

School Travel Support Transport Policy.

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Version 1

School Travel Support Transport Policy

Parents and carers have a legal duty and a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend. In certain circumstances based on statutory guidance the Council has a duty to provide school travel support (STS) and this document sets out these circumstances.

Parents are encouraged to support their children to walk or cycle when the route is safe. There are health benefits for children who walk or cycle to school, but local communities also benefit through improved road safety, reduced traffic congestion and associated noise and air pollution. One of our service aims is to promote the independence of our children wherever possible.

For those children who do qualify for school travel support, the council reserves the right to decide on the type of transport support that is offered.

The categories of eligible children who are entitled to transport support are defined below. These apply to children of compulsory school age (5-16).

Suitable School

A suitable school for School Travel purposes is the nearest school.

Qualifying schools are:

- 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.

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.

Statutory Walking Distance

School travel support, support can be provided for a child of statutory school age on distance grounds if he or she attends their nearest suitable school.

- Beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8); or
- Beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)

The shortest appropriate route between a school and a home address is measured by the Council using a computerised geographical information system. Each house and school has a unique reference, as do all the redways and paths, which are coded at any point or junction such as at an underpass or where it crosses with another path. This enables the programme to calculate the distance from home to school.

Child A is six years old and attends their nearest suitable school. It is 2.3 miles from their home. Child A is eligible for free travel to school.

Child B is seven years old and attends a primary school that is 2.6 miles from their home. There is another suitable primary school 1.2 miles from their home which has places available. Child B is not eligible for free travel to school, as they are not attending their nearest suitable school.

Child C is eleven years old and attends their nearest suitable school. It is 2.6 miles from their home. Child C is not eligible for free travel to school.

If the transport support offered is in the form of a taxi or minibus provision from a home address the provider will only pick up from one primary address. This is usually the home address of the parent/s that receives the child benefit for the child/ren receiving school transport support. In exceptional circumstances (such as Respite Care) an alternative address may be considered however this will need to be agreed in advance by the Local Authority.

Special educational needs, disability or mobility difficulties

If a child's special educational needs, disability or mobility problems mean that they could not be reasonably expected to walk to school then the Council will assess each child on an individual basis to identify the most appropriate transport option.

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
- they could not reasonably be expected to walk there because of their special educational needs, disability, or mobility problem, even if they were accompanied by their parent.

To be eligible on these grounds, a child does not need to:

- have an Education Health and Care plan (EHC plan); or
- have travel to school specified in their EHC plan if they have one; or
- attend a special school; or

- live beyond the statutory walking distance.

Not every child with an EHC plan or who attends a special school will be eligible for free travel to school.

Where a parent would prefer their child to attend a school that is further away from their home than the nearest school that would be able to meet their needs, the local authority should consider whether arranging travel to the preferred school would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources.

If the local authority determines that providing travel to the parent's preferred school would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources, the local authority may:

- name a different school that would be appropriate for the child's needs (this may be the nearer school), or
- name the parent's preferred school on the condition that the parent arranges the travel or provides some or all of the cost of the travel, or
- name the parent's preferred school on the condition that they arrange the travel (or provide some or all of the cost) and name a different school that would be appropriate for the child's needs and to which the authority would provide transport.

Local authorities will need to assess eligibility on the grounds of special educational needs, disability or mobility problems on a case-by-case basis. The assessment should take account of the child's physical ability to walk to school and any health and safety issues related to their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems. It may take account of whether they would be able to walk to school if they were accompanied. Information that local authorities may take into account when assessing a child's eligibility may include (but need not be restricted to) the following, where it illustrates why the child may not be able to walk to school:

- information provided by the parent;
- information provided by any professionals involved in the child's care, for example, an educational psychologist or hospital consultant;
- information provided by the child's school;
- any relevant information in the child's EHC plan if they have one;
- any relevant information in their individual healthcare plan if they have one.

It is likely local authorities will need to ask parents to provide some or all the information they will need to make their decision.

Unsafe route eligibility

The Council will make transport arrangements for children who cannot be reasonably expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.

Child D is fourteen years old and has a disability that requires them to use crutches to walk. They need to take their time to ensure they are balanced. They attend their nearest suitable school. It is 1 mile from their home. The local authority decides that they could not reasonably be expected to walk to school. Child D is eligible for free travel to school.

Child E is eleven years old and has been diagnosed with a long-term medical condition which causes them to take a long time to recover after strenuous physical activity. They attend their nearest suitable school which is a short walk from their home. The parent applies for free travel to school on the basis that the child needs to recover for a long time after any strenuous activity. Based on the information available to them, the local authority decides that Child E would not need to recover for a long time after the short walk to their school. Child E is not eligible for free travel to school.

The Council uses a computerised geographical information system to assess the safety of routes. This will include, for example, any sections that use footpaths or bridleways, as well as sections that use roads.

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.

Child F is twelve years old. They attend their nearest suitable school. It is 2 miles from their home. The only walking route to this school is along a busy road with no footpaths or stepping off points. The local authority carries out an assessment of the route and decides it would not be possible for a child to walk it in reasonable safety, even if they were accompanied by their parent. Child F is eligible for free travel to school.

