

SEN Transport Policy

Policy for the provision of home to school /college transport
for pupils/students up to the end of the academic year
in which the pupil becomes 21 years old



HILLINGDON
LONDON

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1. Introduction

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. However, Hillingdon LEA recognises that travel assistance may be required to help parents and carers fulfil this responsibility.

The following policy outlines travel assistance, which may be provided to educational establishments for those pupils/students living within the Hillingdon area. The allocation of this provision is based on individual need and circumstance, in line with government guidelines.

This section of the Home to School Transport Policy applies to services for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities. These services are in addition to those normally available.

The Government places local education authorities (LEAs) under a duty to deliver the transport service to clear standards of cost and quality by the most economic efficient and effective means available and it is within these guidelines that this policy is written.

2. Eligibility

2.1 In Hillingdon the vast majority of pupils do not receive assistance with transport. For pupils without special educational needs, a suitable and available place can be found in a school close to the pupil's home. In this case it is the responsibility of parents/carers to make sure that their child attends school.

2.2 Most pupils with special educational needs are also able to attend their local mainstream school. The LEA expects the parents and carers of these pupils to make similar arrangements, especially when this is considered to be a factor in developing their child's independence, life and social skills.

2.3 Where pupils with special educational needs attend school out of borough or specialist provision within the borough, parents and carers are encouraged to take responsibility for pupils' home to school travel.

2.4 However, the LEA recognises that there are some pupils who will require assistance with travel. The LEA will consider assistance with travel arrangements to and from school for pupils who fall into at least one or more of the categories listed below.

- Pupils of statutory school age living outside the walking distance from their school, as defined at section 509 and 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) where transport is written into Section 6 of the statement.
- Pupils who have severe physical impairments, severe learning difficulties or severe behavioural problems and do not have a statement of special educational needs.
- Children of pre-school age who have been placed in a nursery by the LEA for the purpose of statutory assessment of SEN.

- Students over the statutory school age attending a college of further education, which is outside the Borough or where special arrangements must be made. (See section 4: Post 16)
 - Pupils looked after, and those that benefit from respite care, where pupils have to move home and may need travel assistance to attend the school they have been attending.
- 2.5 The LEA will take into account the individual circumstances of every case and will consider all the available evidence when exercising its discretion whether to provide assistance with travel.

3. Criteria for assessing entitlement

- 3.1 The LEA has responsibility for determining who is entitled to receive travel assistance. Information for entitlement is obtained as part of the statutory assessment of a pupil's special educational needs as well as eligibility on distance grounds.
- 3.2 The decision to offer assistance with travel to and from school will be made by the Education and Children's Services Transport Manager who will consider the application submitted by the parents and carers, evidence provided in support of the application and any other relevant information available to the authority such as a medical, psychological and social reports. The officer will decide whether or not there is evidence that the child or young person:
- Lives further away than the statutory maximum walking distance to the nearest school with available space;
 - Is unable to access travel arrangements provided in accordance with the local mainstream travel schemes, i.e.:
 - a) Has special educational needs or disabilities such that he or she is unable to walk or use public transport, even if accompanied.
 - b) Has medical needs such that he or she is unable to walk or use public transport without risk or harm, even if accompanied.
 NB Medical reports will always be required and considered.
- 3.3 If the pupil's needs are such that transport is not necessary on account of special educational needs and disabilities, then the following mainstream distance policy will apply:
- The pupil is aged 5-7 and the walking distance to the nearest suitable and available maintained school is over 2 miles.
 - The pupil is over 8 years old and the walking distance to the nearest suitable and available maintained school is over 3 miles.

Parents and carers will usually be advised of the decision in writing within 14 working days.

3.4 Note. The parents of some pupils may be in receipt of the higher rate mobility component (HRMC) of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is the gateway to the Motability Scheme that supplies vehicles, adapted or unadapted, in return for the DLA, usually on contract hire terms. If a pupil is the HRMC recipient and the family obtain a vehicle through the Motability scheme, then the vehicle is expected to be used for the benefit of the disabled pupil. When deciding whether or not to provide travel assistance, the Authority will take account of the Motability car where this has been provided for the benefit of the pupil.

Similarly, the Authority will take account of the HRMC of the DLA where this has been provided for a child but has not been used to obtain a vehicle.

4. Post 16

4.1 Assistance with travel may be available for post 16 pupils taking full time courses at sixth forms, special schools with sixth form arrangements or at a college of further education. This will be in collaboration with other agencies e.g. Learning Skills Council, Social Services up to the end of the academic year in which the students become 21 years old. Normally, assistance will only be provided to the nearest suitable establishment that is able to offer an appropriate course.

