

Home to School Transport Policy 2026-2027



Education travel assistance for Knowsley children of compulsory school age

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1. Local Authority Duty to Provide Home to School Travel Assistance

- 1.1** The Council has a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to make suitable home to school travel arrangements for eligible children of compulsory school age. This policy sets out how the Council will fulfil its responsibilities and outlines the circumstances in which children and young people may qualify for travel assistance.
- 1.2** Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and for making appropriate arrangements for their child's journey to and from school. The Council is required to provide suitable travel assistance, free of charge, only where a child meets the eligibility criteria prescribed by legislation or where the Council exercises its discretionary powers.
- 1.3** When expressing preferences for schools, parents and carers should consider the availability of transport and the potential implications for travel arrangements. The allocation of a school place does not, in itself, create an entitlement to home to school travel assistance.
- 1.4** Eligibility for travel assistance will be determined in accordance with the provisions of this policy, relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and the individual circumstances of the child or young person.
- 1.5** The Council will seek to ensure that travel assistance arrangements are appropriate, promote attendance and participation in education, support independence where possible, and represent the efficient and effective use of public resources.

2. Eligible children

- 2.1** Children of [compulsory school age](#) qualify for free school transport if they go to their nearest suitable school and any of the following eligibility categories apply:
- **Children under 8 years old** - The school is more than 2 miles away or the child could not reasonably be expected to walk to that school because of their special educational needs, disability, or mobility problem, even if they were accompanied by their parent.
 - **Children Over 8** - The school is more than 3 miles away or the child could not reasonably be expected to walk to that school because of their special educational needs, disability, or mobility problem, even if they were accompanied by their parent.

2.2 Children from **low-income families** will qualify for free school transport if:

- They are entitled to free school meals.
- they get the maximum Working Tax Credit

For children from low-income families, the usual transport eligibility rules are expanded as follows:

- **Children aged 8 to 11** qualify for free transport if they attend their nearest suitable school and live **more than 2 miles** from it.
- **Children aged 11 to 16** qualify if they attend **one of their three nearest suitable schools** and the distance is **between 2 and 6 miles** from home.
- **Children aged 11 to 16** attending a school chosen on grounds of **religion or belief** may qualify where the school is **between 2 and 15 miles** from home and there is no nearer suitable school consistent with that religion or belief. there is no suitable school nearer to their home.

2.2.1 Proof of entitlement is required at the time of application; annual confirmation to confirm low-income status will be required.

2.3 Children with Medical Needs .

2.3.1 Some Children with medical needs will require travel assistance to get to an from educational settings.

2.3.2 When the local authority determined after assessment on a case-by-case basis that support is required we will consider how those needs might affect the child during their journey to and from school and, where necessary, put in place proportionate arrangements to manage those needs.

2.3.3 The matters that will be considered will include:

- the medical condition,
- its triggers and symptoms;
- the likelihood and consequences of the condition affecting the child on the journey to and from school; and
- action that may need to be taken to manage the condition.

3. Exceptional Circumstances Category

3.1 The Council recognises that, in exceptional cases, children and young people may face significant barriers to accessing education that are not adequately addressed through the standard home to school transport

eligibility criteria.

- 3.2** Applications for transport assistance may therefore be considered under the ***Exceptional Circumstances Category*** where there is compelling evidence that exceptional medical, social, safeguarding, welfare, or other circumstances prevent the child or young person from accessing their educational setting.
- 3.3** Circumstances that may be relevant to the Council's consideration include, but are not limited to:
- Children who are Looked After by a Local Authority.
 - Children subject to Emergency Care Orders, Special Guardianship Orders, or other protective arrangements.
 - Families experiencing homelessness, temporary accommodation, domestic abuse, or other crisis situations.
 - Significant safeguarding concerns affecting the child's journey to school.
 - Exceptional medical or social needs that do not meet the normal eligibility criteria but create substantial barriers to attendance.
 - Other circumstances where the Council considers that transport support is necessary to ensure access to education.
- 3.4** Each application will be assessed on its individual merits, considering all relevant evidence provided by the family and professionals involved with the child or young person.
- 3.5** Eligibility under this category is **discretionary**, and the provision of transport assistance will not create an ongoing entitlement beyond the period for which the exceptional circumstances apply.
- 3.6** The Council reserves the right to review transport arrangements awarded under this category at any time and may withdraw support where the exceptional circumstances no longer exist.

