- The home to school distance measurement.
- The safety of the route.
- The transport arrangements offered.

Where the child or young person has an Education Health and Care Plan ([EHCP](#)) it may be that a disagreement about transport is part of a wider question of school provision and placement. In these cases, the home to school transport appeals process is not the route for this to be reconsidered. Instead, this may be a matter for the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal. This body does not hear appeals specifically about transport, but may consider the issue as part of a wider appeal. The parents/carers should contact the Children and Young Persons Disability Service (CYPDS) on 01628 685878 or at cypds@achievingforchildren.org.uk directly to discuss this further.

Appeal stage 1: review by a senior officer

Parents/carers and young people have 20 working days from receipt of the Royal Borough's decision to make a written request to the School Transport Team asking for a review of any decision relating to the matters set out above. This request should be sent to transport@achievingforchildren.org.uk or by writing to:

The School Transport Team,
Achieving for Children
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead

The written request should detail why the decision should be reviewed, and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances that should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

A senior officer will review the original decision within 20 working days of the Royal Borough receiving the written request. The parents/carers/young person will be sent a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review, setting out:

- The decision reached.
- How the review was carried out, including any standard followed, e.g. Road Safety GB guidance.
- What factors were considered.
- The reasons for the decision reached.
- Information about how the parents/carers/young person can proceed to stage two of the appeal process, if they are still unhappy.

Appeal stage 2: review by an independent appeal panel

If the parents/carers or young person are still unhappy with the decision made, they have the right to escalate the matter to stage 2 within 20 working days of receiving the stage 1 appeal outcome, where an independent panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the appellant and the Royal Borough within 40 working days of receiving the stage 2 appeal.

To ensure that the panel has all the relevant information to review the case, you should complete the home to school transport appeal form, available on the Royal Borough's website at:

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport/school-transport-appeals/school-transport-appeals-stage-two>

The completed form should be sent to:

Clerk to the Appeals Panel
Democratic Services Section
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1RF

Alternatively, the form can be emailed to democratic.services@rbwm.gov.uk. If you do not have access to the online forms, please contact democratic services on 01688 796529 or at the email above.

Following the appeal hearing, a detailed written notification of the outcome will be sent to the parents/carers/young person, setting out:

- The decision reached.
- How the review was carried out, including any standard followed, e.g. Road Safety GB guidance.
- What factors were considered.
- The reasons for the decision reached.
- Information about how the parents/carers/young person can complain to the Secretary of State.

Further avenues for appeal - Judicial review

Parents/carers and young people have the right to seek a judicial review of a decision made by the appeal panel. A judicial review would ask the courts to consider whether the panel has acted lawfully in taking its decision (e.g. has it followed the correct process and/or considered all of the evidence properly) rather than whether the decision of the panel is the correct one. If a judicial review is upheld then the independent appeals panel could be asked to consider the case again. If a parents/carers/young person is considering judicial review then the Royal Borough advises that they should seek independent legal advice immediately.

Complaints

If the parents/carers/young person wish to complain about how the local authority has handled their application, then they can use the Royal Borough's complaints process. Further information about this is available on the borough's website at:

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/contact-us/make-complaint>

You can also call 01628 683800 and ask for more information about making a complaint.

Your local councillor will be happy to help you at any stage, simply to give advice, provide additional information or to handle the complaint on your behalf. The Leader of the council is always willing to assist if you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been handled or its outcome. You can find details of your local council/leader of the council by calling 01628 796319 or online at:

<https://rbwm.moderngov.co.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

Local Government Ombudsman

If, having been through the Royal Borough's complaints process the parents/carers or young person are still unhappy then they can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. The ombudsman can be contacted at:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771

Coventry
CV4 0EH
0300 061 0614
www.lgo.org.uk/

Other complaints

Queries or complaints relating to journey planning; the standard/condition of vehicles; drivers; passenger assistants and any other issues relating to the journey to and from school should initially be brought to the attention of the School Transport Team on 01628 683800 or at transport@achievingforchildren.org.uk

Changes to the policy for 2022/23 academic year

Nature of change	Page no.	Details
General update	All	Date references updated from 2022-23 to 2023-24 throughout the policy
General update	All	Cost of fare paying seat updated for 20223-234 academic year
Clarity	9	Clarified the measurement of routes when assessing applications under extended rights for low income families
Clarity	11	Added notes to clarify that exceptional circumstances may apply if a student of statutory school age who has an EHCP, attends their nearest appropriate school and is not able to walk the statutory distance.
Clarity	14	Notes added to state concessionary seats are not guaranteed to be available and will be assigned in August once all students entitled to free travel have been assigned to routes.
Clarity	16	Notes added to highlight that School Admissions and Transport use different methods to calculate distance and assess the nearest school to a student's home address.
Clarity	31	Added timescales for submission of stage 2 appeals.
Clarity	38	Updated parental responsibility to note that the requirement to get children to different schools will not make a child eligible for home to school transport assistance.

