

## **Bristol City Council Home to School (5-16) Travel Support Policy**

**Travel Support policy for children and young people of compulsory school age (5-16)**

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# Introduction

This document sets out Bristol City Council's Home to School/College Travel Support Policy and describes how the Council fulfils its duties and exercises its discretionary powers under the Education Act 1996.

This policy:

- explains the criteria for eligibility for travel support for pupils to their school for children and young people of compulsory school age (5-16 years old) and for young people aged 16 to 19 and 19 to 25
- how parent/carer(s) can apply for travel support and how decisions are made
- sets out how parent/carer(s) may appeal against decisions that they believe do not comply with this policy.

# Policy Statement

Bristol City Council (the Council) is committed to ensuring that all pupils have a great start to life, are safe and healthy and have access to high quality education so that they are able to achieve their full potential. The Children and Families Act 2014 commits partners to work together to develop services which strengthen the abilities and resilience of children and young people, and their families to be independent.

The Council is also committed to meeting the educational needs of as many children and young people as possible within local schools. In many cases, this will mean a child/young person can walk or cycle to school with their parent/carer(s). This policy sets out how we will help the small number of pupils who find it difficult to travel to school without some support.

The Council will continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities to meet the travel needs of children and young people, enabling them to access their place of education. This support will be targeted at those children and young people who have significant additional needs or are deemed extremely vulnerable.

We want to support parent/carer(s) to fulfil their responsibility to ensure their school-aged child and young person attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school. Those children and young people not in receipt of travel support from the Council can use a wide range of forms of travel in Bristol, accompanied as necessary, including bus, train, concessionary fares, walking and cycling. We also want to support schools to promote safe routes to school and safe travel skills through their regular curriculum.

The Council has a duty under s.508A of the Education Act 1996 to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport for all children and young people in Bristol. This requires the Council to have a strategy to develop sustainable travel and transport infrastructure and to promote these modes of travel as part of the [One City Climate Strategy](#).

We encourage young people to walk, scoot, wheel and bus to school with support from our Active Travel Team and [Bristol School Streets - travelWEST](#). These schemes are part of our plans to improve road safety, encourage walking, cycling to and from school and improve the air quality and environment outside of schools.

# Aims and Objectives

Aligned with the Councils SEND Strategy and the Bristol Belonging Strategy the service aims to:

“Work with parent/carer(s) to ensure children and young people are empowered to travel to and from education safely and as independently as possible”

Through delivery the service will contribute to the overarching vision for children and young people of Bristol. This vision underpins this policy in relation to the assessment of travel needs and necessary travel support that is subsequently provided:

- For our children and young people to have the best possible start in life, gaining the support and skills they need to prosper in adulthood
- For our children and young people to be welcomed into to a city with a culture of nurture and care, with opportunities to grow with support from their community
- For our children and young people to have their needs recognised at the earliest point in a system that collaborates to help them thrive
- For our children and young people to have a home which sustains, nourishes, and protects them in safe and healthy families
- For our children and young people to have a confident sense of self and identity in a cohesive and diverse city
- For our children and young people to access education that is inclusive and values diversity, where they learn from each other and benefit from an understanding of their different experiences
- For our children and young people to own the whole city and experience and benefit from all that Bristol offers

The policy will also contribute towards the delivery of the Council's One City Climate Strategy and enable Bristol to be carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030.

# Eligibility

## All pupils

This policy applies to those who are resident in Bristol or where children/young people are in the care of Bristol City council, including those who would normally reside in Bristol (and attend a nearest suitable school) but have either been housed by the council outside or Bristol or are under the care of Bristol City Council.

If you reside outside of Bristol but your child/young person(s) attend a Bristol school, then you must apply to the local authority where you reside to request assistance with travel.

Parent/carer(s) have a legal duty to ensure that their statutory school-aged child/young person (age 5-16) attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school.

A child/young person is of compulsory school age from the start of term after their fifth birthday up until the last day of the academic year in which they are in year 11. This applies to both children/young people with and without an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

There are four core categories of eligible children/young people:

- statutory walking distances
- unsafe walking routes
- extended rights
- special educational needs, disability and mobility problems

Children below the age of 5 will not be eligible for free travel support between their home and school.

For pupils in year 12 and above (post-16 year olds), there is a separate policy ([HYPERLINK to be added](#)).