4. Home Address and Measurement of Distance

- 4.1** The Council will normally only consider applications for home-to-school travel assistance from a child's permanent home address. Travel assistance will not usually be provided between a school and more than one home address.
- 4.2** Where parents/carers reside at different addresses and both hold parental responsibility; the child's permanent home address will normally be deemed to be the address at which the child ordinarily resides for most of the school week. Where this is unclear, the Council may use the address associated with Child Benefit or request additional

evidence to determine the child's permanent home address. Only one application for travel assistance will be considered for each child.

- 4.3** The distance between home and school will be measured using the shortest available walking route from the main entrance of the child's permanent home address, including flats and apartments, to the main entrance of the school. Measurements will be calculated using Google Maps or an alternative geographical information system determined by the Council.
- 4.4** The route measured will follow roads, footways and footpaths that the Council considers available and suitable for pedestrian use. As road and pathway networks may change over time, measurements are subject to periodic review. The Council reserves the right to amend the geographical measuring system used for the purpose of determining eligibility.
- 4.5** Where a school operates across multiple sites, the distance will be measured to the main entrance of the principal school building, unless the Council determines that another entrance is more appropriate for the purposes of assessing eligibility.

5. Unsafe walking route

- 5.1** A child is eligible for free travel to school if:
- They attend their nearest suitable school,
 - and
 - it is within the statutory walking distance of their home
 - and
 - the nature of the route means they could not be expected to walk there in reasonable safety even if accompanied by their parent
 - and
 - there is no alternative route within the statutory walking distance that they would be able to walk in reasonable safety, even if accompanied by their parent.
- 5.2** When assessing whether a route can be walked in reasonable safety, the Council will consider the whole of the route and complete a risk assessment.
- 5.3** This will include, for example, any sections that use footpaths or bridleways, as well as sections that use roads. We will also consider a range of risks such as canals, rivers, ditches, speed of traffic and fields of vision for the pedestrian and motorist.

6. Nearest Suitable School

- 6.1** A suitable school for school travel purposes is a qualifying school that is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.
- 6.2** A suitable school is not necessarily the school that is considered the most suitable, preferred, or desirable by a parent or carer. Schools are expected to meet a broad range of educational needs, and there may be several schools capable of providing an appropriate education for a child. Where this is the case, the nearest school to the child's home address that can meet their needs will normally be regarded as the nearest suitable school for travel purposes.
- 6.3** Where the nearest school is unable to offer a place because it is full or oversubscribed, the nearest alternative school with an available place that can meet the child's needs will be deemed to be the nearest suitable school for the purposes of assessing eligibility for home to school travel assistance.
- 6.4** In determining eligibility for travel assistance, the Council will consider whether a suitable school is available closer to the child's home than the school attended. Where parents or carers choose a school that is further away than the nearest suitable school, they will normally be responsible for making and funding the travel arrangements.
- 6.5** In exercising its home-to-school travel functions, the Council will have regard to any preference expressed by a parent for their child to attend a school on the grounds of religion or belief (Section 509AD of the Education Act 1996). However, the existence of such a preference does not, in itself, create an entitlement to free travel assistance where a nearer suitable school is available.

7. Qualifying Schools

- 7.1** For the purposes of this policy, a **qualifying school** is a school or educational institution that falls within the categories prescribed by the relevant home to school transport legislation and statutory guidance.
- 7.2** For children of compulsory school age without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), a qualifying school will normally be:
- community schools, foundation schools,
 - voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools;

- academies (including those which are free schools, university technical colleges, studio schools and special schools);
- alternative provision academies;
- community or foundation special schools;
- non-maintained special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- maintained nursery schools (where attended by a child of compulsory school age); and
- city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts.

7.3 For children and young people with an EHCP, a qualifying school will include any school or educational institution named in Section I of the EHCP where the Council has determined the placement as suitable to meet the child's identified special educational needs. **See Section 7 for more details.**

7.4 An independent school will be regarded as a qualifying school where it is the only school named in the EHCP or, where more than one school is named, it is the nearest school capable of meeting the child or young person's identified special educational needs.

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7.5 Where parents or carers choose a school that is further away than the nearest qualifying school capable of meeting the child's needs, they will normally be responsible for making and funding the necessary travel arrangements, unless an entitlement arises under home to school transport legislation or the Council exercises its discretion to provide assistance.

8. Education, Health, and Care Plans – parental preference and school travel

8.1 Parents of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) may request that a particular school is named in Section I of the plan. The Council will consider such requests in accordance with the Children and Families Act 2014 and other relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

8.2 Where a parent requests a school which is further from the child's home than another school which the Council considers suitable, available and able to meet the child's special educational needs, the Council will take account of

the suitability of the schools, the child's individual needs and the implications, including cost, of travel to each school.