Definitions

Descriptions of common terms used in the Home to School Transport Policy

College

For the purposes of this policy, a college is any provider or institution offering sixth form education, including:

- A school.
- A Further Education institution.
- An authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education.
- An establishment funded directly by the Education Funding Agency.
- A learning provider that is funded by the local authority to deliver accredited programmes of learning.

The institution need not be located within the geographical boundary of the Royal Borough.

Designated area

Most schools in the Royal Borough offer priority for places to children who live within a defined geographical area around the school. This is called the designated area. You can view the designated areas online using the Royal Borough's online mapping portal 'Know Your Neighbourhood' at: <http://mol.rbwm.gov.uk/mol/>

Discretionary home to school transport

This means that the local authority is not, by law, required to offer this home to school transport, but currently chooses to.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Children have an Education, Health and Care Plan if they have severe learning, behavioural or physical difficulties that affect their ability to learn. EHCPs are replacing the Statements of Special Educational Need.

Fair Access Protocol

The Royal Borough's Fair Access Protocol ensures that any child without a school place resumes their education in a suitable school with the minimum of delay. The protocol can be found online here:

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-admissions/fair-access-protocol>

Home Address

The home address is, for the purposes of this policy, a residential property where the child mainly lives, normally with someone who has parental responsibility, not an address at which your child may sometimes stay or sleep due to your domestic arrangements. Proof of residence may be requested (e.g. receipt of child benefit) to confirm that a child and the child's family lives at the address. The Council will not generally provide travel assistance to or from any other address.

In cases where parents or carers live separately the home address will be taken to be the address where the child lives most of the time. Where a child lives equally with both parents at different addresses the child's home address will be taken to be the address of the parent that is deemed to be the child's main residence. In the absence of a formalised legal agreement we will consider all available evidence that you provide to support your application.

We will not accept the address of a relative (unless it can be evidenced that the applicant and the child live there as a long-term and permanent arrangement), friend or childminder, a temporary address or an address of a house you intend to move to, or a commercial address.

Free home to school transport

The Royal Borough can provide free home to school transport in a number of ways, including paying a mileage allowance; providing a Personal Transport Budget; providing a bus or train pass; or organising a shared or individual vehicle.

Home address

The home address is, for the purposes of this policy, where the child mainly lives, normally with someone who has parental responsibility. Proof of residence may be requested (e.g. receipt of child benefit) to confirm that a child and the child's family lives at the address. The Council will not generally provide travel assistance to or from any other address.

In cases where parents or carers live separately the home address will be taken to be the address where the child lives most of the time. Where a child lives equally with both parents at different addresses the child's home address will be taken to be the address of the parent that is deemed to be the child's main residence. In the absence of a formalised legal agreement we will consider all available evidence that you provide to support your application.

Low income family

A low income family is one that is in receipt of maximum level of Working Tax Credit or whose children are entitled to receive free school meals (further information on entitlement to free school meals can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>) Further information can be found on page 9

For post-16 eligibility, this means the young person qualifies for income support, and/or whose parents/carers qualify for income support or are in receipt of the maximum amount of working tax credit.

Mainstream school

A mainstream school is a school that is not a school specifically for children and young people with an EHDC or statement.

National eligibility criteria for access to care

These are criteria set by the government to help local authorities decide who should receive assistance with adult social care. The eligibility threshold for adults with care and support needs is based on identifying how a person's needs affect their ability to achieve relevant outcomes, and how this impacts on their wellbeing.

The eligibility decision-making process involves the consideration of the following:

Whether your needs for care and support arise from certain physical or mental conditions and as a result, you are unable to achieve at least 2 of the following:

- Feed yourself
- Maintain personal hygiene (keeping clean)
- Manage toilet needs
- Be appropriately clothed
- Stay safe in your own home
- Manage the housework in your home
- See and keep in touch with friends and family and meet new friends
- Work, volunteer or do education and training you may need
- Make use of necessary facilities or services in the local community including public transport, and recreational facilities or services
- Carry out any caring responsibilities you have for a child

Nearest appropriate school

The nearest appropriate school for the purposes of this policy is the nearest school that is suitable for the child or young person's age, gender and ability, and any special educational needs that the child may have. Consideration of which school is appropriate, in terms of this policy, excludes consideration of:

- An opinion that a school is inappropriate or unsuitable because of your child's suitability for selective education or the school's Ofsted ratings, exam performance and popularity.
- An opinion that a school is inappropriate or unsuitable because of a religious or philosophical belief (including lack of belief) that you hold. The exception to this is when a child is from a low-income family and qualifies under [Extended rights for pupils from low income families](#).

The Royal Borough does not accept that obtaining a place at a grammar school means that the grammar school in question can be regarded as the nearest appropriate school.

Where there distance between the home address and two different school is the same, both schools may be considered as the nearest appropriate school.

The words "appropriate" and "suitable" in relation to a school place are interchangeable for the purposes of this policy.

