London Borough of Barnet

SEND Travel Assistance Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age

(2026 -2027)

Delivered by Barnet Education & Learning Service (BELS)

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Introduction

It is the parents/carers responsibility to ensure that their child maintains their attendance at school. This means that they must take all the action necessary to enable their child to attend their school. For most parents/carers, this includes making travel arrangements.

The Local Authority has a duty and powers to make travel arrangements for children who are considered eligible for travel assistance. This document outlines the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy for the London Borough of Barnet (LBB), in compliance with the Education Act 1996 and subsequent legislation.

This policy explains the eligibility criteria, the application process and the travel assistance options that are available. This policy covers the provision of home to school travel assistance for children and young people aged 5 to 16, up until the end of the academic year in which they turn 16.

The policy promotes a safe, active, and sustainable approach to travel, prioritising the most independent options while fostering genuine partnerships with children, young people, and their parents/carers. LBB is committed to enabling opportunities to develop these young people's skills, preparing them for adulthood, independence and employment.

Main changes from the May 2026 Department for Educations statutory guidance for Local Authorities

The following policy has been updated in line with the current statutory guidance available for local authorities – ' Travel to school for children of compulsory school age. Statutory guidance for local authorities. May 2026' .

The significant changes that have been made to this policy are directly linked to changes in the statutory guidance. These areas are

- Extended rights
- Pupils with dual registration
- New requirement in the Bus Services Act 2025 / DBS
- Working Tax Credit has been phased out so references for Working Tax Credit have been replaced with Universal Credit.

Policy Overview

Most children and young people will access school supported by their family/carer without additional assistance from the Council. Transport for London (TFL) already provides suitable free transport for children under the age of 16. This is considered an acceptable form of travel assistance, as long as the needs of the child/young person have been considered.

Where public transport provided by TFL is not currently suitable and more specialised travel assistance is required, it should be part of a plan that encourages children and young people to

become more independent and resilient in their future lives, while encouraging sustainable forms of travel, including walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

This policy sets out how the Council will identify and support those children and young people who need travel assistance to a school or educational setting, and provide it in a consistent, transparent and fair way. It will also explain how parents/carers and, where appropriate, young people may apply for travel to school assistance, how decisions are made, and how they may appeal against decisions.

This document explains the following:

- The circumstances where the Council has a statutory duty to assist with travel to school/college.
- The criteria the Council will apply when using its discretionary powers to provide travel assistance where there is no statutory duty.
- Examples of how the Council will deal with requests for travel assistance which fall outside the normal policy.
- The travel solution, i.e. how the assistance, if agreed, will be provided.
- Operational issues, including arrangements pupils who attend residential special schools, the deployment of escorts, and personal travel allowance.
- The arrangements for considering appeals by parents/ carers against the Council's decisions, and the measures the Council will take to resolve disputes in the event the transport arrangements break down.
- The Council's expectations in relation to the partnership with parents/carers, including its expectations on parents/carers to play a responsible part in the arrangements for safe travel for their child.
- The procedures the Council will use to determine eligibility for travel assistance, timescales for notifying parents/carers and the way assistance will be kept under review.

Statutory duty in relation to eligible children

Sections 508A, 508B and 508C of the Education Act make provisions for local authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. This duty applies to:

- all children of compulsory school age attending their nearest suitable school, or a designated school.
- if the child has an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan).
- a school designated by an appropriate officer for other reasons, irrespective of the category of school the child attends (local authority-maintained, academy, special school, or any other special provision).

These provisions are for travel to school arrangements only, the LA has no responsibility to provide travel arrangements:

- between educational institutions during the school day

- to enable children to attend extra-curricular activities and other commitments outside school hours; or
- to and from before and after school childcare or medical appointments.

If LBB names a residential school based on termly or weekly boarding in the EHCP of an eligible child, LBB will provide reasonable free travel assistance to enable the child to attend that school, for example, on a Monday and Friday for children who are weekly boarders, or before and after school holidays for children who board termly.

What is compulsory school age?

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

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

Part 1: Eligibility Requirements and Qualifying Factors

1. Suitable and qualifying school – definition

A suitable school for school travel purposes is a qualifying school that is appropriate for the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have. Schools can meet a wide range of needs. Where a child has an EHCP, the school named in the plan will normally be their nearest suitable school.