- 8.3** Where attendance at the parent's preferred school would result in additional travel costs, the Council will determine whether those additional costs would be compatible with the efficient use of public resources, having regard to its statutory duties and the circumstances of the individual case.
- 8.4** Where the Council is satisfied that another suitable school is available which would enable the child's needs to be met without the additional travel expenditure associated with the parent's preferred school, this will be taken into account when determining both the school to be named in the EHC plan and responsibility for home-to-school travel.
- 8.5** Where the Council concludes that providing travel to the parent's preferred school would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources, it may take one of the following approaches:
- (a) **name another suitable school**, including a nearer suitable school, in Section I of the EHC plan.
 - (b) **name the parent's preferred school only**, on the express condition that the parent arranges the child's travel to and from that school and/or meets some or all the cost of that travel; or
 - (c) **name both the parent's preferred school and another suitable school**, with the parent's preferred school being the school the child will attend on the condition that the parent arranges the travel and/or meets some or all its cost.

9. Accompaniment

- 9.1** A child will not normally be eligible for home to school travel assistance on the grounds of their special educational needs, disability, mobility difficulties, or because the walking route is considered unsuitable, where they are able to travel safely when accompanied by a parent, carer, or another responsible adult. In such circumstances, it will normally be the responsibility of the parent or carer to accompany the child or make appropriate arrangements for the journey to and from school.
- 9.2** The fact that a parent or carer is unable to accompany their child due to employment, training commitments, childcare arrangements, or other caring responsibilities will not normally give rise to an entitlement to travel assistance. However, the Council will consider all relevant circumstances and will act reasonably in the exercise of its statutory duties.
- 9.3** Parents and carers are generally expected to accompany their child where this is necessary to enable safe travel to school unless there is a compelling reason why it would be unreasonable to expect them to do so.

- 9.4** The circumstances that the Council should take into account may include, but are not limited to, whether the parent has a disability or mobility problem that would make it difficult for them to accompany their child, and the parent's reasons for not being able to accompany their child or make other suitable arrangements.
- 9.5** Decisions relating to accompaniment will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking account of all relevant information, supporting evidence, and the Council's statutory duties.

10. Children Who Are Excluded from School

- 10.1** Children and young people who are permanently excluded from a school and subsequently admitted to an alternative educational setting will not normally be entitled to home-to-school travel assistance solely as a consequence of the exclusion.
- 10.2** Eligibility for travel assistance will be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in this policy and relevant legislation. Travel assistance may be considered where the child meets the statutory eligibility criteria or where the Council determines that exceptional circumstances apply.

11. Applications and timescales

- 11.1** Parents are responsible for applying for home-to-school travel assistance where they believe their child meets the eligibility criteria set out in this policy. Applications should be made as soon as the child's school placement and the need for travel assistance are known.
- 11.2** For children requiring travel assistance from the beginning of a new academic year in September, applications should normally be submitted **by 31 May**. This enables the Council sufficient time to assess eligibility and, where assistance is agreed, plan and commission suitable travel arrangements for the beginning of the academic year.
- 11.3** Applications received after 31 May will continue to be considered. However, where an application is received after this date, the Council cannot guarantee that travel arrangements will be in place for the first day of the new academic year. Applications will be processed as soon as reasonably practicable, having regard to the individual circumstances of the child and the arrangements required.
- 11.4** The Council will normally aim to determine a complete application for travel assistance **within 20 working days** of receiving all information required to assess eligibility. Where further information or evidence is required, the Council may request this from the parent, school or other relevant professional before a decision can be made.

- 11.5** Where travel assistance is agreed, the Council will aim to put suitable arrangements in place **within 10 working days of the decision**, or by the beginning of the academic year where an application has been received by the published deadline. Some arrangements, particularly those requiring specialist vehicles, passenger assistants, additional risk assessments or procurement of new provision, may take longer. Where this occurs, the Council will keep the parent informed and will consider what arrangements are necessary in the interim to ensure that its statutory duties are met.
- 11.6** Where a child changes school, moves home or otherwise requires a new travel arrangement during the academic year, an application should be submitted as soon as the change is known. The Council will assess the application and, where the child is eligible, make suitable arrangements as soon as reasonably practicable. Parents should not assume that existing travel arrangements will automatically transfer to a new address or school.
- 11.7** Parents must provide accurate and complete information when applying and must notify the Council promptly of any change in circumstances which may affect eligibility or the travel arrangements required. A delay in providing information may result in a delay in determining the application or putting arrangements in place.
- 11.8** To apply go to <https://transport.knowsley.gov.uk/>

12. Appeals Against Decisions Relating to Travel Assistance

- 12.1** Parents, carers, or eligible students have the right to appeal against a decision relating to home to school travel assistance, including the refusal of an application or the nature of the travel arrangements offered. The Council operates a two-stage appeals process in accordance with Department for Education statutory guidance.