## **Statutory walking distances**

The Council will provide free home to school travel support for children and young people of compulsory school age to the nearest suitable school from their home address who meet the 'qualifying distance' criteria which is:

- 2 miles or more for children below the age of eight, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school
- 3 miles or more for children and young people aged 8 and above, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school

Children and young people who live between 2 and 3 miles from their school will cease to be entitled to free travel from the start of the term following their eighth birthday.

If the child/young person or family qualify for free school meals or they are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit then please refer to the Extended Rights section below.

Further detail on eligibility is dealt with in the application section below.

## **Home Address**

A child or young person's home is the place where they are habitually and normally resident. When assessing eligibility and making travel arrangements this will be the primary home address recorded with the School and in accordance with any benefits received on behalf of the child or young person.

Home to school travel provision applies to home (the place where the child is habitually resident) to school (the educational setting where the child is enrolled) travel arrangements, and vice versa. This does not include pick-up or drop-offs at locations other than home or school, such as any extracurricular activities or appointments.

Local Authorities will consider applications for support with travel to School outside the area, if the School is considered to be the nearest appropriate School. Applications should be made to the Local Authority in which the student lives. Support with travel will be approved only if the individual application represents reasonable public expenditure. A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) may be offered.

## **Unsafe walking routes**

The Council will provide travel support if it determines that a child/young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk. The Council regularly assesses walking routes in conjunction with local context and knowledge, and using the "Road Safety GB Guidelines on Assessment of Walked Routes to School." Routes that have been determined to be unsafe will be kept under review and support will be withdrawn when the walking route is no longer deemed to be unsafe. The Council will expect a parent/carer to accompany the child along a route which would otherwise be classified as being unsafe and will not provide travel support if this accompaniment will make the route safe.

## **Extended rights**

Children and young people from low-income families are entitled to additional support in certain circumstances. This applies to pupils who are entitled to free school meals, or those families who are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC).

Children and young people above the age of 8, but under the age of 11, from low-income families will be entitled to travel support to their nearest suitable school if the shortest walking distance between their home and the school is more than two miles.

Children and young people aged 11 and over (years 7 – 11) from low-income families will be entitled to travel support if they attend one of their three nearest suitable schools where they live between two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) and 6 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their school.

Children and young people aged 11 and over (years 7 - 11) from low-income families who are attending their nearest designated faith school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will also be entitled to travel support if their school is more than two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) but not more than 15 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their home.

## **Special educational needs, disability and mobility problems**

Where a child/young person with special education needs, a disability and/or mobility problems does not meet the other three eligibility criteria but has identified specific needs/circumstances that may mean it is unreasonable to expect the child/young person to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then an assessment based on their individual needs and circumstances will be undertaken to identify if support with travel is necessary in order to access their education setting.

# Application Process

## How to Apply

All requests for travel support must be made through submission of an online application form <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/schooltravelform> .

Alternative formats of this policy and application form are also available in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Accessibility Policy [Website accessibility \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/accessibility)

The Council will look to complete the assessment of applications in a timely fashion, aiming to put in place travel arrangements for those entitled at the earliest opportunity. However, it may take up to 6 weeks to process and families should be prepared to make their own interim travel arrangements if necessary.

While an application is being processed parent/carers will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements, the Council will not compensate parent/carers during the assessment process for any costs incurred.

During periods of high demand, such as the build-up to the new academic year, timescales for processing applications may be extended. Families are advised to apply for support with travel at the earliest opportunity to ensure arrangements are in place when they are required.

To try and reduce any disruption to the service and inform effective planning, The Council are implementing cut off dates for applications made for arrangements to begin for the next academic year. The beginning of the academic year is the most critical time with regards to school travel and we aim to promote continuity in the service we provide the children.

Late applications will still receive travel assistance, however this may be delayed for the start of the academic year. The arrangements may be interim or temporary solutions that have been sought in the short term and will be subject to review/change.

Cut-off dates will be published well in advance via the Council's local offer, which is available on the Council's website. Where possible, we will also correspond with parent/carers in writing via mail/email informing them of the exact dates.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application with explanation of the reasoning of the decision in accordance with this policy.

# Assessing travel support entitlement for compulsory school age children and young people

In all cases, a child/young person must be attending the nearest suitable school (or one of the three nearest suitable schools under the extended rights eligibility). The nearest suitable school for the purpose of school travel will be measured by shortest walking distance. This is defined as a school that has spaces available that provides education appropriate to the age, gender, ability and aptitude of the child/young person, and appropriate to the child/young person's EHCP where one exists. It should be noted that a child's nearest school for school travel purposes may not be their nearest suitable school for admissions purposes.

