

Home to School Transport Policy

4 to 16 Year Olds

2026 to 2027 Academic Year

This policy sets out City of York Council's arrangements for home to school travel support for children of compulsory school age. It has been reviewed for the 2026 to 2027 academic year, taking account of current Department for Education statutory guidance while retaining City of York Council's more generous local distance criteria.

Children and Young People Transport Team

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[DfE statutory guidance - Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#)

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Part 1 - Children attending a Mainstream School and those on a low income](#)

[Part 2 - Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#)

[Part 3 - Review of Decisions and Appeal process](#)

[Review of this policy](#)

Introduction

This transport policy sets out City of York Council's policy for providing appropriate home to school travel support for eligible children of compulsory school age living in the City of York area.

The Council is under statutory duties to promote sustainable travel and transport and, where necessary, to make free travel arrangements to facilitate an eligible child's attendance at school. These duties arise principally under sections 508A and 508B of the Education Act 1996 and Schedule 35B to that Act. The Council must also have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are assessed under the same statutory framework as other children, with eligibility determined by the individual child's circumstances and needs.

The Council would like as many children and young people as possible to be able to travel independently to and from school. Travelling independently develops key life skills and leads to increased educational, social and employment opportunities in adulthood, as well as improving health outcomes and contributing to sustainable travel in the city.

Part 1 - Children attending a Mainstream School and those on a low income

Meanings

Compulsory School Age

A child must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If the child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates, then they reach compulsory school age on that date.

For example, if the child reaches compulsory school age on 31 March, they must start full-time education at the beginning of the next term (summer term that year).

Qualifying schools are

- Community, foundation, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- Academies, including free schools and special schools
- Alternative provision academies and pupil referral units
- Community or foundation special schools and non-maintained special schools
- Maintained nursery schools where attended by a child of compulsory school age
- Other qualifying provision as defined by Schedule 35B to the Education Act 1996

Suitable schools are

A qualifying school that is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Suitable school does not mean the most suitable school for a child.

Distance measurements

- Measured using the GIS mapping tool which shows known safe walking routes in the City of York area. This is the same system used by the admissions team to determine home to school distances when allocating school places.
- Where a distance is measured by road because it is beyond the Council's qualifying distance, online mapping software may be used, such as Google Maps or AA Route Planner.

Safe Walking Routes

In assessing the safety of a route, the Council will assess the risks a child might encounter and will consider factors including:

- The age of the child.
- The width of roads and the existence of pavements.
- The volume and speed of traffic.
- The existence or otherwise of street lighting.
- Rivers, ditches, traffic speeds and fields of vision for pedestrians and motorists.
- The condition of the route at different times of year and at the times of day the child would travel.
- Whether potential risks might be mitigated if an adult accompanied the child.

Home Address and Joint Residency

The child's home address will be the address where they live with their parent/carer and which is registered with their school. In the case of joint residency, transport will only be provided from one address. The Council will take into account:

- The address taken into account at the time of application for a school place, if circumstances remain the same.
- The address at which the child spends most school days or, if split equally, the address where the parent receives child benefit.
- The address registered with the child's doctor.

School Opening and Closing Times

The duty to provide free home to school transport is for the journey at the start and end of the school day, at the times approved by the governing body or academy trust. If a school or academy proposes to change its school hours it should follow best practice, consult at least three months before the planned change and include the Local Authority in the consultation. Where a school changes its hours without consultation, any additional transport costs may be the responsibility of the school.

Journey Times

As a general guide, the maximum journey time should be no longer than 45 minutes each way for primary-aged children and 75 minutes each way for secondary-aged children. There may be circumstances in which this is not possible, for example where children live in remote locations or where a child with special educational needs, disability or mobility problems needs to travel some distance to the school that is able to meet their needs. Where longer journeys are unavoidable, the Council will seek to minimise any negative impact on the child.

Collection and Drop-off Points

Children are collected as near to their home as reasonably possible. Some children may have to walk a reasonable distance to and from home to meet the transport. However, the designated picking up/setting down point will not exceed one mile from the child's home. Responsibility for ensuring a child's safety in getting to and from the designated point rests with the parent/carer.

City of York Council distance criteria and eligibility for transport

City of York Council applies more generous local distance criteria than the statutory minimum requirements. For the purposes of the Council's general distance policy, the qualifying walking distances are:

- Primary-aged children: 2 miles or more from their home to their nearest suitable school.
- Secondary-aged children: 3 miles or more from their home to their nearest suitable school.

