

Call: 01908 252526
Reply to: School Travel Support
Email: STS@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Alternative/SEN Panel Terms of Reference

Purpose

The council has a clear policy about which children are eligible for support with School Travel. If policy determines that a particular request for support with school travel cannot be granted under the policy, then parents/carers may make an application to ask for the case to be heard by the Alternative/SEN Panel, (hereafter 'the Panel'). There are three reasons why this might happen:

1. The parent/carer believes that the policy has been incorrectly applied
2. The parent/carer believes that the policy has been correctly applied, but their child's needs are exceptional and merit consideration outside of normal policy
3. Home to school travel has been agreed under policy, but the parent/carer believes that the way it is being provided is inappropriate for their child's needs

Membership and Meeting Schedule

The Panel is chaired by the Senior Officer from Access to Education, Employment and Training and attended by officers from Access to Education, Employment and Training (including School Travel Support), Finance and Special Educational Needs.

Meetings are held on a fortnightly basis.

Criteria applied by the Panel

All decisions of the Panel will be made based on evidence produced by the parent/carer or local authority representative acting on behalf of the parent/carer. A parent/carer can provide input from an external third party, but this must be submitted in writing along with the application. For example, if health issues are cited as a factor, then the parent/carer should submit written medical evidence from health practitioners with their application.

At the Panel, the following questions will be asked:

1. Has the policy been correctly applied?
2. If the policy has been correctly applied is the support being offered, or the fact that no support is being offered, appropriate for the child and family's needs?
3. If not, what is the cheapest way in which the child and family's needs can be appropriately met?

All relevant information and evidence relating to each case must be submitted at the time an Alternative/SEN application is made. If insufficient information is provided, the case will be postponed until a future Panel meeting.

Notification of panel decisions

Decisions reached by the Panel will be notified to parents/carers by email within 5 working days (may take longer to arrive if no email address is provided) of the Panel meeting and a clear reason will be given about the rationale for the decision, alternatively applicants can call 01908 252526 to be updated of the panel outcome.

If support for travel is agreed or altered, it can then take the School Travel Support Team approximately 15 working days from the date of the Panel's decision to put the operational arrangement into place.

Key dates – Subject to change if required

| Application deadline | Alternative/SEN Panel date | Outcome emailed by |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 08 December 2023 | 18 December 2023 | 22 December |
| 05 January 2024 | 15 January 2024 | 19 January 2024 |
| 19 January 2024 | 29 January 2024 | 02 February 2024 |
| 02 February 2024 | 12 February 2024 | 16 February 2024 |
| 16 February 2024 | 26 February 2024 | 01 March 2024 |
| 01 March 2024 | 11 March 2024 | 15 March 2024 |
| 15 March 2024 | 25 March 2024 | 02 April 2024 |
| 29 March 2024 | 08 April 2024 | 12 April 2024 |

Emergency Arrangements

In exceptional circumstances there may be situations where cases need to be reviewed outside of the above Alternative/SEN panel timeframes for safeguarding purposes. In such situations a request will need to be made by the Head of Service in writing via email to the Chair of the panel. It is at the Chairs discretion whether it is appropriate to deviate from the deadlines stated above and for the case to be seen at the next Alternative/SEN panel regardless of the date of the application made.

Dissatisfaction with panel decision

The outcome of the panel is final.

A new application will only be accepted if key information was omitted from the original application; any further application will need to provide new and detailed information regarding family's circumstances/needs.

Only in the case where you believe that policy or procedure outlined in this document have not been followed can you consider making a complaint. This option is available on the council's website.

If you feel that the support offered does not meet need or is unsuitable then you can appeal this decision within 20 working days by submitting a written request for the decision

to be reviewed. Once this is received an independent panel will have up to 40 working days to review and reach a decision.

How to Submit an Alternative/SEN Application

Full information about how to make an application can be found at:

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-parents/home-to-school-transport