Types of suitable schools considered under this policy are:

- community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- academies or alternative provision academies
- alternative provision academies
- community or foundation special schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- maintained nursery schools
- city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts
- independent schools where this is named on a child/young person's EHCP or is the nearest of two schools named.

For mainstream applications processed during the normal school admissions round, a school will be determined as having a vacancy if a place would have been offered according to the allocations made on the national offer day, assuming the parent/carer(s) either made or could reasonably have made an application. For applications made after the normal admissions round and those made during the school year, a school will be determined as having a vacancy if, at the point of processing the child/young person's school application, a place could have been allocated to the child/young person.

When a child or young person cannot be offered a place at the nearest school to the home address, the Council will, subject to the criteria set within this policy and the qualifying distance being met, provide support with travel to the next nearest school with space to admit. For travel arrangements to be provided in this instance the parent/carer(s) must provide evidence that they have applied for and been refused a place at the school which is the nearest school for their home address and any other schools closer than the school offering admission.

Where a school operates on multiple or split sites, the assessment of nearest qualifying school will take account of the sites used to prioritise admissions (as defined in each school's admission arrangements), regardless of which year groups are educated at which site or which site a child or young person might attend.

If a school makes arrangements independently to enable a child/young person(s) to be on dual roll or have commissioned an alternative location/setting (without consultation with the Council) to provide elements of the individuals education then the School will be responsible for ensuring suitable travel arrangements are in place.

## Named School in Education, Health and Care Plan

For a child or young person with special educational needs, disability and mobility problems and who has an active Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) parent/carer(s) have the right to ask for a particular school to be named in their child/young person's plan.

During the process of naming the school and finalising the plan the Council will consider whether the child will be eligible for school travel and how travel arrangements will be provided. The Council will also consider the impact of the journey and the child/young person's ability to learn upon arrival. If the journey may cause a negative impact on the child/young person, the Council will need to consider mitigations to minimise impact and whether the school remains appropriate for the child/young person due to the potential impact.

For a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan, the school named in a child's plan will usually be considered their nearest suitable school for home to school travel purposes.

Where a parent/carer would prefer their child to attend a school that is further away from their home than what the Local Authority deems to be their nearest, suitable school that would be able to meet their needs and deliver the special education provision, as stated in Section F of the EHCP. The local authority will consider whether providing travel support for the child to the preferred school would be compatible with the efficient use of resources (known as 'the Dudley test').

The Local Authority will consider three steps:

1. Are both schools suitable and is there a physical place available at the Local Authority's proposed closer school.
2. If both schools are suitable, the cost of the relevant travel offer to each of the two schools.
3. Whether the cost of the preferred school is significantly or disproportionately more expensive than the Local Authority's closest school (*including transport costs*), to such an extent that it may be deemed an inefficient use of resources.

If the Local Authority's choice cannot meet the child's needs and deliver the special educational provision as stated in Section F and/or there is no physical place available, then the parent's choice will be deemed as the child's nearest suitable school, and will be named in the EHCP, without any condition.

If both schools are deemed suitable, the Local Authority will determine the cost of providing the child with a free travel offer to each of the two schools. If it would cost more to provide travel support for the child to the preferred school, the Local Authority will decide whether this additional cost is incompatible with the efficient use of resources. This will include deciding whether the educational benefits and other advantages the school is able to provide for the child, outweigh the additional cost.

If it is decided that the parent/carer(s) choice is compatible with the efficient use of resources then only this school will be named, in the EHCP, without any conditions.

If the cost of the parents/carer(s) choice of school is deemed significantly or disproportionately more expensive than the Local Authority's choice of school, to such an extent that it is deemed an inefficient use of resources, the Local Authority may name both schools on the condition that parent/carer(s) provide for all travel arrangements and expenses to the preferred school.

If the cost difference is not deemed significant, then the Local Authority will name the preferred school, in the EHCP, without any conditions.

Should you have any query regarding the named school within your child's EHCP, please contact your link SEND Officer.

Parent/carer(s) who disagree that both schools are suitable and consider only their choice can meet their child's needs, and/or, where a parent/carer considers that the cost (including transport to their preferred school) is not an inefficient use of resources have the right of appeal to the [SEND Tribunal - Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal](#)

## **How walking distance is measured**

Walking distances are calculated using the shortest available walking route from the home address to school. If families believe that the walking route measured is not available to walk they should request a review of the route.

