

Home to School Travel Policy Statement 2016

Travel policy for all children of compulsory school age
(aged between 5 and 16 years)

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1. Introduction

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school and this includes getting them to and from school. In some circumstances we will help with travel as set out in this policy.

The policy and the ways in which home to school travel arrangements are put into practice have been determined in accordance with the relevant provisions of:

- The Education Act 1996, particularly Sections 444 and 509,
- The Education Act 2002 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- The requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years (2015).

Home to School Travel Guidance July 2014 has been taken into account when publishing this policy.

2. Transport for children of compulsory school age

Statutory Offer

All children of compulsory school age, that is aged between 5 and 16, from Reception to Year 11, qualify for free school travel if they go to their nearest suitable school with places available and live at least:

- 2 miles from the school if they are under 8,
- 3 miles from school if they are 8 or older.

Distances are measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. A child is said to be 5 if their fifth birthday falls within that school year, ages taken on 1 September, this is the reception year. Children will normally have their eighth birthday in Year 3 and will be 16 in Year 11.

Children will also get free travel if their parents get the maximum Working Tax Credit or the child is entitled to free school meals due to low income, if they are:

- aged 8 to 11 and the school is at least 2 miles away;
- aged 11 to 16 and the school is 2 to 6 miles away – as long as there are not 3 or more suitable schools nearer to home;
- aged 11 to 16, and the school is 2 to 15 miles away – if it is their nearest school preferred on the grounds of the parent's religion or belief.

3. Special educational needs, a disability, or mobility difficulties (including temporary medical conditions)

Children of compulsory school age are entitled to free travel however far they live from the school if they cannot be expected to walk because of their SEN, a disability or mobility problem¹.

We operate travel arrangements for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities according to the Department for Education (DfE) guidance which states:

¹ A local authority must make transport arrangements for children of compulsory school age who are eligible because they cannot be reasonably expected to walk to school (or other place where they might be receiving education under section 19(1) of the Act) because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their SEN or disability.

In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk for the purposes of SEN, a disability or mobility problems the local authority will consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child. However, when assessing the transport needs of children eligible due to SEN and/or disability the usual transport requirements, for example the statutory walking distances, will not be considered.

Children are entitled to free travel however far they live from the school if they:

- cannot reasonably be expected to walk because of their SEN, a disability or mobility problem.
- DfE guidance states that some children with SEN and/or a disability may, by reason of their SEN and/or disability, be unable to walk even relatively short distances to school. Similarly, children with a mobility problem caused, for example, by a temporary medical condition such as a broken leg, may also be unable to walk to school.

The local authority may also consider additional support for travel if professional supporting evidence is provided that a child or young person's needs are significant enough to require further assistance. Parents that believe their circumstances justify additional travel support need to make written representation to the Passenger Transport Unit, contact details are provided in the further information section of this policy.

If it is agreed that help with travel should be provided this will always be aimed at preserving the child's independence as far as possible. The Local Authority will consider the following options in order (home to school transport only being provided as a last resort):

- travel training support to enable the young person to learn to use public transport or to travel independently

- a walking travel assistant (where a parent or carer is unable to accompany the child)
- a bus or rail pass including where necessary an additional pass for parent or carer to accompany the child
- a passenger assistant to accompany the child on public transport
- transport from a networked pick up point
- a mileage payment for the parents or carers to transport themselves
- home to school transport (which might include a minibus or taxi).

Temporary Travel Arrangements

The County Council does not provide transport in circumstances where the parent might not be able to accompany the child to school on a temporary basis.

Where the normal arrangements for home to school travel are inappropriate, for example, because a child or young person experiences an accident, planned surgery or an illness which results in a temporary inability to use the current travel arrangements, the following protocol will be followed.

- a. Requests can be made by the parent/carers or school and should be made by contacting the County Council Passenger Transport Unit directly. This can be done by telephone, in writing, email or in person.
- b. Supporting medical advice will be needed to accompany the request so that the County Council is in a position to determine. Supporting evidence to include:
 - Full medical details of the condition, including timescales for recovery.
 - Written medical confirmation regarding the child's fitness to return to school.
 - The likely period for which additional transport may be needed.
 - Any risks associated with lifting and handling the child.
- c. Any implications for travel assistants may need to be considered e.g. action that might be required in a medical emergency.
- d. Any temporary travel arrangements deemed necessary would normally be arranged within five working days from the receipt of the written request and supporting evidence.

Boarding

Subject to distances outlined in the statutory offer of travel and the child being placed by the local authority help with travel will be provided for those that board at schools.

For termly boarding, transport will be provided at the beginning and end of school terms and half terms and at weekends if the school closes.

For weekly boarding transport to school will be provided at the start and end of the school week.

Daily Placements

Transport to school will be provided at the start and end of every school day. For day pupils, every effort will be made to keep journey times to a minimum and discretion will be used depending on the child or young person's special educational needs and the availability of a suitable school near to their home with a place.

Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age might be considered to be 45 minutes; whilst a child of secondary school age might be expected to travel up to 75 minutes each way, however for children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.

Passenger Assistants

A passenger assistant will normally be provided if there are more than five children or young people with education, health and care plans and/or statements of special educational needs or additional needs travelling in one vehicle. The requirement for a passenger assistant will be reviewed annually or as circumstances change. Needs may alter as the child grows older and a passenger assistant may not continue to be necessary.

In circumstances where a child may be travelling on their own on a public service and there is clear evidence that an assistant is needed, the child may be accompanied by the parent or the local authority will arrange for a passenger assistant to accompany them on an individual exceptional basis.

The passenger assistant's duty is to supervise children/young people on the vehicle. They will assist them to board and to leave the vehicle, but they cannot collect them from the home and take the children/young people into school if that would mean leaving others unattended in the vehicle.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to take the child to the vehicle and collect from the vehicle. Passenger assistants have basic training in first aid but are not otherwise medically trained.

Medical Conditions

If a child suffers from a medically-diagnosed condition which is potentially life-threatening and may require immediate medication or treatment, parents or carers will be encouraged to take the child or young person to school themselves.

If a child with a potentially life-threatening condition travels on local authority home to school transport it should be noted that passenger assistants will not administer treatment or medication. Should this situation arise the emergency services will be called. All passenger assistants are advised of this protocol.

Where a child or young person has a care-plan or medical protocol in place, parents and carers should make this known to the driver and/or passenger assistant.

For some children and young people who require constant nursing interventions and/or are dependent on technology for their survival, a specialist learning support assistant service is available.

This can involve learning support assistants who work with the child or young person at school, or at home when they are too ill to attend. As part of the arrangements, a risk assessment is undertaken to inform the support required.

Parental Agreements

Parents or carers who have an agreed arrangement with Suffolk County Council to provide transport themselves will be reimbursed travel expenses, at the County Council parental transport rate.

Dual Placements

Sometimes, children may have a dual placement and be on the roll at both a mainstream school and a special school or other specialist provision. In these individual circumstances where this arrangement has been agreed by the local authority in discussion with the schools and the family, the special arrangements policy for home to school transport will only apply to the specialist provision. Travel assistance would only be provided to the mainstream school if the child was eligible under the County Council's home to school travel policies.

4. Discretionary Offer

Section 508C of The Education Act 1996 provides local authorities with discretionary powers to go beyond their statutory duties and provide transport for children who are not entitled to free transport. Suffolk County Council's discretionary travel offer is as follows:

Transport Priority Areas

In addition to the statutory offer the Local Authority (LA) will provide help with free travel to the school designated within the Transport Priority Area. The Transport Priority Areas can be viewed at www.suffolkonboard.com.

Spare Seats Scheme

The discretionary arrangements scheme operated in Suffolk may provide assistance to children who do not otherwise qualify for free travel, by using spare seats on journeys the County Council has arranged specifically for children entitled to free travel.

However, this scheme does not extend to the offer of seats on public transport journeys or to other vehicles that have not been hired as a whole to carry out school transport journeys solely for the County Council. Where the offer of a seat transport. The availability of a seat is reviewed termly.

Parents whose children do not otherwise qualify for free home to school travel assistance, and who would like them to travel on the transport can apply by contacting

Suffolk Passenger Transport. Details of this offer and charges can be found online at www.suffolkonboard.com.

Travel to Denominational Schools

Transport Arrangements for Roman Catholic students have been phased out from September 2012. Students in receipt of transport assistance from September 2011 continue to do so until they change school or they complete their statutory education in Year 11. At this point transport assistance will cease.

From September 2012 onwards no new students have been offered transport assistance, and neither will students who have transferred to a different Roman Catholic School.

Parents who think they may qualify for assistance with travel under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 need to refer to the criteria set out in the Statutory Offer of this Policy (see earlier section on page 1).

5. Post-16 Travel arrangements for students at sixth forms and colleges

The County Council has a separate Post-16 discretionary policy for home to school and college travel assistance for Post-16 students. These arrangements meet the requirements set out in the legislation and in other guidance that is from time to time provided.

The Post-16 Discretionary Travel policy is available at the following link: <http://www.suffolkonboard.com/post16>

6. How is the policy implemented?

Calculation of Home to School Distances

In order to establish whether or not there is an entitlement to home to school or travel assistance and in accordance with requirements set out in the legislation, home-to-school and college distances are measured by the nearest available walking route from the gate or access to the pupil or student's home to the gate or access to the school or college*.

The type of route we measure is one with a hard surface available for all-the-year-round use. We maintain detailed records of home-to-school and college distances. Of course, when new enquiries are made we will carry out further distance checks to add to our records if that is necessary.