Extended rights eligibility

The Council will support children with transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit and if:

- The nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11)
- The school is between 2 and 6 miles away (if aged 11-16 and there are not 3 or more suitable nearer schools)
- The school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16)

Child G is eleven years old and eligible for free school meals. Their nearest suitable school is 2.5 miles from their home. Their second nearest suitable school is 3 miles away. Their third nearest is 5 miles away. Child G would be eligible for free travel to any of these schools.

Child H is eleven years old and eligible for free school meals. Their three nearest schools are School X, School Y and School Z. School X is 1.5 miles from their home, School Y is 2.2 miles from their home, and School Z is 5.5 miles from their home. Child H would be eligible for free travel to School Y or School Z, but not to School X.

Child I is thirteen years old and is eligible for free school meals. Their parents are Sikh and wish them to be educated in a school with a religious character. They attend a designated Sikh school that is 8 miles from their home. There are other schools which are nearer to their home, but none of these is a Sikh school. Child I is eligible for free travel to the Sikh school.

Should family circumstances and the entitlement come to an end then transport support will be withdrawn at the end of the academic year.

Transport options

The council will consider a range of options for transport based on the application form submitted and relevant information gathered from professional services. Where possible the Council will encourage and support families and individuals to remain/become as independent as possible.

If transport is agreed that uses third parties such as taxi or minibus, where possible the Council will add new applicants to existing transport options as the first option rather than procure a new contract.

Application for School Travel Support

To apply for school travel support, under the eligibility criteria set out in this policy parents and carers should complete the [Application form for children eligible for School Travel Support](#)

Alternative/SEN Application

If following the outcome of an STS application, a parent or carer is dissatisfied, an Alternative/SEN application can be made for the following reasons:

- A. The parent/carer believes that this policy has been incorrectly applied

- B. The parent/carer believes that the policy has been correctly applied, but their child/family's needs are exceptional and merit consideration outside of normal policy
- C. Travel assistance has been agreed under policy, but the parent/carer believes that the manner in which it is being provided is inappropriate for their child's needs

All decisions of the application are made by a senior officer within the school travel support team on the basis of information produced by the parent or carer. The Officer will decide if the case is exceptional and select the form of transport support offered.

There are a number of transport support options that will be considered:

Bus pass - Child and adult pass to use public transport. This is the default offer.

Suitable for journeys within statutory travel times, and for children that can travel of public transport

MK Connect rider account - Account to use MK Connect for school travel. Option for accompanying adult if required.

Door to door option available where required. Currently being trialled with Post 16 SEN passengers

Mileage payments – Suitable for eligible families with a vehicle and ability to get the child to school.

Termly payment cover anticipated mileage costs at 45p per mile.

Payments are made in August for September, in December for January and in March/April for the rest of the academic year.

Family Led Travel Budget – Suitable for eligible families to make their own arrangements to suit the needs of the family / child (e.g., childcare arrangements, arrange own transport - taxi / friends & family). The usage of the FLTB will be checked throughout the academic year.

Termly payment cover anticipated FLTB costs at £1 per mile

Payments are made in August for September, in December for January and in March/April for the rest of the academic year

Commissioned Shared Transport - Transport is commissioned and managed directly by MKCC.

The vehicle will be shared with other children

Commissioned 1:1 transport - Transport is commissioned and managed directly by MKCC

The vehicle is not shared by other children

To apply for school travel support, on exceptional grounds then parents and carers should complete the [Application form – Alternative/SEN](#)

Direct Payment Cards

For Families who are entitled to School Travel Support and have been awarded Mileage or a Family Led Travel Budget (FLTB), payments will be made onto a direct payment card that is issued directly to you.

As a Local Authority we need to be clear of the procedure to recover surplus amounts as a result of unspent direct payments made by the Local Authority to parents/carers. This is to ensure families receive the agreed amount of payment to ensure their children are attending school

This is specific information relating to the School Travel Support service and seeks to ensure direct payments are monitored and accumulated surpluses are incorporated into the next payment if remaining eligible or recovered by putting a stop on the direct payment card.

For example – Funds would be recovered if a family were no longer eligible for School Travel Support. This would be recovered immediately by putting a stop on the direct payment card.

- Moved address outside of Milton Keynes
- Moved address and no longer meets the eligibility criteria
- Change of School/College Placement and no longer eligible

Funds could also be adjusted due to changes in circumstances but remain eligible under the School Travel Support eligibility criteria.

- Address change
- School/College change

Payments could be adjusted up to 3 times in an academic year, this would be August, December and March/April.

If families have a change and remain eligible the adjustment would show in the following payment to the family.

Please see our Direct Card Payment FAQs -

Distatisfied with Alternative/SEN decision outcome

Where an Alternative/SEN application has been heard and the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome a further application can be submitted in the following circumstances:

- Parent/carer omitted significant information from application
- Family circumstances have changed

This information will be reviewed by a multi-disciplinary panel who were not involved in the original decision making process, this is a Stage 2 Appeal.