4.2 Decisions on whether or not to grant travel assistance will take account of:

- The eligibility criteria outlined above.
- The course of study that the pupil is taking as well as progress made within the study programmes.
- The ability to travel independently

Students will always be encouraged to travel independently where they can. Assistance may be given to support independent travel training (as described in 7.7).

5. Applications

5.1 The parents and carers of pupils who may be entitled to transport assistance are required to complete an application form and return it to the SEN Education Department. The form includes space to identify any particular special or health related needs.

Application forms can be obtained from the SEN officer. When completing the application form medical or other supportive documents may be used to support the request.

6. Parental Preference

- 6.1 Assistance with home to school travel will be provided to the nearest appropriate school with space available for the pupil. On occasions parents will decide to send their child to a school that is further away. The Authority will not normally provide assistance with travel in these circumstances.
- 6.2 For pupils with statements of special educational needs the LEA may name the school of parental choice. In such cases the LEA is not committed to provide transport if it is sure that the pupil's needs can be met appropriately at the local school.

7. Transport Provision, i.e. ways in which travel assistance may be provided

- 7.1 Where it is not possible for the parent/carer to transport the pupil in their own car, the Authority may decide to make its own arrangements for the pupil, depending on individual circumstance. The Authority will decide, based on the information received for the statutory assessment and/or the application form and its obligation to make effective use of resources, how best this may be done.
- 7.2 Once it has been decided that a pupil is entitled to assistance with travel, the Authority will expect the pupil to travel in the most cost effective way. In the first instance public transport should be used. In such cases the pupil will be issued with a travel voucher or bus/train pass.
- 7.3 In situations where this is not appropriate and there is space on transport already arranged to take other pupils to the school or nearby schools, the LEA will expect the pupil to join that transport.
- 7.4 Transport may be provided in a variety of ways using, as appropriate, Council, private and public transport - including minibuses, coaches, minicabs and London taxis.
- 7.5 Transport will be arranged to achieve the most appropriate and efficient means of travel taking full account of the safety, journey times and the needs of individual pupils. Where possible, new pupils will be placed on an existing route. Parents will be notified, by letter, of the Firm or Travel Company used and the pick up and set-down times, as soon as these have been finalised.
- 7.6 In most cases, when transport is provided, pupils will be collected from and returned to their home or an authorised alternative address close to their home, within Hillingdon. Parents/Carers will be responsible for ensuring that pupils are ready for pick up a minimum of five minutes before the pick up time and must be available to receive them promptly to avoid unnecessary delays to drivers and other pupils.

However, where appropriate, pupils who do not have significant difficulties with mobility will be picked up from designated pick up points. Parents will be responsible for their child getting to and from the designated pick-up point, which will be within reasonable walking distance of their home.

7.7 It may be appropriate for the pupil to receive training in independent travel. On these occasions an escort will be provided for an individual pupil or group of pupils to travel to school using public transport services or on foot in accordance with local travel schemes.

7.8 Once transport is agreed it will generally take 14 working days to make the necessary arrangements.

7.9 The Authority may decide, at any time, to vary the provision of travel assistance in order to make efficient use of resources. Parents will be notified in writing and given 14 working days notice of any change.

8. Payment to parents and carers

8.1 The Authority may, in some circumstances, make payments to parents to provide home to school transport using their own vehicles. Payments may be made where:

- The pupil is eligible for assistance with travel in accordance with the criteria set out in 3.2.
- There are no existing travel arrangements that could accommodate the pupil;
- The needs of the pupil are of such complexity that transport provided by parents is the most appropriate travel solution.

Where there is no established transport to the school the Authority will agree the most cost effective arrangements. Where the parent or carer transports the pupil to school in their own car, payment will be made at the Community Transport Association mileage rate currently paid at the following rate:

Within Greater London 35p per mile

Outside Greater London 27p per mile.

(The Authority will require the school to certify the pupil's attendance before paying the mileage allowance.)

9. Escorting Policy

9.1 Where the Authority has decided to provide travel assistance it will, in addition, consider whether it is necessary to provide an escort to supervise the pupil's journey. Escorts will normally be provided:

- If a pupil is under the age of 11.
- If a pupil has particular needs and disabilities that mean that travelling without an escort would cause a risk to health and safety of the pupil or those travelling with them i.e. severe behaviour difficulties, serious and uncontrolled epilepsy.
- If a pupil suffers from a severe or complex medical condition that requires continuous support.

- Where the vehicle carries more than 10 pupils.

Provision of escorts should be subject to regular reviews and may be discontinued where assessment of risk deems it to be unnecessary.

10. Basic quality standards, health and safety

10.1 The Authority will endeavour to ensure that journeys are not stressful, or excessively long.

Travel times depend on the following two important factors:

- The distance between home and school;
- The numbers of pupils travelling on the vehicle and hence the number of stops the vehicle has to make.