*There may be a potential change of definition at the time of implementation of new software, EMS4 (anticipated December 2016). If this is required, we will publish this on www.suffolkonboard.com

Provision of Travel Assistance

For children or young people who qualify for travel assistance in accordance with the above criteria, the County Council will provide the most appropriate travel arrangements having regard to the child's needs.

Travel Passes

As a part of the information we use to assess entitlement to transport, we have a database of pupils and students provided by schools. It is, therefore, vitally important that the details of an individual pupil or student, which are held at the school are correct – particularly in relation to the home address, post-code and date of birth.

- Each pupil or student who is allocated to a transport service arranged by the County Council will normally be provided with a pass which authorises travel on that journey.
- Passes are not transferable to other journeys and should be carried at all times. The companies who provide us with transport have clear instructions to check passes regularly and to allow only those who can produce a valid Pass to ride under the arrangements made by the County Council.
- We tell them to exercise discretion, particularly at the beginning of each new term, **however it is important to emphasise that pupils and students must carry their Pass each day.**
- Details of the timetable applicable to each of the journeys are available at www.suffolkonboard.com.

Travel Times

Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age might be considered to be 45 minutes; whilst a child of secondary school age might be expected to travel up to 75 minutes each way. Similarly, a child's special educational needs and/or disability might be such that it implies a shorter maximum journey time.

7. Additional Information

Any significant changes to personal circumstances (for example a house move) must be notified to the County Council and will trigger a review of travel assistance in accordance with the policy in operation. This might result in travel assistance being changed or withdrawn.

The County Council does not provide home to school travel for children who may attend other schools or venues as part of transition arrangements, or work experience. Any such assistance would have to be negotiated between the schools and the families concerned.

Travel to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) will only be provided in line with this policy and in particular will be available only at the beginning and end of the school day. Other arrangements, such as transfers or changes that occur during the school day, including at lunchtime are for the PRUs and schools concerned to organise and fund.

All drivers and passenger assistants are required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS) check. Details of codes of conduct for transport operators can be viewed online at <http://www.suffolkonboard.com/safeguarding>

Smoking is strictly forbidden on all the transport services the County Council arranges for pupils and students. It is also a requirement that when on the vehicle pupils and students must behave appropriately at all times and not do anything that might put the driver, the vehicle or other passengers at risk. Misbehaviour or damage caused to a vehicle may result in the Travel Pass being withdrawn by the County Council, the school or the operator. Details of the codes of conduct for students can be viewed online at <http://www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/safeguarding-overview/>

In all cases schools must notify the County Council in advance, of any changes to school dates affecting transport arrangements for example, training days or emergency closure.

How do I challenge a travel assistance decision?

Suffolk County Council's policy on entitlement to transport has been summarised in this document. The County Council sets that policy and staff have no discretion to amend its application.

However, if a child falls outside the terms of the free travel policies but the parents believe their circumstances justify special consideration there is the right of review or challenge either via the appeals or complaints process.

On what grounds may I challenge?

A parent or carer can challenge a decision about transport entitlement on:

- The transport arrangements offered
- Their child's eligibility
- The distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances
- The safety of the route
- Consideration of exceptional circumstances

Full details about your right of challenge are available on our website www.suffolkonboard.com/rightofchallenge or on request from contacting us on 0345 606 6173 or via email at customer.service@suffolk.gov.uk

A complaint to challenge the decision can be sent to customerrights@suffolk.gov.uk or telephone the Customer Care Manager on 01473 260711. Further information on the complaints process also be found on-line at www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support/customer-rights

General Notes

Home to school travel assistance applies only to the school start and finish times. Other arrangements, such as transfers or changes that occur during the school day, including at lunchtime are for the schools concerned to organise and fund.

The County Council has a duty to provide free travel assistance for eligible children as determined in the criteria set out in this Offer.

Free travel may also be offered if the catchment area school is full and a place has been offered by the County Council at the next nearest school with an available place which is over the distances set out above.

Agreement to provide help with travel will be considered carefully and only if there is a significant reason why the child could not otherwise get to school, accompanied (“as necessary by a responsible adult”) their parent or carer in line with the general travel policy.

As an example, another child in the family attending a different school would not normally be considered as a “significant reason”. It is important to note that there is no automatic entitlement to special travel arrangements.

Such exceptional circumstances are considered by the Individual Needs Transport Group (INTG), taking into account professional supporting evidence provided by the parent or carer.

Travel assistance is not provided to independent schools, unless it is a requirement in terms of an individual case where the child has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

It should be noted that where parents choose an alternative school for their child, travel assistance is only provided to the nearest suitable school to the home address and it is over the statutory walking distance.

Further Information

You can find further information on terms and conditions of use and procurement practices at www.suffolkonboard.com

The County Council produces a Schools in Suffolk booklet each year about our schools and this includes some general information about transport. You can view this document online at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions

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