



Milton Keynes
City Council

School Travel Support Transport Policy.

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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. This also includes a safe route for a wheelchair. 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 children who qualify for School Travel Support, Milton Keynes City Council will determine the most appropriate and cost-effective travel arrangement taking account of the child's needs, journey requirements, safeguarding considerations and the efficient use of public resources. Eligibility for travel assistance does not imply entitlement to a particular mode of transport.

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

Policy Principles

The Council will seek to:

- Promote regular school attendance.
- Enable eligible children to access education safely.
- Encourage independent travel wherever appropriate.
- Make efficient use of public resources.
- Ensure decisions are fair, transparent and evidence based.
- Support sustainable methods of travel where safe and appropriate.
- Take account of the individual needs of children and families when making decisions.

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 and young people with an EHC Plan, 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 or travel in a wheelchair 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 School Travel Support.

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 eligible through Low-Income criteria or in receipt of Free School Meals and if:

- The nearest suitable school is more than 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 is one of their 3 nearest suitable schools)
- The school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest suitable 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.

Safeguarding

Milton Keynes City Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people receiving school travel support travel safely.

Appropriate risk assessments may be completed where required and reviewed regularly.

All contracted transport providers must comply with relevant safeguarding requirements, licensing requirements and applicable transport legislation.

Where a child's medical, behavioural or mobility needs require specific arrangements, these will be considered as part of the assessment and review process.

Behaviour

Children and young people are expected to behave in a safe and respectful manner while travelling to and from school using transport arranged by the Council.

Where serious behavioural concerns arise, the Council may review the transport arrangements in consultation with parents, carers, schools and transport providers.

Any changes to transport arrangements will continue to take account of the Council's statutory responsibilities and the individual needs of the child.

Further information is provided below in the Code of Conduct.

[Code of Conduct Mainstream Transport](#)

[Code of Conduct for SEND Transport](#)

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.

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

Bus pass – Child pass (adult pass if child under 8 years) to use on public transport or commissioned services for the rural areas.

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

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

Termly payment cover anticipated mileage costs at 55p per mile.

Mileage payments are provided as a contribution towards the overall cost of using a private vehicle for school transport. This may include fuel, servicing, repairs, maintenance, tyres, insurance, MOT, vehicle tax and other associated running costs. Separate claims for these expenses will not be reimbursed in addition to the agreed mileage payment.

The usage of the Mileage will be checked throughout the academic year.

Payments are usually made:

- in **August** for the **Autumn Term** (starting in September);
- in **December** for the **Spring Term** (starting in January); and
- in **March or April** for the **Summer Term**

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 usually made:

- in **August** for the **Autumn Term** (starting in September);
- in **December** for the **Spring Term** (starting in January); and
- in **March or April** for the **Summer Term**

Commissioned Shared Transport - Transport arranged and managed directly by Milton Keynes City Council. This may be provided on either a shared or individual basis depending upon the assessed needs of the child, safeguarding considerations, journey planning and the efficient use of resources.

Which Application should I Make?

School Travel Support (STS) Application (Bus Pass)

[Application form for children eligible for School Travel Support](#)

Parents and carers should complete a School Travel Support (STS) application where they believe their child meets the eligibility criteria set out in this policy, including statutory walking distance, low-income eligibility, or unsafe walking route criteria.

Alternative/SEN Transport Application – [Application form – Alternative/SEN](#)

Parents and carers should complete an Alternative/SEN Transport Application where:

- Their child does not qualify for travel assistance under the standard eligibility criteria, but they believe their child's special educational needs, disability, medical condition, mobility difficulties, or family circumstances are exceptional and require individual consideration.

- They believe their child's needs mean that standard transport arrangements would not be suitable.
- Travel assistance has been refused under the standard criteria, but they wish the Council to consider exceptional circumstances.
- Travel assistance has been approved, but they believe the type of transport offered does not appropriately meet their child's needs.

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 Educational 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.

- Attendance
- Address change
- Educational Placement change

Payments could be adjusted up to 3 times in an academic year.

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 - [Direct Payment Card FAQ's](#)

Dissatisfied with Alternative/SEN decision outcome

Where an Alternative/SEN application has been to Stage one Panel and the parent/carer is not satisfied with the decision, a further application can be submitted in the following circumstances:

- new or additional information and evidence is available that was not previously considered; or
- there has been a significant change in the child's or family's circumstances since the original decision was made.
- Or if the above does not apply parent can request a Stage two Appeal, all information will be reviewed by a multi-disciplinary panel who were not involved in the original decision-making process.

Once the Council's appeals process has been exhausted, complaints regarding maladministration or failure to follow policy may be made through the Council's complaints procedure on [our website](#) or through the Local Government Ombudsman.

Children living in temporary accommodation

Where a family is placed in temporary accommodation, school travel support may be provided for up to 12 weeks where the Council has accepted a full housing duty. If the placement is expected to last longer than 12 weeks, parents and carers will normally be expected to apply for a place at a suitable school closer to the temporary accommodation. Travel support beyond 12 weeks will only be considered where exceptional circumstances apply. Parents and carers must apply with supporting evidence.

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 and young people not entitled to school travel 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 an eligible child who is entitled to school travel support. Normally a notice period is given. Please note that 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 (contact 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, evidence would need to be provided. This would normally be in the form of a letter or report from a consultant, specialist or other relevant healthcare professional.
- In most cases, decisions will be based on the individual circumstances of the child. Where relevant, the Council may consider whether it is reasonable to expect a parent or carer to accompany their child to school.
- 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 a parent's working arrangements, childcare commitments, or the fact that children attend more than one educational setting will not normally, on their own, be considered sufficient reasons for a parent or carer being unable to accompany their child to school. These circumstances apply to many families and, in most cases, it is reasonable to expect parents or carers to make suitable arrangements to meet their responsibilities, both as a parent and, where applicable, as an employee.

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.

The Council seek to ensure that journey times are reasonable and suitable for the age and needs of the child.

As a general guide, journey times should not normally exceed:

- 45 minutes each way for primary age pupils
- 75 minutes each way for secondary age pupils

These times include any time taken to walk to a collection point associated with the journey.

There may be exceptional circumstances where longer journey times are unavoidable, including where a child attends a specialist placement, lives in a rural location or where traffic conditions significantly affect travel times.

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

Milton Keynes City Council does not normally provide free travel support for young people aged 16 to 18 attending school sixth forms, sixth form colleges or further education colleges. However, the Council operates a concessionary fare scheme which enables eligible young people up to the age of 19 to access discounted public transport - [All in One MK Card](#)

For more information on all these services please call the Milton Keynes Council Bus Card Section on 01908 252558.

For details of eligibility and available Post-16 transport support, please refer to the Council's Post-16 Transport Policy -

[MKCC School Travel Support Post 16 Policy May 2026](#)

Review of Travel Support

When the Council agrees travel support, an end date will be provided. This allows eligibility and transport arrangements to be reviewed periodically.

If travel support is required beyond the end date, it is the responsibility of the parent or carer to submit a new application.

Parents and carers must also inform the Council of any change in circumstances before the end date. A new application will be required if there is:

- a change of address;
- a change in the school or educational setting attended; or
- a change in the child's or family's circumstances that affects the suitability of the current transport arrangement.

The Council regularly reviews travel support arrangements. If a change in circumstances is identified that has not been reported, travel support may be withdrawn.

The Council also reviews transport arrangements to ensure resources are used effectively and provide value for money. As a result, the type of travel support provided may change during a child's period of eligibility. Where possible, reasonable notice will be given of any changes

Enquiries

School Travel Support,
Telephone (01908) 253338