Travel assistance may be provided for children or young people attending one of the following qualifying schools or education and training establishments:

- community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided and 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 of compulsory school age)
- city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts.

For children with special educational needs, an independent school is a qualifying school if it is the only school named in their EHCP.

2. Eligibility Criteria

A child is eligible for travel assistance if they are of compulsory school age, attend their nearest suitable school and if any of the criteria's listed below is applicable to them:

- Statutory walking distance
- Special Educational Needs (SEN), disability or mobility needs
- Unsafe walking route
- Extended rights/low income

2.1. Statutory walking distances eligibility

Where children live within the statutory walking distance (and are not eligible for free travel on any of the other grounds set out in this policy) LBB expects parents/carers to be responsible for arranging their child's travel to school. It is for the parent to determine what arrangements are suitable for their child.

LBB can provide travel assistance to children where the distance between the home address and school is greater than the statutory walking distances.

Eligible children are those of compulsory school age who attend the school designated by the Local Authority and who live beyond the statutory walking distances (two miles for pupils below the age of eight and three miles for those aged eight to 16).

Distances are measured (using online mapping tools - google maps) along the shortest available safe walking route (which may include footpaths) and take into account that, where necessary, the child will be accompanied by a parent/carer.

Where a child lives at two addresses, for example if separated parents share joint custody of the child, LBB will provide travel to school assistance from the primary address, provided:

- the primary address is within LBB.
- the child is eligible for travel assistance based on the eligibility criteria - the child's EHCP (if applicable) is administered by LBB.

If the child or young person lives equally between different addresses, the principal home address will be considered as being the address at which the child is registered whilst attending school, with their GP, and, if applicable, the address of the parent who is in receipt of Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit.

LBB will consider providing travel assistance to and from the second address and will provide support when logistically possible and within the reasonable use of resources.

2.2. Special Educational Needs (SEN), disability or mobility needs

LBB will assess eligibility and travel assistance requirements based on special educational needs, disability or mobility challenges on a case by case basis. This assessment will take account of the child's physical and mental ability to walk to school with any other health and safety concern related to their needs. The assessment may also take into account whether the child is able to walk to school if they were accompanied by their parent/carer.

Where a child is unable to walk to school, LBB may request the following to contribute towards the decision making:

- information provided by the parent.
- information provided by professionals involved in the child's care, for example, an educational psychologist or hospital consultant (please note that we do not consider a GP note sufficient).
- information provided by the child's school.
- any relevant information in the child's EHCP if they have one.
- any relevant information in their individual healthcare plan if they have one.

There may be cases where a child may be eligible for support because of a temporary mobility problem but due to the short-term nature of some mobility problems it may not be feasible for LBB to make travel arrangements before the child has recovered.

2.3. Unsafe walking route

LBB will provide travel assistance to children who attend their nearest suitable school which is within statutory walking distance of their home and there is no alternative route within the statutory walking distance that they would be able to walk in reasonable safety, even if accompanied by their parent or carer.

When assessing whether a route can be walked in reasonable safety, LBB will consider the whole of the route journey including any sections that use footpaths or bridleways, as well as sections that use roads. A range of risks such as canals, rivers, ditches, speed of traffic and fields of vision for the pedestrian and motorists will also be considered.

2.4. Extended rights/low income

Extended rights provide additional entitlement to free school travel assistance for children from low-income households. From the beginning of the 2026-2027 academic year, there are two categories of Free School Meals (FSM) relevant to understanding extended rights:

- **Targeted Free School Meals (Targeted FSM)** – This is the category used when determining whether a child may qualify for extended rights to free school travel.

- **Expanded Free School Meals (Expanded FSM)** – This provides entitlement to free school meals to a wider group of children. Eligibility for Expanded FSM alone does not provide entitlement to extended rights travel.

The criteria used to determine eligibility for Targeted or Expanded FSM are separate to the LA's assessment of eligibility for travel assistance.

A child who is eligible for Targeted FSM may qualify for free school travel under the extended rights provisions where they meet one of the following criteria:

- They are aged 8 or over but under 11, attend their nearest suitable school and live more than 2 miles from the school;
- They are aged 11 to 16, attend one of their three nearest suitable schools and the school is more than 2 miles but no more than 6 miles from their home; or
- They are aged 11 to1 6 and attend a school chosen on the grounds of their parent's religion or belief, where there is no suitable school nearer to their home having regard to that religion or belief. The school must be more than 2 miles but no more than 15 miles from their home.