The legal definition of an 'available walking route' is a route along which a child or young person, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school.

Where a school operates on a temporary site and that school's permanent/current site is deemed to be a child/young person's nearest qualifying school, the home to school walking distance will be measured to the school's temporary site to determine if the child or young person lives over the statutory walking distance and is eligible for travel support. Eligibility will be reassessed at the point a child or young person ceases to be educated at the temporary site.

Distances will be measured from the address point of the pupil's house to the nearest school gate available for pupils to use.

## **Accompanied as necessary**

Parent/carer(s) are expected to accompany their child/young person to school. Assessments of routes will be undertaken on this basis. Parent/carer(s) will be expected to make suitable arrangements to accompany their child/young person or make alternative travel arrangements if a route is deemed available.

A child or young person will not automatically be eligible for home to school travel solely because of parental/carer work or caring commitments that mean they are unable to accompany their child/young person themselves.

Where there are circumstances that may impact a parent/carer(s) ability to accompany their child/young person to school then the Council will consider these on a case-by-case basis (see extenuating circumstances). This may include the parent/carer having a disability or mobility problem that would make it difficult to accompany their child/young person.

## **Route safety assessment**

Where a parent/carer believes the assessed walking route to be unsafe, they should write to the Home to School Transport (HTST) Team outlining the aspect of the route they believe to be unsafe. The identified aspects of the route will then be reviewed by the team. Review of the routes will use the 'Road Safety GB Guidelines on Assessment of Walked Routes to School' in conjunction with local context and knowledge to assess the suitability of the route.

## **Extended Rights**

Parent/carer(s) who believe they meet the Extended Rights criteria and are therefore eligible for support with travel to school must include evidence of the child/young person's entitlement to free school meals or the family's receipt of maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC) with their application form. Parent/carer(s) must evidence this by including a copy of all 6 pages of their most recent TC602, Tax Credit Award Notice, with their application.

A child or young person who has been assessed as eligible for travel support by meeting the Extended Rights criteria will have their entitlement reviewed each academic year to ensure that the child/young person continues to meet the necessary criteria.

If a child or young person ceases to be eligible for free school meals or a family ceases to be entitled to the maximum level of Working Tax Credit during the academic year for which travel support has been awarded, travel support will continue until the end of that academic year.

If the child or young person is applying for travel support to a school of faith under Extended Rights eligibility, then the parent/carer(s) must also provide supporting evidence regarding their genuine adherence to their religion or belief and this will normally be confirmed by asking their religious leader to sign the denomination form.

## **Special educational needs, disability and mobility problems**

Where a child/young person with special education needs, a disability and/or mobility problems does not meet the other three eligibility criteria but has identified specific needs/circumstances that may mean it is unreasonable to expect the child or young person to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then an assessment based on their individual needs and circumstances will be undertaken.

In determining whether a child or young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk between home and school, the Council will consider whether the child/young person could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child/young person's parent/carer(s) can reasonably be expected to accompany their child/young person. The expectation is that a child/young person will be accompanied by a parent/carer.

When assessing entitlement for travel support for a child or young person with SEND or mobility problems, the Council will consider the individual needs of each child/young person. This may include taking professional advice from educational psychologists, medical professionals and teachers and consulting with parent/carer(s) before arriving at a final decision.

Consideration will also be given to the child/young person's physical and medical requirements including any disabilities they may have. The findings and decision will be shared with parent/carer(s).

The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing travel support entitlement:

- the age of the child or young person
- the distance of the child/young person from school to home
- whether the child or young person is physically able to walk the journey to school
- whether the walking route is appropriate for the pupil and their specific needs and allows them to arrive in a fit state to be educated
- whether a child/young person's emotional and behavioural difficulties will create a clear health and safety hazard to themselves or others on the journey to school
- the SEND of the child or young person
- the efficient use of resources
- any other individual circumstance

This is not an exhaustive list. It is not presented in any particular order and is for guidance only. Meeting one or more of the criteria does not automatically entitle a child or young person with SEND to travel support.

The fact that a child or young person has an EHCP or attends a special school does not automatically entitle them to travel support.

Eligibility for travel support is related to the child/young person's needs. Assessment may take into account the need for travel support due to some family circumstances. Factors identified in an application will be considered when determining eligibility for home to school travel support and deciding on the type of travel support to be provided.

Other family circumstances, such as parent/carer(s) attending work or looking after other children/young people will not normally be considered when determining eligibility.