A child may also qualify where they cannot reasonably be expected to walk because of the unsafe nature of the route, or because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems, taking account of accompaniment where appropriate.

Low income families

For the purposes of extended rights to free home to school travel, a child is treated as being from a low-income family where they are eligible for targeted free school meals (targeted FSM). From the 2026 to 2027 academic year, extended rights continue to be based on targeted FSM rather than the wider expanded free school meals entitlement.

Targeted FSM applies where the child, or their parent or carer, meets one of the following qualifying criteria:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Universal Credit, where annual household earned income is no more than £7,400 after tax and not including benefits

Working Tax Credit has been phased out and is no longer an eligibility category for extended rights to free school travel.

Children from low-income families may qualify for extended rights where:

- they are aged 8 to 11, attend their nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles from their home;
- they are aged 11 to 16 and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools, where the school is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or
- they are aged 11 to 16 and attend the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where the school is more than 2 miles but not more than 15 miles from their home.

Transport to a school chosen because of religion or belief

Transport under the extended rights provisions will only be provided where the child meets the relevant low-income criteria. The extended-rights distance range of more than 2 miles and not more than 15 miles applies to the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief. Outside those provisions, parents are normally responsible for transport where they choose a school other than the child's nearest suitable school. The Council will consider individual circumstances where it is asked to exercise its discretionary powers.

Medical Needs of the parent or child

Long-term

If a parent/carers is unable to take their primary-aged child to their nearest suitable school for medical reasons, assistance may be considered where the medical need of the parent or child means they cannot enable the child to access education by any other means. Appropriate evidence from a GP, consultant or other relevant professional should explain why the parent is unable to take the child to school or why the child is unable to walk.

Short-term

For medical reasons that are not long-term, discretionary assistance may be offered on a short-term basis up to a maximum equivalent to one half term. Parents should provide appropriate supporting evidence and demonstrate why no reasonable alternatives are available.

Change of address

Emergency or Temporary

If a child moves because of an emergency or is placed in temporary accommodation and their school is more than the Council's qualifying walking distance from their temporary home, they may be entitled to assistance with transport. This will normally be for a maximum of 3 months. At the end of this period the parent/carer must decide whether to:

- Keep the child at the original school and meet the travel costs; or
- Move the child to another, nearer suitable school.

Permanent

If a child moves to a permanent new address, the family must normally change the child's school or make their own transport arrangements. If a child is in Year 10 or 11 and a change of school may disrupt their GCSEs, transport assistance may be considered on a discretionary basis.

Nursery aged children

There is no general duty for the local authority to offer transport assistance to a child who is below compulsory school age.

Fair Access Protocols and Exclusions

If a child is permanently excluded or allocated a new school or a place at Danesgate Community through the Fair Access process, the new school or Danesgate will be considered for school travel purposes and the Council's normal eligibility rules will be applied. Parents will be expected to apply through the normal application process.

Children and Young People in Care

If a child has been placed in emergency or short-term foster care, City of York Council may need to support continued attendance at the original school where this is judged to be in the child's best interests for stability and continuity. Travel assistance will be considered in consultation with the child's social worker and the Virtual School, with a view to promoting independent travel where possible.

Movement between educational establishments during the day

The local authority's home to school travel duty does not normally extend to travel between educational establishments during the school day. Where a child needs to travel between establishments to receive education, responsibility for that travel will normally rest with the school or commissioning service.

Transport other than home to school

The local authority's duty to provide home to school transport does not normally extend to:

- Work experience placements.
- Ad hoc or regular visits to other schools or educational establishments.
- Attendance outside normal school hours.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Educational provision planned for weekends or bank holidays.
- Pick up or drop off at an address other than the child's home address or an agreed designated point.

Travel Options

The local authority will offer a suitable and cost-effective method of travel assistance. This will usually be a bus pass for a public service bus or a place on dedicated home to school transport. Other options may include:

- Cycle allowance and/or assistance with the purchase of a bicycle.

- A personalised transport budget or mileage payment where appropriate.
- Independent travel training for eligible children and young people.
- A seat in a minibus.
- A seat in a taxi.
- Other creative solutions agreed with families to support safe and sustainable travel.