12.2 Stage One: Review by a Senior Officer

- 12.2.1** A parent or carer who wishes to challenge a decision must submit a written request for a review within 20 working days of receiving notification of the decision. The request should clearly set out the reasons for the appeal and include any additional information or supporting evidence they wish the Council to consider.
- 12.2.2** The review will be undertaken by the in the Senior Officer in the team's line management chain, who was not involved in making the original decision. The reviewing officer will consider all relevant information, including the original application, supporting evidence, relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and

the grounds of appeal.

12.2.3 The written decision will include:

- The outcome of the review.
- The reasons for the decision.
- Details of how the review was conducted.
- The factors considered in reaching the decision.
- Details of any advice or information obtained during the review; and
- Information explaining how to request a Stage Two appeal where the original decision is upheld.

12.3 Stage Two: Independent Appeal Panel

12.3.1 Where a parent or carer remains dissatisfied following the Stage One review, they may request a Stage Two appeal. This request must be made in writing within 20 working days of receiving the Stage One decision and may include any additional evidence or information they wish to be considered.

12.3.2 The appeal will be considered by an independent Travel Support Appeal Panel comprising officers who have had no previous involvement in the original decision or Stage One review.

12.3.3 The panel will consider whether:

- The Council has correctly applied its Home to School Travel Assistance Policy.
- The Council has complied with its statutory duties and relevant guidance.
- Relevant information and evidence have been carefully considered; and
- The decision reached was reasonable in the circumstances of the case.

12.3.4 Parents and carers will be given the opportunity to attend the appeal hearing, either in person or virtually, and to present their case. Where they choose not to attend, the appeal will be determined based on the written information available to the Panel.

12.3.5 The Stage Two appeal hearing will be arranged within 40 working days of the Council receiving the request for a Stage Two appeal.

12.3.6 Following the hearing, the Council will notify the parent or carer of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 working days.

12.3.7 The decision letter will include:

- The decision reached by the Panel.
- The reasons for the decision.
- Details of how the appeal was conducted.
- The factors considered by the Panel.

- Any advice or information obtained during the appeal process; and
- Details of any further rights of challenge.

12.4 Further Challenge

12.4.1 The decision of the Independent Appeal Panel represents the Council's final stage of review.

12.4.2 If a parent or carer remains dissatisfied following the completion of the Council's appeals process, they may refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman where they believe there has been maladministration or fault in the way the Council has reached its decision.

13. Independent Travel Training

13.1 The Council is committed to supporting children and young people to develop the skills, confidence and independence needed to travel safely and successfully as they prepare for adulthood.

13.2 Where appropriate, children and young people may be offered Independent Travel Training (ITT). ITT is a structured programme designed to help individuals learn how to travel safely and independently using public transport, walking routes, and other community travel options.

13.3 The Council recognises that independent travel can provide significant benefits, including:

- Increased confidence, independence, and self-esteem.
- Improved preparation for adulthood, employment, further education, and community participation.
- Greater choice and control over travel arrangements.
- Development of personal safety, decision-making and life skills.
- Reduced reliance on specialist transport services where independent travel is a safe and appropriate option.

13.4 Participation in Independent Travel Training will only be considered where it is appropriate for the child or young person's age, needs, and circumstances. The decision will be based on an assessment of individual needs and capabilities and will be undertaken in partnership with the child or young person, their parents or carers, educational setting, and other relevant professionals.

- 13.5** Successful completion of Independent Travel Training may result in a change to existing travel arrangements where the Council is satisfied that independent travel can be undertaken safely and sustainably.

