



**Wokingham
Home to School Transport
“A Parent’s Guide”**

WELCOME

This guide is for you as a parent or carer because your child may be eligible for home to school transport. Here you will find essential information about the Home to School Transport Service, what you should expect from us and what you can do to help ensure your child has a great journey.

We aim to deliver a quality service that ensures your child is safe, secure and comfortable during their journey.

We aspire to provide a service that understands the needs of children and is centered on caring for those needs. The Home to School Transport Service works daily to make sure that pupils:

- ✓ Arrive at school ready to learn.
- ✓ Are picked up on time, arrive at school on time and are taken home on time.
- ✓ Are safe, protected and their needs are met.
- ✓ Are supported, where possible and appropriate, to travel independently.

WHAT IS THE HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE?

The Home to School Transport Service is part of the Community Transport Unit within the council, that is responsible for running a smooth and effective transport service to the highest possible standards. We are your first point of contact for anything related to your child's transport.

Applications for Home to School Travel assistance can be found at:
<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>

Please send completed mainstream applications to:

Community Transport Unit,
Wokingham Borough Council,
Shute End, Wokingham,
RG40 1BN

or email to ctu.group@wokingham.gov.uk

PUPILS WITH AN EHC PLAN, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED OR DISABILITY

Parents will still have to complete an application form, but they should include evidence in support of why it is not reasonable to expect the child to be able to walk to school, even if accompanied.

Completed application forms should be sent to sen@wokingham.gov.uk together with any additional evidence to support the application.

WHAT IS OUR ROLE?

We will make sure that you and your child receive:

- A clean, safe and secure vehicle
- A reliable service which arrives on time
- Well trained, polite and consistent staff

We only provide home-to-school or college transport in the mornings and the afternoons. The Home to School Transport Service cannot provide transport for personal medical appointments or any extra-curricular activities.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT?

For more detail on the criteria for eligibility of Home to School Transport, please refer to the Home to School Transport Policy, which can be found at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>

Children between 5 and 16 qualify for free school transport if they go to their nearest suitable school and reside:

- ✓ Two miles or more from that school if the child is under the age of 8.
- ✓ Three miles or more from the age of 8 and upwards (Year 4 onwards).

The Council also has a duty to provide travel assistance for children who cannot be expected to walk to the nearest suitable school where there is 'no safe walking route under the relevant statutory walking distance' even if accompanied by an adult. Safe walking route means a route which is safe for the child to walk accompanied if necessary (appropriate to their age and nature of the route).

The Council provides home to school transport assistance to children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who attend the nearest suitable school to their home address as named on their EHCP and reside:

- ✓ Two miles or more from that school if the child is under the age of 8.
- ✓ Three miles or more from the age of 8 and upwards (Year 4 onwards).

Or, where a young person is unable to walk the required distance due to their SEN or mobility needs, even when accompanied by a suitable adult. In these cases, applicants are required to submit independent professional evidence to support their request.

Please note that there is no automatic entitlement to travel assistance just because a young person has a Special Educational Need or Disability, even where an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) has been issued.

Low-income policy - Your child may be able to get free home to school transport if your family has a low income.

WHAT IF I PREFER A SCHOOL FURTHER AWAY?

Parental Preference

A parent/carer may prefer a different school that is further away than the nearest school that is able to meet the young person's needs. If your child attends a school which is outside of the statutory walking distance, but the local authority can demonstrate that there is a nearer suitable school, then it is not required to provide transport.

With regards to Special Educational Needs and Disability, transport is provided to the nearest school as named on the EHCP, under the criteria above. The assessment and decision as to the nearest school that can meet a young person's needs is made by the SEND Team. If the parent/carers preferred school is not named in the young person's EHCP, the parent/carer must accept full responsibility for arranging transport and any

costs that go with this. If this is something that you are considering, it is very important that you take this into account.

The SEND Team's decision on the nearest suitable school that can meet a child's needs may not always be the one a parent feels is the best school for their child.

WHAT TYPE OF TRANSPORT IS PROVIDED?

Where an entitlement to transport exists, the Council will ensure that suitable transport support is arranged to enable a young person to access their education and return home at the start and end of the usual school day.