## **Elective Home Education**

Where a parent/carer chooses to home educate their child, instead of sending them to a school, no assistance will be available from the Local Authority in connection with any arising travel need.

## **Education other than at school (EOTAS)**

For a child to be Educated other than at a school the Local Authority must agree to this arrangement. Where the Local Authority arranges for a pupil to have education other than at a school, the Local Authority will provide transport subject to the normal eligibility criteria, as detailed in this Home to School Travel Policy.

## **Shared custody arrangements**

A child or young person's home is the place where they are habitually and normally resident. When assessing eligibility and making travel arrangements this will be the primary home address recorded with the School and in accordance with any benefits received on behalf of the child or young person.

Where a child/young person who is eligible for travel support spends part of the week at one location and another for the rest of the week, due to shared custody for example, the Council will not normally provide travel from both locations, travel will be organised based on the primary home address.

## **Temporary (housing) local authority accommodation**

Where a low income family has been moved to temporary local authority accommodation, such as bed and breakfast, they may be eligible for travel support for up to two terms.

This is to facilitate attendance at the child/young person's same school while arrangements are made for transition to the nearest suitable school.

For support to be provided the child/young person's "new" temporary accommodation must be located at least 2 miles from their existing school, and it must be the nearest school to their previous home at the time of securing a school place and moving into temporary local authority accommodation.

Children and young people in key stage 4 (years 10 and 11) at the time of being moved will be supported in their current school until the end of key stage 4 as long as the school remains beyond 2 miles from the child/young person's temporary local authority accommodation. The award of support will not be limited to two terms or subject to moving to the nearest available suitable school.

## **Support for children who are in the care of the Council**

Children and young people in care of the Council (children looked after) and children/young people who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to child arrangements order or special guardianship order) will be assessed against the eligibility criteria details in this policy.

- If the child or young person is not entitled to free travel support, it is the carer's responsibility to ensure that they are able to get to and from school.
- Where exceptional circumstances exist, the professionals working with the individual child/young person would review the child/young person's needs and, if appropriate, make a case for travel support, which would be considered by the service.

## **Independent Fostering Agency Placements**

In line with page 84 of the current National Framework Contract for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements:

*'The provider or their carers are expected to fund the day to day travel needs for children/young people placed within a 20 mile radius. This agreement shall be specified in the individual Placement Agreement (IPA).'*

It is important to note that radius will differ from the journey measured post code to post code. Where the journey exceeds the 20 mile radius the Home to School Transport (HTST) team will reimburse the additional mileage. This will be discussed and agreed on a case by case basis.

The HTST Team is not responsible for the administration relating to other local authorities and IFA travel arrangements.

## **Extenuating circumstances**

Recognising that the Council's discretionary powers should not be restricted by its general policy, the Council will consider and may agree requests for home to school travel support where there are considered to be extenuating circumstances that prevent a child or young person accessing their school unless travel support is put in place. If the parent/carer(s) believe extenuating circumstances exist and support with travel is necessary, then information and evidence must be provided when applying for support in order for this to be considered.

The overriding expectation is that parent/carer(s) should undertake their legal responsibility to get their child(ren)/young person(s) to and from school and as such the Council will need to be satisfied that the parent/carer(s) have demonstrated why they, for social, medical, financial or personal reasons cannot undertake this duty.

A decision will be based on evidence received to support the case as to whether travel support is necessary in order for the child or young person to receive an education. Consideration will be given as to whether the circumstances could have reasonably been foreseen by the parent/carer. For example, moving to temporary accommodation owing to flood damage cannot be foreseen, whereas choosing a school other than a child/young person's nearest school and realising following this decision that support with travel is not available could be foreseen.

Where it is decided that a child or young person does not qualify for support with travel based on the presented needs/circumstances then it remains the parent/carer(s) responsibility to ensure school attendance or consider transferring the child/young person to a more local school.

In all cases the decision whether to exercise discretion will be taken on a case by case basis.

## Special consideration and appeals

Parent/carer(s) of children or young people who live in Bristol and who wish to appeal a decision about one of the following, may apply for their case to be considered at a travel support case review:

- the travel arrangements offered
- their child/young person's eligibility
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances
- the safety of the route

During the appeal process about an application for travel support, travel arrangements will not be provided to the child/young person. Where the appeal concerns a change to existing travel arrangements, then the previously agreed travel arrangements will continue until the review is complete.

