

# Home to School Transport Policy 2025-2026

*Education travel assistance for Liverpool children of compulsory school age*



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# 1 Local Authority Education Travel Duty

Local authorities are required by both the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make suitable travel arrangements for certain children to attend school. This policy sets out how the Liverpool City Council (“the Council”) will meet this statutory duty and provides information about the categories of eligible children.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school. This means they must take all the action necessary to enable their child to attend school – including making arrangements for their child to travel to from school.

Therefore, travel arrangements should be an important consideration when parent/carers are making school preferences. An offer of a school place does not guarantee travel assistance.

## 2 Eligible children

A child is eligible if they are of compulsory school age<sup>1</sup>, attend their nearest suitable school and:

- live more than the statutory walking distance from that school or 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 or
- would not be able to walk to that school in reasonable safety, even if they were accompanied by their parent.

A child is eligible for free travel to school if they are eligible for free school meals **or** a parent with whom they live receive maximum Working Tax Credit.

- Aged 8 or over but under 11, attend their nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles from their home; or
- Aged 11 to 16 years, and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools provided it is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or
- Aged 11 to 16 years, attend a school that is more than 2 but no more than 15 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home.

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

Where, a child ceases to be eligible for free school meals during the course of an academic year, or their parent ceases to receive maximum Working Tax Credit, free travel to school will continue for the remainder of the academic year.

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<sup>1</sup> Compulsory school age begins at the beginning of the term following a child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and ceases on the last Friday in June in the school year when the child reaches the age of 16. Children may, however, start school in the reception class in the September following their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday and will therefore be considered eligible children for the purpose of this policy.

### 3 Extraordinary circumstances category

For those in most need including Looked After Children, Emergency / Special Guardianship Orders, domestic violence, low-income families, health conditions and other vulnerable children who do not meet the extended rights criteria applications will be assessed individually under the extraordinary circumstances criteria.<sup>2</sup>

For those families choosing schools for religious or cultural beliefs, applications for travel assistance to a school chosen on religious or belief grounds will be considered on case-by-case basis under the extraordinary category.

Applications will be assessed based on need and in partnership with other agencies involved in supporting the child, young person, or family.

### 4 Measuring distance

When determining eligibility for a travel pass the child's permanent home address is used. If parents/carers live at different addresses and both have parental responsibility, the address of the person claiming Child Benefit will be used to determine the child's permanent address. Only one application per child will be considered.

Distance will be measured by the shortest walking route from the main entrance of the child's permanent home address (including flats and apartments) to the main entrance of the school using the City Council's computerised measuring system. This system follows paved, lit roads and paved, lit footpaths that the City Council considers are safe walking routes. These road network used to calculate distance is subject to change. Measurements using other geographical systems such as Multimap, AA or RAC will not be accepted. The Local Authority reserves the right to change the geographical measuring system at any time.

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<sup>2</sup> Vulnerable children' are defined as any children at greater risk of experiencing physical or emotional harm and/or experiencing poor outcomes because of one or more factors in their lives.

When measuring the distance to a school with a split site arrangement, the available gate or entrance on the main block will be used.

## 5 Nearest suitable school

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.

It should also be suitable for the child's sex, for example a girls' school could not be considered the nearest suitable school for a boy.

**'Suitable school' does not mean the most suitable school for a child.**

**Schools are able to meet a wide range of needs.**

Section 509AD of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to have regard to any wish of a parent to have their child educated at a school based on their religion or belief when exercising their school travel duties. This does not mean local authorities must arrange travel to a school with a designated religious character for a child whose parents have chosen it on the grounds of their religion or belief.

Where a child's nearest school is oversubscribed and unable to offer them a place, the nearest school with **places available** is their nearest suitable school for school travel purposes.<sup>3</sup>

**A child attending a school outside the statutory walking distance will not be eligible for assistance if the Local Authority can demonstrate that there is a nearer suitable school with places available unless eligible under extended right for free travel in relation to low-income families.**

Where a child has an Education and Health Care ('EHC') plan, the school named in

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<sup>3</sup> When an application for travel is considered following the normal admissions round, to ensure fairness and consistency schools with places available are determined as of the relevant national offer day. Where a travel application is received outside of the normal admissions round, schools with places available will be determined by the most recent school census returns.

the plan will normally be considered to be their nearest suitable school.

## 6 Qualifying schools

Qualifying schools are:

- Community schools
- Foundation Schools
- Voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- Academies (including those which are free schools, university technical colleges, studio and special schools)
- Alternative Provision
- Non-maintained special schools
- Pupil referral units
- Maintained Nursery (where a child is of compulsory school age)
- City technology and city colleges for the technology of arts

For children with special educational needs, an independent school is a qualifying school if it is the only school named in their EHC plan, or the nearest of two or more schools named in the EHC plan.

