

Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2017

(Statutory School Age)

People Directorate



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Context

Halton Borough Council has a duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated regulations and guidance, to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. This applies to home to school travel arrangements, and vice versa, and do not relate to travel between educational establishments during the school day. Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

The duty on local authorities is to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at schools for eligible children. Schedule 35B of the Act defines eligible children as those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16) in an authority's area. Local authorities are also required to publish their Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy by 31st August each year, and, as recommended within Department for Education Guidance, this document integrates that strategy within this policy document.

Other legislation which requires local authorities to provide certain socially necessary bus services within the Borough remain in force, and some of these services provide important links to schools and other education/learning facilities within the Borough.

This Policy is reviewed annually (last review March 2017) and published in the Education and Families section of the Council website at www.halton.gov.uk and is available to pick up at any Halton Direct Link or by phoning 0303 333 4300.

It is also intended that this document will assist in meeting the Council's priorities and support the Halton Children and Young People's Plan.

If your child/young person has Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities, please see the separate Home to School & College Travel and Transport Policy for Children & Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – available on the Council's website.

The Local Authority is aware that travel patterns across Halton may alter over future years. The needs of pupils and parents will be continually reviewed as any school organisation programmes progress.

Section 1

Strategy for the Promotion of Sustainable Modes of School Travel within Halton

Halton Borough Council strongly supports measures which encourage local communities to use environmentally sustainable forms of travel (walking, cycling and public transport). These wider policies are detailed within the Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP3) found at www.halton.gov.uk/ltp3. The Halton Local Transport Plan contains a wide range of measures to improve access to education for statutory school age children (up to 16 years of age)

Each school has developed a School Travel Plan with the aim of improving access by sustainable and safe forms of travel for all children and young people, promoting healthier lifestyles and less car dependency. Halton Borough Council is seeking to place Health at the heart of all its policies, and this Policy encourages children to walk and cycle to school, and supports the Health agenda.

When assessing the needs of eligible children and young people for assisted home to school travel Halton Borough Council has adopted a range of sustainable travel options including walking and cycling. In addition, Halton has an excellent network of high frequency bus services linking the main residential areas with local schools. The majority of local buses are now fully accessible to all in the community.

This policy document is aligned to the Council's School Admissions Policy and with the principles set out in the central government document "Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance" (2014).

Sustainable Modes of School Travel – Options:

Walking

For journeys of under 2 miles for primary school pupils aged up to 8 and 3 miles for older pupils, walking to and from school is the preferred mode of travel. Walking helps improve levels of personal fitness and aids the personal development of children and young people.

Cycling

For journeys between 0 – 3 miles cycling is an option for primary and secondary aged pupils. Halton Borough Council has introduced a range of measures to make it safe and attractive to travel to and from school by bike.

Public Transport

For journeys over 2 miles for pupils aged up to 8 and 3 miles for older pupils, public transport (buses and trains) offers a convenient and affordable way of travelling to and from school.

The type of travel assistance provided for eligible pupils will be at the discretion of Halton Borough Council based on the principles set out in this Policy and may include one of the following:

- A cycle maintenance grant
- A travel pass for use on a conventional, timetabled, public transport service
- A place, from an appropriate collection point, on a minibus, taxi or other suitable vehicle, adapted where required, provided under contract by the Council
- Mileage allowance paid to parents, providing that there is no available seat on existing transport. Mileage allowance will not be paid if a pupil has been removed from existing transport for safety reasons. It remains the responsibility of the parent to make alternative arrangements to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis

Halton Borough Council will use the sustainable school travel options approach to assess the level of transport and assistance required by all children and young people resident within the Borough. A package of travel assistance will then be determined and offered to all eligible children and young people in line with the criteria set out in this Policy.

In assessing an individual child or young person's eligibility for assisted travel, a comprehensive review of how accessible education is in terms of walking, cycling and public transport routes and services is undertaken. Halton Borough Council also operates an Independent Travel Training initiative which provides tailored help and support for children and young people.

The Council and its key partner organisations are working towards promotion of sustainable travel to all facilities within the Borough. Every school within Halton has a Travel Plan.

Detailed advice on public transport is available from Traveline Phone: 0871 200 22 33 or www.traveline.info or from the Halton Borough Council Website at www.halton.gov.uk/transport.

