

Home to School Travel Assistance Policy 2025/26

Bolton Council has a duty under Education Act 1996 as amended by the Education & Inspection Act 2006 to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made for eligible children in the area to facilitate the attendance at their nearest qualifying schools or other relevant institutions where the child is receiving education.

Please see Appendix A for a glossary of terms.

The duty applies to “home to school” travel arrangements at the start of the day, and “school to home” at the end of the day. It does not relate to travel between educational institutions during the school day. Eligible children are those categories of children in an authority’s area for whom travel arrangements will always be required and are of compulsory school age:

- Children unable to walk to school by reason of their SEN, disability, or mobility problem (including temporary medical condition). See the separate [SENDAS Travel Assistance Policy](#) for further details.
- Children attending their nearest school and are unable to walk in safety to that school because of the nature of the route as determined by the Local Authority.
- Children who have disabled parents where both parents are disabled or a single parent family and that parent is disabled, the route requires a parent to accompany the child for it to be considered safe and where the parents’ disability prevents them from doing so. The child must be attending their nearest qualifying school. A Risk Assessment by the Authority will be used to determine eligibility.
- Children living outside the statutory walking distance to their nearest qualifying school with places available. Statutory walking distance for children under 8 is 2 miles and for 8 and over is 3 miles measured using the shortest walking route, accompanied as necessary.

Where a pupil is registered at a school but is attending a place other than a school following an exclusion, the LA will consider the distance to the place other than where the child is registered.

- Children in receipt of free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum Working Tax Credit who satisfy the criteria below:
 - Primary aged children in this category of compulsory school age and under 11 from low-income families and live more than 2 miles from their nearest qualifying school with places available measured using the shortest walking route, accompanied as necessary, will be eligible for assistance with home to school transport.
 - Children aged 11 to 16 from low-income families will qualify for travel assistance where they live more than 2 miles but less than 6 from one of their 3 nearest qualifying schools with places available.

- Where a parent has expressed a preference for a school, and that preference is based on the parent's religion or belief, and the child is aged 11 to 16 from a low income family and the preferred school is more than 2 miles but less than 15 miles from the home then a free travel permit will be issued. Evidence of active worship of parent and child at least monthly in the 12 months prior to the bus pass application. The 2-mile limit will be measured along the nearest available route. However, the 6-mile upper limit and the 15-mile upper limit to a school preferred on grounds of religion or belief will be measure along routes which a motorised vehicle can pass, i.e., road routes. Evidence of entitlement to free school meals or maximum Working Tax Credit will be required to determine eligibility to assistance with home to school transport.

Bolton Council issues free school bus passes for qualifying eligible pupils. An allowance will be paid at a rate determined by Children Services when a child who is eligible for support under this policy uses a bicycle to travel to and from an educational establishment. Such arrangements require the relevant parental consent. These will be required by the local authority each year, or whenever a child moves school, whichever is the shorter period.

Children moving address

Where a pupil has been attending their nearest school and moves to a new address in Bolton and at the time of moving:

- s/he has started in Year 6, 10 or 11 (this does not include the holidays before the start of term) **and**

the school is more than 3 miles from their new address (or 2 miles in the case of a child from a low-income group) then the pupil will be eligible to a free bus pass or financial assistance (dependant on the term in which they move). Evidence of the change of address will be required, i.e., Utility bill, Council Tax bill.

Qualifying schools are:

- Community, foundation, or voluntary/voluntary controlled schools
- Academies (including those which are Free schools, university technical colleges, studio schools and special schools
- Alternative provision academies
- Community or foundation special schools
- Non-maintained special schools
- Pupil referral units
- Maintained nursery schools (where attended by a child compulsory school age)
- City technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts

In relation to a child with SEN, at an independent school, if it is the only school named in the Education, Health and Care Plan or it is the nearest of two or more schools named in the EHC Plan. Reference to the nearest qualifying school is taken to mean the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate

to the age, ability, and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs that the child may have.

Under section 508C of the 1996 Act (inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006) Bolton Council has discretionary powers to make arrangements for those children not covered previously.

Appeals Process

If an application for travel support to access education is **not** approved by the Council, a letter will be sent to the parent/carer/young person with a Review of Decision/ Appeals form.

If the parent/carer/young person disagrees with the travel solution offered or the decision not to approve the application, there is a right of appeal.

Appeals should be made within 20 working days of the decision being received by the parent/carer/young person. The appeal should be made in writing to ITU.applications@bolton.gov.uk or to the postal address on your decision letter setting out the exact nature and grounds of the appeal. The Review of Decision/Appeal should include the details of personal and or family circumstances the parent/carer/young person believes should be considered, with supporting evidence. Parents/carers/young people can appeal against the travel solution offered, the child/young person's eligibility, the distance measured in relation to statutory walking distances and safety of the route.

The Appeals Process has two stages:

Stage 1 – Review of the original decision

A senior officer of the Integrated Transport Unit who was not involved in the original decision will consider the review. A Review of Decision/Appeal form will have been included with your decision letter.