## 7 Special education needs and disability or mobility problems

Transport assistance will not automatically be provided for children and young people with an EHC plan as a matter of course. Applications will be considered on an individual basis using information from the pupil's most recent assessments and information held by outside professionals involved.

If the child or young person is not attending the nearest suitable school, the school or designated resource provision where the authority places that child or young person will become the nearest suitable school for the purposes of this policy. If, because of parental preference, the child or young person attends a placement further away, then transport would become the responsibility of the parent.

In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk, 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.

When considering whether a child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child on the journey to school a range of factors may need to be taken into account, such as the age of the child and whether one would ordinarily expect a child of that age to be accompanied.

- a) The general expectation is that a parent will accompany a child where necessary, unless there is a good reason it is not reasonable to expect the parent to do so.
- b) Parents citing work commitments as a reason for being unable to accompany their child to school will not be considered as a reason to provide free door to door transport. Parents with school aged children find it challenging to manage drop off and pick-up times and their work commitments, so it is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance.
- c) However, the local authority will ensure equality of opportunity for disabled parents. For example, if a parent's disability prevents them from accompanying their child along a walking route that would otherwise be considered unsafe without adult supervision. A reasonable adjustment might be to provide free home to school transport for the child in question.

## 8 Children excluded from school

Children admitted to another establishment following a permanent exclusion will not receive travel assistance other than when qualifying under normal criteria.

## 9 In year changes

A change in circumstances in year can result in a change in eligibility. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A change in the child's place of residence



- A change of school.
- A change in financial circumstances that means parents no longer qualify under low income.
- An error in the calculation of distances
- Change to the statutory walking distance.
- Change of circumstances in respect of the safety of the route

Where the change in circumstances removes eligibility the removal of travel assistance, this will take effect from the beginning of the following academic year

## 10 Appeals against refusal of travel assistance

There is a right of appeal if you are refused travel assistance. A parent/carer or student who wishes to appeal against a decision may do so via the councils' agreed appeals procedures. This is in line the statutory guidance two stage process.

- Stage One – a review of your case by a Senior Officer
- Stage Two – a review of your case by the Travel Support Appeal Panel.

The appeal panel is an independent panel comprising of senior officers not involved in the original decision or stage one review.

The appeals form and guidance can be obtained from

[liverpool.gov.uk/schooltravelpass](https://liverpool.gov.uk/schooltravelpass)

## 11 Applications for travel assistance

Apply online at [liverpool.gov.uk/schooltravelpass](https://liverpool.gov.uk/schooltravelpass)

## 12 Implementation timing

All aspects of this policy will be implemented from 1 September 2025 for all new applicants for travel support.

For those pupils already in receipt of some form of travel support on this date, that support will continue, normally until the next point of transition in their school career or any change in circumstances.

## 13 Types of transport provided

If you are successful for travel assistance, your child/young person will be provided with a Merseytravel SOLO ticket for use on public bus services. If this involves more than one mode of transport (bus and train) a TRIO ticket may be issued, and a charge may apply.

For pupils with Special Educational Needs, disability or mobility problems, a travel pass will only be provided if the pupil is not eligible for a Merseytravel Disabled Person's Travel Pass.

If the council considers that a travel pass is inappropriate for a child, transport will be provided by minibus or other vehicle contracted by the council.

These will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those young people travelling on them. Each route will be planned based on school start and finish times and the shortest possible route for all young people travelling on a particular vehicle.

Where the council determines that a child is entitled to transport, but there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this (e.g., if there is a health and safety risk and the parent can offer specialist support which would otherwise not be available), parents may make their own home to school travel arrangements for their child. In these circumstances, parents can apply for a personal transport budget.

If a pupil is awarded assistance with school transport but wishes to use a dedicated school bus where public transport is not available, it may be possible for the parent to be reimbursed the cost of travel subject to a maximum limit equivalent to the cost of a Merseytravel Solo ticket.

## 14 Terms and conditions

The council may withdraw transport support from any pupil whose behaviour during the journey to and from school is not of an acceptable standard.

Where, for any reason, transport support is approved in error, the council reserves the right to withdraw that provision at any time.

Parents/ carers are responsible for notifying the council if there is a change of address or a change of school as this may affect entitlement to free transport. Eligibility would need to be reassessed taking into account the new circumstances.

Pupils who are entitled to free travel support based on the low-income criterion, and whose family's financial circumstances change mid-year, will continue to receive a bus pass until the end of the academic year.

Theft of a bus pass must be reported to the police, where appropriate, by the parent or carer. The council reserves the right to request further information regarding the loss or theft of a bus pass from other bodies, such as Merseytravel or the police.

In cases where a duplicate bus pass is required, an administration charge of £10 will be levied.

For children attending school daily, transport will be provided at the start of the school day and the end of the school day. In the event the child must leave school early or start school later, parents must make alternative arrangements to ensure their child's attendance at school.

For children attending a residential school on a weekly basis i.e., coming home at weekends, transport will be provided at the start of the school week and the end of the school week.