14. Implementation and Transitional Arrangements

- 14.1** This policy will come into effect on **20 September 2026** and will apply to all applications for home to school travel assistance received on or after that date.
- 14.2** Eligibility for travel assistance determined prior to the implementation of this policy will normally continue to be assessed in accordance with the policy and criteria that were in force at the time the decision was made.
- 14.3** Children and young people who were awarded travel assistance under a previous policy will ordinarily continue to receive that support until the next key phase of education, or until their eligibility is reviewed because of a change in circumstances.
- 14.4** A reassessment of eligibility may be undertaken where there is a material change in circumstances, including but not limited to:
- A change of home address.
 - A change of school or educational placement.
 - A change in the child or young person's needs.
 - A change in family circumstances affecting eligibility; or
 - Any other circumstance that may affect entitlement to travel assistance.
- 14.5** Following any reassessment, eligibility for travel assistance will be determined in accordance with the policy in force at that time.
- 14.6** The Council reserves the right to review existing travel assistance arrangements where required to ensure compliance with legislation, statutory guidance, and the effective use of public resources.

15. Types of Travel Assistance

- 15.1** Where a child or young person is assessed as eligible for home to school travel assistance, the Council will determine the most appropriate, suitable, and cost-effective form of support based on their individual needs and circumstances. Travel assistance may be provided in a variety of forms and will not necessarily include dedicated transport.

15.2 Travel assistance may include, but is not limited to:

- A public transport pass.
- Independent Travel Training.
- Transport provided through a contracted vehicle, including taxis, minibuses, or other suitable transport.
- Pick-up point arrangements; or
- Any other form of travel assistance considered appropriate by the Council.

15.3 Where appropriate, travel assistance will normally be provided using public transport. This may include the provision of a Merseytravel SOLO ticket or, where more than one mode of public transport is required, an alternative ticket covering the necessary modes of travel.

15.4 For children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities or mobility difficulties, the Council will consider whether alternative travel concessions or passes are available before determining the most appropriate form of travel assistance.

15.5 Where the Council determines that travel by public transport is unsuitable due to a child or young person's age, needs, disability, medical condition, mobility difficulties, or other exceptional circumstances, transport may be provided through a vehicle commissioned by the Council.

15.6 Travel assistance will only be provided at the level necessary to enable access to education. It may not be necessary to provide transport from the home address to the educational setting. Where appropriate, children and young people may be required to travel to and from a pick-up and drop-off point, provided this can be undertaken safely and reasonably, taking account of their individual needs and circumstances.

15.8 In exceptional circumstances, where the Council has determined that a child is eligible for travel assistance, but alternative arrangements made by the parent or carer are more appropriate to meet the child's assessed needs, the Council may agree a Personal Transport Budget or other alternative travel arrangement. Any such arrangement will be subject to the Council's approval and the terms of the relevant scheme.

16. Conditions of Travel Assistance

16.1 Children and young people receiving travel assistance are expected to behave in a safe, respectful, and considerate manner whilst travelling to and from their educational setting. Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child understands and complies with any reasonable standards of behaviour required when using transport provided or arranged by the Council.

- 16.2** Unacceptable behaviour may include, but is not limited to:
- Bullying, harassment, or intimidation of other passengers.
 - Physical aggression, including pushing, kicking, or hitting.
 - Damage to vehicles or property.
 - Refusal to follow reasonable instructions from drivers, escorts, or transport staff.
 - Actions that distract the driver or compromise the safe operation of the vehicle.
 - Refusal to wear a seatbelt where one is provided and required; or
 - Conduct that places the safety or wellbeing of the child, other passengers, transport staff, or members of the public at risk.
- 16.3** Where concerns arise regarding a child or young person's behaviour whilst using travel assistance, the Council will collaborate with parents or carers, the educational setting, transport providers, and other relevant professionals to identify appropriate support and strategies to maintain safe travel arrangements.
- 16.4** The Council recognises that behaviours may arise because of a child's special educational needs, disability. In such circumstances, the Council will seek to understand the underlying causes of the behaviour and consider reasonable adjustments and appropriate support before making any decision regarding travel arrangements.
- 16.5** Where behaviour presents a significant risk to the safety of the child, other passengers or transport staff, the Council may review the travel assistance provided and consider alternative arrangements. Any decision to amend, suspend or withdraw travel assistance will take account of the individual circumstances of the case, the Council's statutory duties, and the child's ability to access education.
- 16.6** Where travel assistance has been awarded in error, or based on inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information, the Council reserves the right to review and amend the decision. Parents or carers will be notified of the reasons for the review and any subsequent decision.
- 16.7** Lost, stolen or damaged travel passes must be reported to the Council and, where appropriate, to the relevant transport provider or the police. The Council may require evidence in support of any request for a replacement pass.
- 16.8** The Council may apply an administration charge for the replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged travel passes. Details of any applicable charges will be published separately and reviewed periodically.

