

Home to School Transport Policy 2026/2027

Frequently Asked Questions

BACKGROUND

We know getting your child to school safely and reliably is important. We hope this guide will provide more clarity by explaining what help may be available and how decisions are made.

What is Home to School Transport?

Home to School Transport refers to the different ways of supporting children and young people living in Halton, to travel to and from education settings.

This can take many forms, depending on several factors, including age, need and distance to travel.

Legislation sets out when Home to School Transport must be offered

What is a Home to School Transport Policy?

Local Authorities are required to publish a Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) each year, which sets out the eligibility criteria and circumstances against which decisions to offer support will be made.

In addition, they must also prepare and publish an annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement, that outlines the arrangements the authority considers necessary to facilitate access to education or training for students of sixth form age.

In recent years, the cost of providing Home to School Transport has increased significantly because of growing demand and rising costs. This places considerable pressure on already constrained Council budgets – as a consequence, the Council's policy sets out how it will meet its legal duties and ensure:

- Allocation of limited resources to support those children and young people with the greatest needs
- Fairness and consistency
- Support is provided to young people to help them achieve greater independence where possible

SECTION ONE: CHILDREN OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE (5-16 YEARS OLD)

ELIGIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child/children get to and from school at the appropriate time each day.

When choosing a school, it's important to think about how your child will travel there.

If you choose a school that is not your nearest suitable school, the Council will not usually provide free travel just because of that choice.

Work commitments or caring responsibilities, on their own, do not normally make a child eligible for travel assistance.

Is my child automatically entitled to travel assistance because they have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)?

Not always. We understand that many children and young people with SEND need extra support, but eligibility is not automatic.

Each application is looked at individually. We consider your child's needs, their ability to travel safely (with or without support), and your family's circumstances.

Many families of children with SEND make their own travel arrangements without Council support.

Does a child need an EHCP to qualify?

No. A child or young person may be eligible even without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Who is 'eligible' to receive free travel assistance?

By Law, Councils must provide free travel assistance for **eligible** children of compulsory school age (5–16), who attend their **nearest suitable school and** who meet one of the four main eligibility criteria for free travel assistance

A **suitable school** for the purpose of applying the policy is a 'qualifying school' that is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.

For children with special educational needs, an independent school is also a qualifying school, if it is the only school named in their EHCP. When more than one school is named in the EHCP, the school nearest to the home address will be the qualifying school.

When deciding on eligibility for assistance with transport, the measurement from home to school will be taken from the boundary of the home to the nearest school entrance gate. As well as the nearest available walked route (that is suitable).

Eligibility criteria

1 Statutory walking distances eligibility

Free travel assistance will be offered for pupils of compulsory school age (aged 5-16) if their nearest qualifying school is:

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

2 Extended right eligibility

Under recent Government guidance free travel assistance will be offered, where pupils meet the targeted free meals criteria if:

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

The guidance highlights that local authorities must check eligibility for applications – if you are unsure you meet the criteria, please contact us and we can confirm this with you.

3 Unsafe route eligibility

To make travel arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school or educational establishment because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.

4 Special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility

Some children may qualify because they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school due to:

- Mobility difficulties
- A disability
- Health and safety issues linked to their SEND

In these circumstances, the Council is required to carry out an individual assessment to understand your child's needs.

We may consider whether your child could walk to school if accompanied by a suitable adult.

Every decision is based on the child's individual circumstances.

When are you not eligible?

You are not usually deemed eligible for home to school travel support when:

- Your child would be able to walk to school in reasonable safety if they were accompanied (the general expectation is that you will accompany them, or make other suitable arrangements)
- Your work commitments or caring responsibilities mean you are unable to accompany your child yourself
- You choose a school other than the one classed as the nearest qualifying school
- Your application is for travel to and from more than one address, for example if parents don't live together; it is usual for transport to be arranged to and from a child's main place of residence
- Your application is for travel support to alternative provision, work experience or work placements. In these circumstances, your child's school or college would normally arrange travel support

My older children are eligible, does that mean that my younger children may also be eligible

Not necessarily. It may be that your older child was assessed under the former policy. The current policy is to be adopted from September 2026 following public consultation and will be applied from that date to new applications or where there is requirement to reassess a child's eligibility to travel.

This means in some families there will be differences in eligibility.

My child is currently receiving transport support; will this remain in place until they are 16?

Not necessarily. As part of your annual review, a discussion will take place around any transport support that is in place. This will cover any factors, including changes in circumstance and age, that might affect eligibility criteria (see eligibility criteria above).

The review will also consider whether a different type of support may be appropriate, particularly as your child gets older and there is an opportunity to support greater independence.

When and where will my child be picked up and dropped off?

We will assist with travel to or from a school or education setting either at:

- The start and end of their school day

We will not offer school travel support to and from after school events, for example sports events or breakfast clubs.

Where appropriate and reasonable, parents or carers may be expected to take their child to and/or from a pick-up or drop-off point. These points will be within one mile of the child's home address.