Halton Borough Council's Neighbourhood Travel Team (NTT) will prepare individual journey plans for pupils wishing to use public transport when travelling to and from school. Phone: 0800 1953 173, Email: ntt@halton.gov.uk. A School Travel Map is available via the NTT, or the Council website. This is a handy, fold out, tube style map of the services in Halton with extra information about School Services and other information and support available including information about ticketing and cycling. All transport information is available on the Council website at www.halton.gov.uk/transport.

Curriculum travel during the school day

There is no duty on the Local Authority to provide transport for curriculum activities or for travel between different educational establishments during the course of the school day. It is the responsibility of the individual schools, institutions and education providers to organise and provide pupil's transport for curriculum activities during the school day.

Children attending pre/after school activities

This Policy does not cover Parents/carers whose children attend pre/after school activities. Parents/carers will need to make their own arrangements in this regard.

Section 2

Travel Assistance for Pupils of Statutory School Age

Eligibility Criteria

Halton Borough Council will meet its statutory obligations by providing assisted transport to children aged 5 to 16 years who live within the Borough and who attend the nearest qualifying school which is above the statutory walking distance.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. However, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to ensure suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school.

Children who are eligible will receive assistance to the nearest qualifying school. A qualifying school is defined as a school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs they may have.

Under the terms of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 508(B) defines "qualifying schools" as:

- Community, foundation or voluntary schools
- Community or foundation specialist schools
- Non-maintained special schools
- Pupil referral units
- Maintained nursery schools
- City technology colleges (CTC), City Colleges for Technology or the Arts (CCTA) or Academies (including Free Schools)

To comply with its duty Halton Borough Council will provide for home to school travel for children of statutory school age in the following circumstances:

1. Where a child aged under 8 attends the nearest qualifying school over 2 miles or

where a child aged 8 and over attends the nearest qualifying school over 3 miles, respectively from the child's home address. This will be measured by the shortest walking distance along which the child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. The route will be determined by the Council. (As such the route measured may include footpaths, bridleways and other pathways as well as recognised roads. The walking distance between home and school is measured from the pupil's home gate or drive nearest to the school, to the nearest available gate of the school. A risk assessment of the route will be made if needed).

2. Children from low income families i.e. those entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit or whose Universal Tax Credit payment entitles them to enhanced assisted school transport. This enhanced provision applies to Primary pupils aged between 5 and 11 from low income families attending the nearest qualifying school more than 2 miles from their home. Proof will be required by TC602, confirmation for free school meals, Working Tax Credit statement, Housing/Council Tax Benefit entitlement etc.
3. Secondary Pupils aged between 11 and 16 years may be entitled to enhanced assisted school transport if they attend one of the three nearest qualifying schools which are between 2 and 6 miles from the child's home or the nearest qualifying school preferred by reason of a person's religion or belief up to a maximum of 15 miles. Proof of low income will be required as detailed above.
4. Where a pupil lives within the statutory walking distance to school and a risk assessment identifies that there is no safe route that the pupil could reasonably be expected to take, assisted travel will be provided in line with the criteria detailed in this Policy. This is based on route safety, not personal safety, and any pupil being accompanied by a responsible adult. The Council will be responsible for determining the safety, or otherwise, of the route.
5. In addition the Local Authority will use its discretion to provide Home to School Transport where a pupil attends a faith school for reasons of religion or belief (evidence will be required to support this e.g. baptism certificate or letter from priest/vicar). This will only be to the nearest voluntary aided or foundation school of the relevant religion/faith where the distance is over 2 miles for children under 8 and over 3 miles for children over 8. If a place is not available at the nearest voluntary

aided or foundation school the Local Authority is not in a position to provide assistance with transport to an alternative school (unless low income conditions apply for Secondary Pupils as referred to above).

In all cases it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child's safe and secure travel to and from school. Parents/carers are responsible for their children until they are received on school premises and the parent/carer has left the school.

If a pupil changes home address their entitlement to assisted school transport will be reassessed on the basis of the eligibility criteria. When pupils leave the Borough any travel passes issued by the Council must be returned.

The Council will make a charge for a replacement travel pass in the event of the pupil/young person misplacing or losing their pass.

In exceptional circumstances, travel assistance will be offered to and from school for pupils who have been temporarily relocated which causes them to become eligible in accordance with the criteria detailed above. For example, if relocated due to being part of witness protection scheme, place of safety from domestic violence, family home uninhabitable due to natural disaster (e.g. flooding).