The parent/carer/young person will receive confirmation the review is being considered. Further evidence may be requested to support the review and consultation with caseworkers and professional bodies may be required. A decision and notification will be made within 20 working days from receipt of the Review of Decision form.

The notification will include the nature of the decision reached, how the review/appeal was conducted and information about other agencies and departments that were consulted as part of the process. An overview will be given of the factors that were considered, the rationale for the decision reached and information of how to proceed to Stage 2.

If the parent/carer/young person remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they should notify the Council in writing to ITU.applications@bolton.gov.uk within 20 working days

of receiving the decision that they wish the matter to proceed to Stage 2 of the appeals process..

Stage 2 – Review by an independent appeal panel

If the parent/carer/young person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review at Stage 1 the appeal moves to Stage 2.

Within 40 working days of receiving the parent’s notification the appeal will be heard by the Council’s Education Assistance Panel which comprises elected members of Bolton Council and is independent of the original decision-making process. The parent/carer/young person will be invited to attend the Stage 2 appeal via Microsoft Teams. The panel considers written/oral representations from the parent and the Integrated Transport Team and reaches a decision. Where the parent/carer/young person does not wish to attend or is unable to attend a hearing, the panel will make its decision based on the written representations.

A Stage Two appeal will consider the evidence gathered and the reasons for the decision being made at Stage 1.

Within 5 working days of reaching their decision, the independent appeal panel notifies the parent in writing of their decision.

During the appeal stages, travel support to access education will not be provided **or** a change to an existing travel solution will not be instigated.

A Stage 2 decision is final.

Corporate Complaints Team

If the parent/carer/young person is dissatisfied with the way in which the appeals procedure has been managed, they have the right to make a formal complaint to the Corporate Complaints Team. This is not an additional stage to the appeals process.

[Corporate Complaints Team](#), Bolton Council, Town Hall, Bolton BL1 1RU

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

If you consider that the Council has made a mistake or hasn’t followed its policy properly, you may complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman who has powers to investigate whether the Council has made decisions properly. Although the Ombudsman cannot change the Council’s decision, if they find it has not been made properly, they can ask the Council to reconsider the case and make a decision again. The Ombudsman is independent, and their service is free to use. You can find more information on their website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/how-to-complain> or you can contact them by telephoning 0300 061 0614.

Appendix A

Glossary of standard definitions used in the policy

Parent /Carer

In this policy parent/carer is taken to mean the adult responsible for the child/young person and can refer to the adult who has parental responsibility, guardianship or care of the child.

Children Looked after (CLA)

A child who is being looked after by the local authority is known as a child in care. These are children who are subject to a care order or accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. The local authority will continue to support these children when they leave care until the age of 21 under the leaving care provisions.

Children in care can be:

- Living with foster parents
- At home with their parents as a Looked After Child/young person under the supervision of social care
- In residential children's homes or other residential settings such as schools or secure units.

Eligible child/young person

Eligible children as defined in Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 may be taken to belong to one of the following groups:

An eligible child and young person is one of compulsory school age who is resident within Bolton and has/is:

- Special Educational Needs (SEN), a disability or mobility problem and cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the school
- Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because of the nature of the route (accompanied as necessary)
- Living outside the statutory walking distance, where no suitable alternative arrangements have been made by the Local Authority for them to attend either boarding accommodation or a qualifying school nearer to the child young person's home.
- Entitled to free school meals, or a parent with whom they live receives maximum level of Working Tax Credit, **and** they satisfy the additional criteria outlined in page 1 of this Policy.

Compulsory School Age

A child becomes of compulsory school age when he/she reaches the age of five and must start school in the term following his/her fifth birthday.

In England, a young person's leaving age depends on when the young person was born. A young person must stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday.

A young person's options are:

- full-time education – e.g. at a school or college
- an apprenticeship or traineeship
- part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

Suitable school

The nearest suitable school is taken to mean the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education suitable for the age, ability and aptitude of the child/young person and any special educational needs that the child/young person may have.

Home

The home address will be the main base from which any travel solution will be offered.

If the child/young person lives in two different homes, for example if the parents are separated, and the child spends some of the week at both homes, the Council will only provide transport to and from one of those addresses.

To decide which of the homes is the child's main home, the Council will consider:

- The address at which the parent claims Working Tax Credit and Child Benefit
- The address the parent gives as the child's doctor, dentist and so on

If the above does not apply and the child spends an equal amount of the school week at each address, the council will usually consider the main address to be the one where the child wakes up on the most school days during the school term (Monday to Friday).

Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Schools and other educational settings should be able to meet the Special Educational Needs of the vast majority of children and young people through the resources available to them at SEN Support. A small number of children and young people require a more intensive level of specialist help and support via an Education, Health and Care Plan. An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan) is a legal document outlining a child/young person's special educational needs and the provision required in order to meet these needs.

Parents can ask the local authority to carry out an assessment if parents think the child needs an EHC plan although most requests should come through the child's educational setting.

Full-time Education (post 16)

Full time education for Post 16 is education undertaken in pursuit of a course, where an average of more than 12 hours per week is spent during term time.