For the 6-mile and 15-mile upper limits, distances are measured using road routes. There is no expectation that a child would walk these distances and so walking routes should not be used for assessing eligibility.

Where a child ceases to meet the extended rights eligibility criteria during the academic year, free travel will continue until the end of that academic year.

Children who qualified for and were receiving extended rights travel on 31 March 2025 may be covered with transitional arrangements. Where the relevant eligibility criteria continue to be met, free travel will continue until the end of the child's current phase of education or until they leave their current school, whichever is sooner.

2.5. Children registered at more than one school

In some circumstance, a child may be registered at, and attend, more than one qualifying school. This is sometimes referred to as dual registration or for children with an EHC Plan, a dual placement.

Where a child is registered at two qualifying schools, neither of which is a Pupil Referal Unit (PRU), eligibility for free home to school travel assistance will apply in relation to the school the child is required to attend on the relevant school day, provided the child meets eligibility for home to school travel assistance.

Different arrangements apply where one of the settings is a PRU. In these circumstances, free travel to the PRU is only available during a period of suspension or where the child is attending the PRU as a result of an off-site education.

The LA will consider travel arrangements for children who are registered at more than one school in accordance with School Travel (Pupils with Dual Registration) (England) Regulations 2007 and the current statutory hone to school travel guidance.

3. Children with EHCP's

It is important to note there is no automatic entitlement to travel assistance because a child has an EHCP.

Most children in LBB with an EHCP or who attend a special school are not eligible for specialised travel assistance.

The naming of a school in a child's EHCP is governed by section 39 and 40 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Parents/carers have the right to ask for a particular school to be named in their child's EHCP. Where naming the parent's preferred school, LBB need to consider if it is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude, or special educational needs, and that it is compatible with the efficient education of others or the efficient use of resources. If LBB determines the preferred school is not suitable, it will name a different school that it believes to be appropriate for the child.

If LBB determines that providing transport to the parent's preferred school would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources, LBB may:

- name a different school that would be appropriate for the child's needs (this may be the nearer school)

or

- name the parent's preferred school on the condition that the parent arranges the travel or provides the cost of the travel. This will be documented in a side agreement and, if this agreement breaks down, LBB reserves the right to call an emergency annual review to consider whether the preferred school remains suitable and an efficient use of resources.

It would be recommended that parents should liaise with the SEND team to ensure consideration is given to transport options at the time of considering school preferences.

4. LBB's discretionary powers to exercise travel assistance

Whilst there is no statutory responsibility for local authorities to provide travel assistance outside of the remit of the eligibility criteria, LBB has discretion to grant travel assistance even where it falls outside of the normal policy and may do so in exceptional circumstances.

Discretionary travel may be provided in either direction between the area of the child's home address and their school, or both. It may be provided free, or a charge may be made. The Council will consider and take account of relevant factors when deciding whether to charge for the provision of discretionary transport, including reducing charges for children from lowincome families. This is subject to the availability of resources. Applications for travel assistance must be submitted via the usual process.

5. Children below compulsory school age

There is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide travel support to and from school for children under five years old and this applies to those children placed in specialist pre-school provision, or specially supported mainstream education before they reach the age at which school attendance normally starts (the September of the year in which children become 5 years old).

As such, LBB will not offer travel arrangements to children under the age of 5, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

6. Exceptional circumstances

In the case that parents/carers do not meet the eligibility requirements outlined, yet are met with circumstances that prevent them from maintaining their child's attendance at school, then a request can be made, deemed as a special request under exceptional circumstances.

Evidence to support such requests will be required. The final decision is made by an SEN Transport Panel, subject to a right of appeal.

Except in emergencies, special requests should be made at least seven working days in advance of the assistance being required.

Travel assistance does not apply when a family has been temporarily rehoused outside of Barnet and there is a request for travel assistance to a Barnet school to maintain educational continuity.

The following circumstances would not normally be considered exceptional under this policy:

- a change of address.
- inability or unwillingness of a parent to provide or pay for transport.
- where parents/carers have other commitments which prevent them from. taking the child to school, such as taking siblings to schools elsewhere, work schedule or caring for a disabled relative.
- a change of school due to alleged bullying or other problems, unless these have been investigated and the Council confirms that such a change is necessary.
- where non-entitlement arises from the choice of the parent or student.
- loss of employment.
- loss of private transport arrangements.
- where there is a suitable school closer to home.
- travel to and from schools where the parents/carers have arranged the placement themselves.