The Council operates a two-stage appeal process as detailed below:

Stage one: Review by a senior officer

To request appeal, contact [home.school.travel@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:home.school.travel@bristol.gov.uk)

- Parent/carer(s) have 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school travel support decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.
- The written request should detail why the parent/carer(s) believe the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent/carer(s) believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent/carer(s) written request, a senior officer should complete a review of the original decision and send the parent/carer a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review.

Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel

To request appeal, contact [home.school.travel@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:home.school.travel@bristol.gov.uk)

- Parent/carer(s) have 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent/carer(s) request an independent appeal panel considers written and verbal representations from both the parent/carer(s) and officers involved in the case and gives a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days).

## Change of child/young person's circumstances

It is the responsibility of parent/carer(s) to inform the HTST team immediately of any changes in circumstances which the original application was based on. Failure to do so may result in existing travel support being suspended/terminated.

The Council will also perform routine checks throughout the year and if it is identified circumstances have changed without parent/carer(s) informing the Council then any existing support may be stopped immediately if the change in circumstances mean that the child or young person no longer meets the agreed eligibility criteria.

Change in circumstances in regard to extended rights and family financial situation will not normally result in an instant removal of support, at the point of change in relation to the family's financial circumstance and no longer meeting the eligibility threshold then assistance will only remain until the end of the current School year.

If a family moves home, a new assessment will be undertaken to establish if eligibility criteria continues to be met. The outcome of the assessment will come into immediate effect.

## **Review of child/young person's needs and ongoing support suitability**

The Council will undertake regular reviews of support and individual eligibility to ensure any provision continues to be appropriate for the individual passengers, is financially sustainable for the Council, and supports the development of independence.

Where a change to existing travel arrangements is identified as necessary the Council will inform parent/carer(s) of any proposed changes and timescales as well as the reasons for the decision. The Council will aim to provide a suitable time frame to support individual transition to the new travel arrangements for each child/young person. Each transition period will reflect the individual needs, circumstances of the child or young person, and the significance of the change.

## **Withdrawal of support provided in error**

Where a child or young person has been awarded travel support in error, Bristol City Council has the right to withdraw this after first considering the circumstances of each case to determine whether there are exceptional reasons for provision to continue.

Consideration cannot be given to those who simply cannot meet their parental/carer responsibility to get their own child/young person to school following the removal of support. This would have been expected to have been taken into account at the time of admitting the child or young person into school, as would have been the case had the error not been made. Where it is decided to withdraw travel support, one term's notice is given.

## **Provision of false or inaccurate information**

When submitting an application, the parent/carer(s) will sign a declaration confirming the accuracy of the information. The parent/carer(s) are also under a duty to notify the Council of any changes in circumstances. If it later transpires that the information is incorrect or updated information has not been provided, then notice will be given and the travel support will cease immediately. The Council will also take steps to recover the cost of travel support provided as a result of this inaccurate information. If the information has been provided fraudulently, the Council's corporate anti-fraud team will investigate to determine whether a criminal prosecution should be commenced.

# **Discretionary Travel Support**

## **Children below the age of 5 (statutory school age)**

Children who become statutory school age during the academic year will be identified as a “rising 5”. Rising 5’s will be classed, for the purpose of travel support as statutory school age at the start of the academic year in which they turn 5 years of age.

A child who does not turn 5 during the academic year will not be classed as statutory school age and therefore will be deemed not entitled, in accordance with the Council’s statutory duty.

Where a child is below statutory school age and parent/carer(s) believe that there are extenuating circumstances that warrant a child being provided with support with travel before they turn five years of age, they should complete the appropriate application form and provide supporting evidence of the extenuating circumstances for their request to be considered on a case by case basis.

A child becomes of compulsory school age at the start of term after their fifth birthday.

## **Pre-school children with SEND**

Local authorities do not have a duty to provide or arrange free travel for children who have not yet reached compulsory school age and who are attending a pre-school setting. However, the Council will consider travel support applications for children below statutory school age, with an active EHCP, in extenuating circumstances and where the Council deems support is necessary for the child.

Where parent/carer(s) believe that there are extenuating circumstances that warrant a child being provided with support to their travel to School (before they turn five years of age), they should complete the appropriate application form and provide supporting evidence of the case.

If the Council agrees to provide travel support it may request a contribution towards costs with travel arrangements subsidised by the Council.

# Travel Support Options

## Forms of Travel Support

The Council will assess the travel needs of all eligible children/young people and decide the most appropriate form of support that will be provided. In accordance with the Council's strategic aims and objectives outlined earlier in this policy.