In order to make effective use of vehicles, cars may carry up to four pupils, other vehicles may carry up to 16 pupils and coaches will be used as necessary. In most cases where Hillingdon pupils attend Hillingdon schools the journey time will be up to one hour. However, for some pupils depending on traffic conditions the journey time may be longer.

In cases where the LEA has placed pupils at schools out of borough, daily travel may not be possible. In these circumstances the LEA may need to arrange a residential placement and the SEN officer will agree with the parents and carers a reasonable frequency for journeys between home and school. Generally where single journeys are between one and a half and two hours plus, travel will be provided on a weekly basis. Where single journeys are in excess of three hours, travel will be provided at the beginning and end of each half term or any official school closure.

Where children are placed in schools out of borough and journey times are longer e.g. over three hours, comfort breaks will be introduced, if appropriate.

10.2 All operators must comply with the vehicle licensing, insurance and taxation requirements as well as Vehicle Construction and Use Regulations.

10.3 All vehicles must have a means of communication available for use in an emergency.

10.4 All drivers must carry essential information and contact details on the vehicle for use in emergency situations. Emergency procedures are included as part of the driver and escort training. Additionally, procedure cards, with a checklist of emergency procedures and contact information are carried on each vehicle. This information must be up to date and known to both driver and escort.

In the case of breakdown the pupils would normally remain on the vehicle unless it is unsafe to do so.

10.5 All drivers and escorts are required to undergo checks to comply with the Criminal Records Bureau.

10.6 All drivers and escorts must carry photo identity cards.

10.7 All drivers and escorts must undergo minimum standards of training.

- All drivers of appropriate vehicles are required to take Minibus Awareness training (MIDAS) or training to a similar standard and this must be updated every four years. Drivers of larger vehicles will hold PCV licences.
- All Escorts are required to take Passenger Transport Assistance Training (PAT) or a similar accredited course.
- Escorts transporting pupils with severe behavioural difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, severe epilepsy etc, will undergo additional training to acquire skills of conflict resolution, safe handling and the ability to deal with particular medical conditions or disabilities.

11. Assessment and management of risk.

11.1 The Assessing officer will consider the needs of each pupil when deciding appropriate travel assistance. This will take account of:

- medical/health related needs
- mobility
- wheelchair where used (type and anchorage arrangements)
- special seatbelts/chairs
- access
- behaviour
- safe handling and lifting requirements

11.2 A care plan will be produced for each pupil. The details of the care plan will be known to the driver and escort and will be agreed with the parents and carers. The care plan will be kept on the vehicle and updated as appropriate.

11.3 Individual pupil requirements will be reviewed at least annually and repeated whenever there is a change in their needs, in order to assess whether the level of provision remains appropriate.

12. Travel during the school day

12.1 This policy covers home to school transport. Assistance is normally only provided for the start and end of school, college or setting sessions. Travel outside these times, where pupils are required to take part in particular school /college or curriculum activities, is the responsibility of the school, college, setting or parent/carer.

12.2 Sometimes pupils may wish to take part in activities requiring an extended school day. In such circumstances the LEA may consider travel assistance for pupils who meet the criteria.

13. Appeals

13.1 Parents and carers who do not agree with the decision or transport arrangements made may ask for a review.

13.2 In the first instance, a request should be made in writing to the SEN officer who will seek to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the Authority and the parent or carer. The Council will acknowledge requests in 7 days and respond in full within 10 days.

13.3 If parents/carers remain dissatisfied with the decision a request for an appeal can be made. Information on the procedure will be sent with the result of the first review.

14 Complaints

14.1 Officers of the council will do all they can to ensure that pupils' journeys to and from school are as safe and happy as possible. Parents having any concerns or complaints regarding their child's transport should, in the first instant discuss them with the Transport Manager or write to:

Education and Children's Services Transport Manager

4E/05 Civic Centre, London Borough Hillingdon, High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

Should parents wish to take the matter further, a letter detailing their concerns should be sent to:

Director of Education and Children's Services

4E/01 Civic Centre, London Borough Hillingdon, Uxbridge UB8 1UW

This policy was written with reference to:

1. Capita Strategic Education Service (July 2004) *Review of SEN Transport Provision in the London Borough of Hillingdon* Internal Document
2. DfES (1996) *The Education Act 1996* HMSO
3. DfES (November 2001) *The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* DfES Publications
4. DfES (November 2004) *Home to school travel for pupils requiring special arrangements* DfES Publications

Policy agreed by Cabinet 28 April 2005

Implementation Sept 2005 for new applicants and September 2006 for existing users.

Policy Review summer 2006