POTENTIAL MODES OF TRANSPORT

- **Public transport passes** – for young people able to use public transport to get to school. If we offer a child a public bus pass and they are of primary school age, then we will also purchase one for parents so that they are able to escort their child.
- **A seat on a shared vehicle** – with other young people traveling to school. Where there is an available vehicle running to a school and there is space, this will be considered first, and where possible, the young person will be added. If there are no available vehicles, a larger vehicle may be provided for a particular route.
- **Personal Travel Budget** - four journeys per day at 45p per mile for parent/carers to take their children to and from school.

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- **A taxi** will only be provided in exceptional circumstances, and when there are no alternative transport options.

Where it is safe, appropriate, and reasonable to do so, pupils will be expected to walk to school, accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult, to and from their home. Training in independent travelling skills may also be offered.

IS A PASSENGER ASSISTANT PROVIDED?

Passenger Assistants (PA) are not automatically provided. When considering whether a PA is necessary, we take account of the following:

- A young person's medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required.
- Where an individual young person's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves, and other passengers, on the vehicle.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT US?

You may need to contact us to:

- Find out about the scheduling of your child's journey.
- Find out about any delays to your child's pick up or drop off time.
- Let us know that your child cannot make a journey.
- Let us know if there are changes to your child's medical needs.
- Give a compliment, make a complaint, or give us any other feedback on your experience with the service. If you do make a complaint, we will investigate the matter and let you know the outcome of the investigation as soon as possible.

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/tell-us-about-a-problem/>

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT?

You play a critical role in making sure that transport runs as smoothly and effectively as possible for your child, as well as any other children using the service. As a parent, you need to make sure that:

- Your child is ready to be picked up so that everyone can get to school on time.
- You update us with your mobile, home and work telephone numbers, email address, emergency contact numbers and address.
- You notify us of any changes that may affect your child's transport arrangements.

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- You bring your child to the vehicle and that you assist your child onto the vehicle.
 - You collect your child from the vehicle or pick up point at the end of each day.
 - You contact us as soon as possible if your child is sick or unable to attend school for any reason.
 - You advise the Passenger Assistant (where applicable),if there is a particular difficulty with your child on a specific day and support them with getting your child on and off the vehicle.
 - You encourage and support your child to behave appropriately when travelling to make sure that all children using the service are comfortable and safe.
 - You and your child treat transport staff with respect and courtesy.

Please remember that there may be other children on board the vehicle and that we all need to work together to make sure they have the best start and end to their day.

WHAT TO DO AT COLLECTION AND DROP-OFF TIMES?

It is important that all children arrive at school and at home in good time. To help us achieve this:

- It is your responsibility to make sure that your child is on time for collection. Drivers are under instructions to wait no more than 5 minutes after the scheduled pick up or drop off time. After this, the transport will depart.
- It is your responsibility to be at the drop-off point to meet your child at the end of the school day.

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- It is your responsibility to be on time to meet your child when they return from school.

It is important to remember that:

- Passenger Assistants (where applicable) will always make sure that your child is collected by you alone. You must be present at the drop off point as your child cannot be left with anyone else, unless this has been agreed with us beforehand.
- Passenger Assistants (where applicable) will not pick up or drop off your child at your front door. You will need to meet the staff beside the vehicle with your child.
- Your child cannot be dropped off at any other destination other than the designated drop-off point.
- Drivers are under instructions to wait no more than 5 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time. After this, the transport will depart.
- If you are regularly late in picking up or dropping off your child, we may consider withdrawing your travel assistance. Where the special Educational Needs Service are involved, we will discuss the matter with them and agree next steps.
- If you are not available to meet your child in the afternoon, the Passenger Assistant or driver will contact us, and we will try to get in touch with you. If we cannot contact you, your child will be taken to an emergency drop-off children's center and you will need to make your own arrangements to collect your child.

ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL OPTIONS

Our overall vision for travel assistance is to promote the independence and wellbeing of all young people and a range of travel options are offered. All pupils should be encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle, including walking a reasonable distance to school, where possible. The council can work with you to explore alternative travel options that would be appropriate for you and your child.

If you would like to enquire further about alternative travel options for your child, please get in touch with us.

THE APPEAL PROCESS

The appeal process is for parents who are not satisfied with a school transport decision. Where an application for transport assistance has been made and has been refused, the parent/carer will be written to with an explanation of the decision. The letter will advise the parent of their right to appeal the decision.

An appeal must be made on our School Transport Appeal Form, and this can be downloaded at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>