In accordance with national guidance, a journey to school for eligible children and young people should be suitable, safe and reasonably stress free to enable the a child or young person to arrive at school ready for a day of study. To this end it is considered reasonable that maximum journey times each way for children and young people are as follows:

- 45 minutes for primary aged pupils
- 75 minutes for secondary aged pupils

However, it is recognised that adhering to journey times may not always be possible due to the distances travelled and complexities of specific journeys. It may be deemed acceptable for a trip to exceed these journey times if it is considered that the additional time does not place undue stress, strain or difficulty on the child/young person, which would prevent them from benefitting from the education.

Where children and young people with special educational needs, disability or mobility problems are present, then journey times may sometimes need to be longer and more complex, although the Council will ensure that it does not extend routes for such children/young people unnecessarily with appropriate measures in place to address any implications for doing so.

Subject to meeting the eligibility criteria of this policy, the following support will be considered (in the following order):

1. bus or train pass for the pupil (including parent/carer where necessary);
2. independent travel training;
3. provision of a personal travel budget (PTB);
4. payment of car mileage/travel reimbursement for the pupil's parent/carer(s);
5. Provision of a cycling allowance
6. Provision of a suitable escort to enable a pupil to walk a short distance
7. provision of shared transport (using collection point if appropriate);
8. Individual transport

The provision of individual transport, such as a taxi, with or without escort should be exceptional and only where it has been demonstrated that other modes of support are not suitable.

Other travel options may be considered and offered where individual needs enable travel, and the development of travel skills and independence.

## **Provision of Escorts**

The Home to School Travel Officer will undertake an assessment of the child/young person's ability to travel to school and whether an escort is required. The following will be taken into consideration:

- Where an individual child/young person's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle.
- Where an assessment of the children/young people on the vehicle and the journey to be undertaken highlight a clear danger or health and safety risk to all passengers on the vehicle.

The consideration for Escorts will be made based on evidence received from all relevant parties and will be reviewed regularly, where appropriate and whenever a contract is re-tendered.

All travel support will be reviewed as part of the annual review of needs and if appropriate as part of an early review. Travel support may be withdrawn or amended if circumstances have changed, or the HTST team considers the withdrawal appropriate as an encouragement to independence or the offer is no longer the most economical mode of travel.

## **Times of Travel (School Times)**

Schools are responsible for deciding when their school day will start and end.

Bristol City Council will make arrangements to enable eligible children to travel to school for the beginning of the school day, and to return home at the end of the school day. Bristol City Council are not required to make arrangements:

- for children to travel between institutions during the school day;
- to enable children to attend extra-curricular activities and other commitments outside school hours; or
- to enable children to get to and from before and after school childcare, whether formal (for example, a childminder) or informal (for example, a grandparent).

Where particular classes, year groups or pupils have a start or finish time that is different from most pupils at the school, it will not normally be possible for the Council to make separate travel arrangements. In this event schools may be required to make their own travel arrangements to accommodate these pupils.

## **Learning at Alternative Sites/Locations**

Where a child/young person(s) are educated on multiple or split sites (operated by the school), the assessment of eligibility and any subsequent travel arrangements will be based on the address used to secure the school place (to prioritise admissions and as defined in each school's admission arrangements), regardless of which year groups are educated at which site or which site a child or young person might attend.

Schools organising education at alternative locations or away from the location used to secure a school place will be responsible for making any additional or alternative travel arrangements to accommodate the alternative location (for learning) for the child/young person.

If the alternative provision is named in the pupil's EHCP as the nearest suitable provision to meet needs (section i), travel support will be considered on a case by case basis.

## **Passenger code of conduct**

Children and young people with special educational needs, disability or mobility problems may demonstrate behaviours as part of their additional needs, for example it may be a consequence of frustration as a result of communication difficulties. These needs and circumstances will be taken into consideration in the event of an incident taking place and as part of any investigation or review.

In the first instance it is expected that the Council, School and parent/carer(s) would work together to identify suitable strategies of support to effectively manage any challenging behaviour that may be presented whilst children/young people travel to school.

If the behaviour of a child or young person becomes unmanageable or presents significant and “real” safety risks then travel support may be withdrawn. This will only be undertaken as a last resort, if an incident occurs then a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) or alternative form of travel may be offered, this will be assessed, reviewed and decided on a case by case basis.