Parents or carers are responsible for the safety of their child until they board and after they exit the vehicle.

What if I want to take my own child to school

Expenses may be paid if you meet the eligibility criteria but wish to use your own transport to take your children to and from school. If you wish to make your own arrangements, you may qualify for a Personal Travel Budget to support with the costs of this.

Please see below for more information about Personal Travel Budgets

SECTION TWO: CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL OR NURSERY BEFORE THEY TURN FIVE

By law, Council's must provide free transport assistance to eligible children from the term following the child's fifth birthday.

In Halton, we are committed to providing support as early as possible to help children to attend school and nursery where possible.

Therefore, the Council has taken a decision to go beyond our legal requirement and extend the Home to School Transport Policy to include *all* eligible children under 5.

The eligibility criteria will be the same criteria for statutory school age children (see above).

SECTION THREE: CHILDREN AGED 16 to 19 YEARS OLD ATTENDING COLLEGE OR SIXTH FORM

Support for young people aged 16–19 with SEND is different and is provided on a discretionary basis.

Travel assistance *may* be available if the young person attends their nearest suitable college or sixth form and:

- The distance is over 3 miles, or
- They cannot reasonably walk (even if accompanied) because of SEND, disability, or mobility needs, or
- The route is unsafe, or
- They cannot use public transport due to their needs

Support is usually offered as:

- A bus pass (or the equivalent cost), or
- A Personal Travel Budget (PTB), which gives families flexibility to make their own arrangements

Surplus places on a multi pick-up vehicle

In exceptional circumstances, where there are surplus places on a multi pick-up vehicle, it may be possible for parent/carers to purchase a seat for a child/young person with SEND who has not met the eligibility criteria.

A notice period, where possible, would be given, if the surplus place is no longer available. The needs for eligible passengers also take priority.

There is a charge for this service:

- £750 per pupil
- £375 for low-income families

16 to 19 bursary fund

The 16 to 19 bursary fund is a central government scheme set up to help 16 to 19 year-olds continue in education, where they might otherwise struggle for financial reasons.

It is made up of two parts: bursaries of up to £1,200 a year to the most vulnerable young people; and a discretionary fund for schools, colleges, academies, training providers (providers) to distribute to other students who face genuine barriers to participation, which could include transport costs.

The 16 to 19 bursary fund guide for providers, which sets out arrangements for the scheme, is available to download from the government's education [website](#)

SECTION FOUR: APPEALING A DECISION

What happens if my application is unsuccessful?

If your application is declined, you have the option to request a review, and subsequently an appeal. If your appeal is upheld, we will process your application immediately.

If your review is declined, you have the option of a second stage appeal where you will be able to attend an online/in-person meeting. We will then make a final decision.

At each stage you may be asked to provide further evidence/information for our consideration. If you do not have anything to add, don't worry this meeting provides the opportunity for you to explain your situation in more detail and for the authority to double-check the decision that was made is correct.

How soon will you hear my appeal?

Stage 1 reviews are heard within 20 working days of the review request being submitted. If you are not satisfied with the decision, you can request a stage 2 appeal.

Stage 2 appeals are heard within 40 working days of the appeal being submitted.

We will prioritise your appeal by arranging it as soon as possible as we recognise the importance of doing so.

SECTION FIVE: PERSONAL TRAVEL BUDGETS

What is a personal travel budget?

The Council can provide funding directly to parents and carers giving them the freedom to make their own decisions and arrangements about how their child will get to/from school each day.

In Halton, we have previously called this “Parental Mileage” and for those who qualify, it is offered at 60p per mile for each round trip from home to school.

Some of the ways you may wish to use a personal travel budget include:

- Purchasing a travel pass for you and your child and using public transport
- Walking with them to school
- Cycling with them to school
- Drive them using your own vehicle
- Lease a car if you don't have one
- Arrange for a family member, friend or someone else you trust to take your child to school, or pay someone such as a childminder to do it for you
- Arrange shared travel arrangements with other parents, such as shared driving responsibilities, walking buses or joint taxi bookings
- Overcome other barriers that may prevent you accompanying your child to school such as making travel /childcare arrangements for siblings

SECTION SIX: INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

Independent Travel Training helps young people aged 11–19 with disabilities learn to travel independently to school, college, and social activities.

Each student receives a personalised travel plan, and a trainer accompanies them on journeys until they feel confident travelling alone.

The training covers key skills such as:

- Personal safety
- Road safety
- Recognising and avoiding dangerous situations
- Following directions
- Getting on the right bus
- Buying tickets

This support builds confidence and often leads to greater independence in other areas of life, including social activities, training, and future employment.

To request independent travel training please [email the Independent Travel Team](#).

Got more questions?

If any of your questions have not been answered in this document or you are still struggling to understand a certain topic then please contact:

Transport Coordination: 0151 511 7444 transportco-ordination@halton.gov.uk

Special Educational Needs Assessment team: SENAT@halton.gov.uk