Parents/carers

In this policy, the parents/carers will be the person(s) with whom the child or young person usually lives. This can include a person or persons who is not a parent, but who has parental responsibility or care of the child or young person. If that person or persons is not a birth or adoptive parent, then evidence may be sought to ascertain the legal basis of the relationship.

Parental Responsibility

It is responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school. In most cases, this means that they will make their own arrangements for getting the child to and from school.

If parents/carers believe that their child might be eligible for free home to school transport, it is their responsibility to make any application needed (see [How to apply](#), starting on page 29).

Parents/carers are reminded that free home to school transport is provided to meet the needs of the child, not the parents/carers. So, for example, difficulty in getting a child to school because of work commitments or the need to get other children to different schools will not make that child eligible for assistance with home to school transport.

Road route

The home to school distance for children aged 11 to 16 and from low income families attending one of their three nearest appropriate schools/attending their nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief is measured along the shortest available route that is passable using a suitable motorised vehicle, i.e. roads.

Royal Borough

This means the local authority, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and the geographical area it covers.

Safe Walking Routes

The home to school distance is measured along the shortest safe walking route, from the home address to the school or college. If there is no safe walking route for an accompanied child to their nearest appropriate school then free home to school transport will be provided if requested.

Safe walking routes are assessed using the closest pedestrian entrances to both the home and the school/college. The measurement is made using the Royal Borough's electronic mapping system. This may be checked using other methods, including physical measurement.

A route will normally only be available if it can be used safely throughout the academic year, and may include footpaths and other pathways, as well as recognised roads. If the child cannot reasonably be expected to walk along this route, even when accompanied by an adult, then the route is considered 'unsafe' and not available.

Walking routes are assessed in accordance with Road Safety GB guidance.

In some cases, a child with an EHCP or statement may not be able to use a walking route safely, even if accompanied, if, for instance, they:

- Are, on a long-term basis, physically unable to move around independently, due to:
 - A disability such as severe cerebral palsy that requires daily use of significant mobility aids (e.g. a wheelchair).
 - A disability such as severe visual impairment.
 - A medical condition such as juvenile arthritis resulting in severe persistent pain and/or extreme fatigue.

- A medical condition such as intractable epileptic seizure disorders that result in a serious persistent health and safety risk.
- Have a lack of awareness of common dangers and a lack of age appropriate independence skills, due to:
 - Severely restricted communication skills, arising from, for example, profound hearing impairment, severe autism or severe language disorders.
 - Significant learning disabilities, where a child might be unable to assess risk and adapt to everyday situations. This might arise from severe learning difficulties, for example.
 - Severe difficulties with interpreting complex social situations or being unable to cope with unexpected change. An example might be a child with Asperger's Syndrome who has very little awareness of personal danger.
 - Severe behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties in comparison with other children of their age.

A long-term restriction on a child's ability to physically move around independently is something that is likely to last for at least a year, and perhaps for the rest of their life. It can include intermittent or sporadic conditions such as epilepsy or multiple sclerosis.

School

For the purposes of this policy, a school is any state-maintained provider offering statutory age education, e.g.:

- Community.
- Voluntary controlled.
- Voluntary aided.
- Academy.
- Free.
- Community or Foundation Special School.
- Special academy or free school.
- University Technical College.
- Studio School.
- Pupil Referral Unit or alternative provision, where this is arranged by the Royal Borough.
- City Technical College (CTC), city college for technology of the arts (CCTA) or an academy).

For children with an Education Health Care Plan or a statement of Special Educational Needs, this may also include independent/private schools (i.e. schools not maintained by the local authority or by the government via the Education Funding Agency), where it is the only school, or nearest of two or more schools named as the Royal Borough's preferred placement on the child's plan or statement.

The school need not be located within the geographical boundary of the Royal Borough.

Sibling

Children and young people are defined as siblings if:

- They are a full/half/step/foster brother or sister; and
- They live at the same address.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children have a Statement of Special Educational Needs if they have severe learning, behavioural or physical difficulties that affect their ability to learn. Statements have been replaced by the EHCP.

Special School

A school that provides education for children with special educational needs, usually those with an Education, Health or Care Plan or statement. Some special schools are independent (private) schools.

Statutory distance

This is the distance set out in law that helps decide whether a child or young person is eligible for free home to school transport. It varies by age and, for the purposes of this policy is as follows:

- For children aged 4 to 8, the statutory distance is 2 miles.
- For children aged 8 to 16, the statutory distance is 3 miles.

For children from low income families,

- For children aged 8 to 11, the statutory distance is 2 miles.
- For children aged 8 to 16, the statutory distance is:
 - Between 2 and 6 to one of the three nearest appropriate schools.
 - Between 2 and 15 miles to their nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief.

Statutory home to school transport

This means that the local authority must, by law, provide free home to school transport to these children, if requested.

Statutory school age

Statutory school age begins at the start of the term after a child's 5th birthday and ends on the last Friday in June in the school year in which they turn 16.