Waiting Points

Where children board transport from a fixed waiting point, they are expected to wait safely and in an orderly way until the vehicle is stationary. Waiting points will be a public bus stop or another named point considered suitable for children to wait and vehicles to stop. Risk assessments will be carried out where concerns are identified.

Seat Belts

City of York contracted transport vehicles are fitted with seatbelts where required and children are expected to use them unless there is a valid reason why they cannot. Parents are advised to encourage their children to wear their seatbelt.

Behaviour on Mainstream Transport

The Council expects safe and appropriate behaviour on school transport. Unacceptable behaviour which places the driver, other passengers or the child at risk will be addressed with the child, parent/carer, school and operator.

For an eligible child, withdrawal of travel arrangements will only be used as a last resort. Where travel is withdrawn because of behaviour, the Council will consider how it will continue to meet any statutory duty to make suitable travel arrangements for that child in an alternative way.

Part 2 - Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Eligibility

Children with an EHC plan do not have an automatic entitlement to free school travel support. Eligibility is set out in legislation and depends on the child's individual circumstances, including their ability to walk or otherwise travel to school. A child does not need to have an EHC plan or attend a special school to qualify on the grounds of special educational needs, disability or mobility problems.

For children attending their nearest suitable mainstream school, special school, enhanced resource provision, pupil referral unit, or a school named by the local authority because it is the school able to meet their needs, free home to school travel will be provided where the child meets the Council's eligibility criteria or another statutory eligibility category.

Where a child does not qualify under the Council's distance or low-income criteria, free travel may still be provided where the Council assesses that the child could not reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, even if accompanied.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

If parents have elected to educate their child at home, the local authority has no general duty to provide transport to education provision chosen by the parent.

Accompaniment

In determining whether a child can reasonably be expected to walk to school, the Council will consider whether they could walk if accompanied and, if so, whether it is reasonable to expect their parent to accompany them. Individual circumstances which may make accompaniment unreasonable will be considered.

A child will not normally be eligible solely because a parent's work commitments or caring responsibilities mean they are unable to accompany the child. The Council will, however, consider each case on its individual circumstances.

Assessments

All applications will be assessed individually in accordance with this policy and current Department for Education statutory guidance. A Council officer may ask to meet the family and child to understand travel needs and plan longer-term options.

The Council may consider:

- Age and maturity of the child.
- Ability and aptitude of the child.
- Any special educational needs, disability or mobility problems.
- The distance and safety of the route, including whether it could be walked if accompanied.
- Relevant individual circumstances affecting whether a parent can reasonably accompany the child.
- The most appropriate travel option.
- Whether the child needs support from a passenger transport assistant.

Parental Preference

Parents have the right to ask for a particular school to be named in their child's EHC plan. Where the preferred school is further away than another suitable school, the Council may take the additional cost of travel into account when deciding whether naming the preferred school would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources. Where appropriate, a preferred school may be named on the condition that the parent arranges or contributes to travel. Any such implications will be explained before a final decision is made.

Nursery Aged Children

Transport support is generally provided for children of compulsory school age. Children with SEND below compulsory school age who are attending specialist provision may be considered for discretionary support on an individual basis.

Periodic Reviews of Transport Provision

The Council will review individual travel arrangements for existing and future applicants. The type or mode of travel offered may therefore change as a child's needs, abilities or circumstances change.

Routine assessments and reviews will consider opportunities to develop independent living and travel skills. Additional reviews may take place at key transition points or where progress can reasonably be made over a period of weeks or months.

Number of Journeys provided

For children attending school daily:

- One journey at the start of the school day.
- One journey at the end of the school day.

For weekly residential placements:

- One journey at the start of the school week.
- One journey at the end of the school week.

For termly residential placements:

- One journey at the start of each half term.
- One journey at the end of each half term.

Travel Options

Travel assistance will be suitable for the child and need not always be a minibus or taxi. Options may include:

- A mileage payment to enable a parent/carer to transport their child, currently paid at 60p per mile for 2 return journeys per day where agreed.
- Independent travel training through York Independent Living and Travel Skills (YILTS).
- A bespoke personal transport budget where appropriate.
- Other creative solutions agreed with the family to support safe travel.

Provision of Passenger Transport Assistants (PTAs)

- A passenger transport assistant is not routinely provided. A PTA may be provided where the needs of the route or an individual child make this necessary.
- Individual PTA support will normally only be provided where there is substantial evidence that the child may be at risk or may pose a risk to others without supervision.
- Requests should be supported by relevant evidence, including risk assessment information and strategies previously tried where appropriate.
- Any PTA provision will be kept under review by the transport team.