The Panel decision is final and a complaint can only be made where policy has been incorrectly applied. Details for making a complaint are available on [our website](#).

More information on the Alternative/SEN process can be found on [the School Travel Support webpage](#)

Children living in temporary accommodation

For families placed in temporary accommodation school travel support, is only applicable where full duty to re-house is confirmed and it is established that the housing placement is

anticipated from the date moved in, for up to 12 weeks. Families who are anticipated to be placed in temporary accommodation for more than one school term should make an application for a more local school place.

Please be aware that the school travel support, team is unable to progress an application for school transport support until this information has been verified by the Housing team. If you wish to check the status of your housing application ahead of making a school travel support, application please email homeless.enquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk or call 01908 253481.

Privilege fare scheme

For children not entitled to free transport support the Council may still be able to offer transport under the privilege fare scheme for which a charge is made. Arrangements made in this way depend on there being surplus places available on an existing service. These places can be withdrawn if they are needed for another child entitled to free home to school transport. Normally a notice period is given. Please note the Privilege fare scheme is only applicable to mainstream schools.

To enquire about seat availability under the privilege fare scheme, pricing and how to apply, parents and carers should contact the School Travel Support Team (details at the end of this document).

Family and other exceptional circumstances

The Council may provide school travel support, where family/individual circumstances mean parents or carers are unable to take their child to school.

These circumstances may include:

- When a parent or carer is unable to walk their child to school or use public transport because of a long-term illness or medical condition, supporting information would need to be provided.
- In most cases, local authorities will not need to consider whether a parent would be able to accompany their child, the local authority will make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case.
- The circumstances that a local authority 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.
- Reasons such as the parent's working pattern or the fact they have children attending more than one school, on their own, will not normally be considered good reasons for a parent being unable to accompany their child. These apply to many parents and, in most circumstances, it is reasonable to expect the parent to

make suitable arrangements to fulfil their various responsibilities (for example, their responsibilities as an employee and as a parent.)

To apply for school travel support, on these grounds then parents and carers should complete the Application form – Alternative/SEN.

More information on travel to school for eligible children

Local authorities must make arrangements to enable a child to travel to school for the beginning of the school day, and to return home at the end of the school day. They are not required to make arrangements:

- for children to travel between institutions during the school day;
- to enable children to attend extra-curricular activities and other commitments outside school hours; or
- to enable children to get to and from before and after school childcare, whether formal (for example, a childminder) or informal (for example, a grandparent)

Where particular classes, year groups or pupils have a start or finish time that is different from most pupils at the school, it will not normally be possible for the local authority to make separate travel arrangements. Schools may need to make arrangements to accommodate these pupils. There may be a small number of circumstances in which local authorities consider it appropriate to arrange transport at an alternative time of day, for example if a child has a medical condition which means they are not well enough to attend school for the whole day.

As a general guide, the maximum journey time for a child of primary school age should be 45 minutes each way, and 75 minutes each way for a child of secondary school age, including any time taken to walk to a pick-up point, but there will be circumstances in which this is not possible, for example in rural areas where children live in remote locations, where a child needs to travel a long way to the school named in their EHC plan, or when journey times are extended by traffic delays. Wherever possible, a child should not be expected to make several changes on public transport.

It may not always be necessary to provide children with 'door to door' transport in order to meet their needs. Many will be able to walk to a suitable pick-up point to be collected, provided they would be able to do so in reasonable safety, accompanied by their parent if necessary. Some children's needs will mean they need to be collected from their home. Local authorities should not have a policy that they never provide door to door transport and should make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Post 16 transport

As a general rule the Council does not provide free transport support for Post 16 students who live in Milton Keynes attending school sixth forms, sixth form colleges and colleges of further education. However, Milton Keynes Council funds a concessionary fare scheme which enables young people up to 19 to travel on public transport at a reduced rate. For more information on all these services please call the Milton Keynes Council Bus Card Section on 01908 252558.

Please see our Post-16 policy for more specific information on Post-16 transport support.

Travel review and termination

When Milton Keynes Council agrees to put transport support in place, an end date will also be issued. This is to enable family and student needs to be reassessed at regular intervals. It is a parent or carers responsibility to ensure that if transport support is still required past this end date that a new transport application is made. Additionally, if there is a change in circumstance before the transport end date it is the parent/carers' responsibility to advise the Council. Any of the following changes will require a new application to be submitted:

- Change of address
- Change of location where student is studying
- Student or family needs change in way which mean that current arrangements are no longer suitable

The Council undertakes regular reviews of students receiving support with travel, if at any point it is identified a change of circumstances has occurred without notification, travel arrangements will be terminated. The Council regularly reviews transport support offered to ensure that we are maximising the use of resources and providing best value for tax payer's money. This may mean that throughout the course of a child's eligibility there are changes made to the transport support offered. If changes are to be made we aim to do this with as much notice given as possible.

Enquiries

School Travel Support,
Telephone (01908) 252526

Email: STS@milton-keynes.gov.uk

If you wish to make a comment, compliment or complaint about the council please complete the online form which can be found at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