Where there is a formal shared care arrangement in place and both parents have care of the child(ren) for part of the week then home to school transport will only be provided from the address(es) where the child would meet the criteria of being an "eligible child".

Assistance with transport will also be provided to a pupil within the "In Year Fair Access Protocol" if their attendance at the particular establishment causes them to become eligible in accordance with the criteria detailed above.

In respect of all eligible children the type of transport provided will be at the discretion of Halton Borough Council on the basis of sustainable school travel. It may be any of the following:

- Cycle maintenance grant
- A travel pass for use on a timetabled public transport service (which may take the form of a conventional public bus service or specific school bus service)
- Travel on specific Halton Borough Council contracted service (including taxis and minibuses where appropriate)

- Mileage payable to parents

All assisted travel is made on the provision that the pupil's behaviour is of an acceptable standard during journeys to and from school. The Council reserves the right to withdraw or reassess the assisted travel arrangements in the light of misuse or poor behaviour. In addition, if assistance with travel is awarded in error, the Council reserves the right to withdraw the assistance.

Where the travel eligibility criteria are not met, parents/carers may apply for a vacant seat on a Halton Borough Council school contract vehicle (where available). However, priority will always be given to providing a place on these services for eligible pupils/young people. Therefore, the provision of "paid for seats" may be withdrawn by the Council (giving parents/carers 5 weeks notice). Parents/carers requiring more information should contact the Council's Transport Coordination Team on 0151 511 7444. The Council will levy a charge for this provision and will review its availability annually.

Right of Appeal

Parents and Carers can appeal to Halton Borough Council through the agreed appeals procedure (outlined in Appendix One).

Section 3

Independent Travel Training

Halton Borough Council provides an Independent Travel Training service for people lacking the skills and confidence to plan and undertake a journey on public transport on their own. The service also trains and supports people with disabilities and learning difficulties to give them the essential skills they need to access public transport and gain independence.

‘Supporting Independence’ Travel Training in Halton provides help with:

- Using money
- Buying tickets
- Finding your way about
- Planning a journey
- Using buses
- Using trains

A Travel Training Toolkit is also available which provides a step by step guide enabling Travel Trainers to develop tailor made, one-to-one programmes to support people to travel independently.

For more information, a referral form or the Travel Training toolkit, contact Derek Donoghue, Independent Travel Trainer:

Phone: 0151 511 7444

Email: derek.donoghue@halton.gov.uk

Appendix One

Assisted Travel Appeals Process

Officer A declines the home school travel application or offers travel arrangements the parent considers “unsuitable”



Parent Challenges (within 20 working days)

Parent challenges on the basis of officer A’s decision on basis of:

- Entitlement as assessed against the eligibility criteria (e.g. distance measurement, route safety)



Stage 1 (within 20 working days): Review by a senior officer

Officer B (a senior officer) reviews officer A’s decision and sends the parent a written notification of the outcome including:

- Detailed reasoning for decision made
- Notification of option to escalate to stage 2 (an appeal panel)



Parent Challenges (within 20 working days)

Parent challenges officer B’s (the senior officer) decision



Stage 2 (within 40 working days): Review by an appeal panel

Independent appeal panel (officer A or B must not sit on panel) considers written representation from parent. The appeal panel is independent of the process to date and suitably qualified. The appeal panel will consider exercising its discretion to award assistance under section 508C of the Education Act 1996 where it considers it necessary to do so. Appeal decisions may result in full assistance, part-paid assistance (i.e. with a parental contribution) or no assistance, i.e. the appeal is declined.



Independent appeal panel sends decision letter to parent (within 5 working days), including how to escalate the case to Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

Notes:

- Officer A refers to the assessing Officer in the Council’s Transport Coordination Department
- Officer B refers to the Council’s Lead Officer, Transport Coordination
- Independent Appeal Panel refers to the Operational Director – Education, Inclusion & Provision, and Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People.

Local Government Ombudsman

A complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman can be made by the parent/carer/young person only if there has been a failure to comply with the procedural rules or there has been maladministration of the policy.

Telephone: 0300 061 0614.

Alternatively, you can write to:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Fax: 024 7682 0001

You can also text 'call back' to 0762 481 1595.