Medical Intervention and administration of Medicines

- Transport crews are not routinely medically trained or able to administer medication. In a medical emergency they will normally call 999 and follow emergency advice.
- Where a child requires specific medical support during transport, an individual transport medical plan may be agreed with the family, school and relevant health professionals.
- The plan will identify the training required, who will provide it and the contingency arrangements if the trained member of staff is unavailable.
- Where necessary, a PTA will receive appropriate training from an agreed health professional.

Behaviour on SEND Transport

- Parents/carers are asked to provide relevant information about behaviours, triggers and de-escalation strategies so journeys can be planned safely.
- Where behaviour creates a risk, the Council will work with the family, school and operator to identify reasonable strategies and adjustments.
- Withdrawal of transport will be a last resort and will take full account of the child's special educational needs or disability. Where the child remains eligible for free travel, the Council will consider how its statutory duty can be met in an alternative suitable way.

Pick up points

Where a specified pick-up point is part of the agreed travel arrangements, parents/carers are responsible for taking their child to and collecting them from that point. Any requested change of point or address must be agreed in advance and may be subject to a charge where it creates an additional cost and the change is discretionary.

Short breaks

The home to school travel duty does not extend to transport to and from short break centres or carers. Short breaks transport must be agreed through Children's Social Care arrangements. Parents will normally be expected to arrange transport unless there are exceptional reasons why they cannot do so.

Part 3 - Review of Decisions and Appeal process

A parent/carer may appeal a decision about their child's travel to school, including a decision about eligibility or the suitability of the travel arrangements offered. City of York Council operates a two-stage review and appeal process.

The timescales below follow the process recommended in the Department for Education statutory guidance, [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#). The DfE states that these timescales are recommended rather than mandatory; complex cases may occasionally take longer, but appeals will be progressed as quickly as possible.

Stage 1 - Review by a Senior Officer

- A parent/carer should submit a written request for review within 20 working days of receiving the Council's school travel decision.
- The request should explain why the decision should be reviewed and include any information or personal/family circumstances the parent/carer wishes to be considered.
- A senior officer will review the original decision in light of the information provided.
- Within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 1 request, the Council will notify the parent/carer in writing of the outcome, explain the reasons for the decision and, where the original decision is upheld, explain how to proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 - Review by an Independent Appeal Panel

- A parent/carer should request Stage 2 in writing within 20 working days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome and may provide additional information.
- The case will be considered by an appeal panel whose members are independent of the original decision-making process. Under the Council's local arrangements this may include elected members, provided they were not involved in the original decision.
- The parent/carer will be given the opportunity to attend the hearing, virtually or in person, to present their case. If they do not wish or are unable to attend, the panel may determine the appeal on the written information.
- The Stage 2 review will normally take place within 40 working days of the Council receiving the request to escalate the appeal.
- Within 5 working days of completing its consideration, the panel will notify the parent/carer in writing of the outcome and the reasons for its decision.

Stage 2 hearing procedure

1. The Local Authority representative presents the reasons for the decision.
2. The panel may ask questions of the Local Authority representative.
3. The parent/carer may ask questions of the Local Authority representative.
4. The parent/carer presents their case.
5. The Local Authority representative may ask questions of the parent/carer.
6. The panel may ask questions of the parent/carer.
7. The Local Authority representative sums up.
8. The parent/carer sums up.
9. The parties withdraw while the panel reaches its decision.
10. The panel reaches its decision and the outcome is confirmed in writing.

A parent/carer may complain to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) if they believe the Council has made a mistake in the way it handled their case. A challenge to an appeal panel decision on public law grounds may be made by way of judicial review.

Review of this policy

This Home to School Transport Policy is reviewed annually by City of York Council ahead of the next academic year. The review will take account of changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local transport arrangements and Council policy.

An up-to-date policy will be published in accordance with the statutory requirements for school travel information and will be available before the normal school admissions round. The policy may also be reviewed during the year if a significant legislative, guidance or operational change requires an earlier amendment.

Policy year: 2026 to 2027 academic year

Review frequency: Annual

Next scheduled review: Summer 2027, ahead of the 2027 to 2028 academic year

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