To mitigate potential triggers that may influence changes in behaviour the Council will aim to provide consistent travel arrangements, and if any change can be identified in advance then it will try to inform everyone affected at the earliest opportunity. It is important to acknowledge that some changes are unavoidable and may take effect with minimal advance notification.

The types of behaviours typically identified as unacceptable include (but not limited):

- being rude
- pushing and kicking
- bullying
- distracting the driver
- refusing to wear a seatbelt or remain seated
- endangering the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others

The Council will work with schools, transport providers, children/young people and their families to ensure appropriate measures are in place to manage unacceptable behaviour where it occurs. This may include the introduction of seating plans or other support strategies for the child/young person.

## **Travel training**

Local authorities have a duty to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities up to the age of 25 in education and training. Independent travel training aims to achieve this.

Independent travel training teaches children/young people a valuable skill to prepare for adulthood, an essential employability skill, and provides greater opportunities for young people, not least increasing confidence in their abilities and reducing their sense of reliance on family members.

The Council will work in partnership with education establishments and other individuals to identify young people who could benefit from Independent Travel Training (ITT) and contact their families to invite them to take part in ITT.

The travel training scheme is not yet in operation. However, further information on Independent Travel Training, including how it is assessed, delivered, and the benefits it provides children/young people will be available online as soon as the scheme is live.

## Personal Travel Budgets

A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is a payment from Bristol City Council to parent/carer(s) of children and young people who are eligible for travel support. A PTB gives families the choice and control to make their own travel arrangements for the child/young person to access education.

The PTB is usually paid in advance at the start of each term (6 payments per academic year) into the bank account of the parent/carer.

The PTB is based on the child/young person's attendance and adjustments may be made to termly payments if a child/young person does not attend every day during the previous term/s. Parent/carer(s) will be notified of any payment adjustment in advance of any change.

Where two or more children/young people live at the same address and attend the same school and the PTB has been agreed for one child/young person, additional PTB payments will not usually be provided for the other children/young people, as all children/young people would be expected to travel together (absences will only be taken off if all eligible children/young people are absent).

Any arrangements made by the parent/carer(s) using the PTB are the responsibility of the parent/carer(s).

Information on PTB's, including how to apply for a PTB and how they work, can be found at: [Personal travel budget \(PTB\): money to help take your child to school \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/parents-and-carers/transport/ptb)

If the Council become aware of a change to the child/young person(s) circumstances that effect the individuals eligibility or value of the PTB, then the Council will claim back any over payment from the date the change in circumstances took effect.

## Collection points

The Council will identify pick-up and drop-off locations for pupils to meet the bus or taxi rather than offering a door-to-door service. This reduces the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils and supports them to become more independent and better prepares them for adulthood.

Using a collection point will not be possible for some children and young people with the most complex SEND needs, and in some cases parent/carer(s) own mobility or disability may impact on them being able to accompany their child/young person to a collection point. An assessment will be conducted to determine if the use of a collection point is a reasonable expectation.

Where a collection point is allocated, it is the parent/carer(s) responsibility to make sure that their child/young person travels to and from the collection point and transfers to and from the vehicle safely.

For parent/carer(s) who are temporarily unable to take their child/young person to a collection point, no temporary support will be provided in those circumstances. This is because the child/young person's special educational need or disability has not changed and the travel support service from the collection point is still available.

All collection points will reflect the specific needs of the individual, each collection point will be assessed in advanced for their suitability.

- wherever a bus stop can be legally used as a collection point, it will be
- minibuses can stop to collect and drop off on yellow and double yellow lines;
- vehicles cannot stop on white zig zags (near a zebra crossing) or school keep-clear hatchings
- the driver always plans not to cause obstructions to other road users while making a drop off or collection and will try to stop in parking areas or bays
- collections or drop-off are always made kerb side
- each collection point is physically assessed before being used in service; a driver will go out and access to see if the location is safe (for example, a well-lit public location, not too close to a junction or on the brow of a hill)
- the drivers complete dynamic risk assessments at the time of collections or / drop offs in the eventuality of any changes (new road layouts, another road user in the stopping space) and will slightly adjust the collection point if it is unsafe to stop

### **Weekly/Fortnightly boarding placements**

Travel support will be provided to take children/young people to school at the beginning and end of the School week.

### **Termly residential placements**

12 single journeys from home to school and school to home will be provided each academic year. This will consist of trips required at the start and end of each term, and at other school closure times, i.e. half term breaks.