The following list, which is not exhaustive, sets out some examples of circumstances which the Council may regard as exceptional. If agreed, the assistance will normally be time limited and subject to regular review:

- an unforeseen major and sudden long term change in family circumstances over which the family has no control, and which would otherwise prevent the child from attending school.
- a change of school due to exceptional circumstances (both schools will need to confirm that a change is necessary).
- where a child has an unexpected short term medical condition, which prevents the child from walking. In this instance, supporting medical evidence will be required as well as reasons why parents/carers cannot provide or arrange the transport.

7. Temporary school exclusion

If a young person qualifies for travel assistance but is temporarily attending a different location because of a suspension, their eligibility for travel assistance may extend to the new location for the duration of the suspension.

The alternative educational establishments needs to collaborate with LBB to co-ordinate the transition of travel assistance arrangements provided for the young person.

8. Special requests and variations to existing travel assistance arrangements

This section relates to children who are eligible for travel assistance, but where a parent/carer makes a special request for a change to the normal arrangements.

Where transport is provided or arranged by the Council, children will be assigned to a vehicle following a particular timetable and route.

From time to time the Council receives requests from parents/carers to vary the normal route or timetable. Some requests are for an on-going change, others are one-off requests. LBB would not generally consider the following as exceptions:

- non-home pick-up or drop-off point to fit parents/carers' working arrangements.
- non-home drop-off point to allow for participation in an after-school club.
- non-home drop-off point for childcare reasons.
- non-home pick-up/drop-off for respite or short-term care where this is not part of a formal care plan.
- travel to induction interviews or taster days.
- earlier pick-up time to allow attendance at a breakfast club.
- transport during the school day, for example between schools or sites, to swimming pools, school visits, and so on.
- collection during the school day because of a child's illness.
- variations to assist compliance with religious obligations.
- transport for pupils who are delayed at school to take part in extra-curricular activities or due to detention.
- travel to hospital, dental or other medical appointments.
- travel away from school for work experience.
- travel to an alternative residence, that is not listed as the primary registered address (e.g. parents that may reside separately).

The Council will not normally assist in these circumstances, but will consider minor changes to existing routes or allow a pupil to transfer to a different route with a spare seat, provided:

- there is no additional cost to the Council.
- the journey time and pick-up/drop-off times for other children on the route are not affected by the change.
- except in an emergency, at least seven days' notice is given in writing to allow time for schools, drivers, and escorts to be informed.

Part 2: Applying for Travel Assistance and Travel Assistance Options Available

9. Applying for Travel Assistance

Travel assistance for pupils, including those with SEND is not automatic. Parents/carers will be asked to complete an online application form or e-form (local offer website) to provide the information needed to determine eligibility. The application form can be found on the Barnet Local Offer Page - https://www.barnetlocaloffer.org.uk/pages/home/information-andadvice/transport/travelling-to-and-from-education

10. Determining eligibility

The application will be considered initially by the Transport Panel (which consist of managers from the Transport Brokering Team, SEND and the inclusion team) against the eligibility criteria in the Travel Assistance Policy. Where there is a clear statutory duty to assist, the Transport Panel will approve the request and notify the parent.

In other cases, and where the request is linked to a decision about school placement, the request will be considered by the Complex Needs Panel. Travel requests are usually considered by the panel at the same time as considering which school the child with a EHCP should attend.

In coming to a decision, the Complex Needs Panel will take account of information contained within the EHCP. The panel will also have regard to the cost of transport as well as educational suitability and other factors, such as parental preference when taking into consideration the most efficient use of resources. For placements in residential schools, the panel may also take transport costs into account in deciding whether the pupil should be placed on a daily, weekly, or termly basis.

In some cases, it may be necessary to seek further information from the parent or request medical evidence or seek advice from one of the Council's professionals or the child's current school.

If a request is turned down at this stage, the parents/carers are informed of their right of appeal. Appeal arrangements are set out in Section 12.

11. Requests for travel assistance

Travel assistance requests are considered in two stages:

- first, to determine whether the Council should offer travel assistance (eligibility),

and then

- second, to determine what type of assistance should be offered (the travel solution).

Applicants will need to complete a new application for a child if any of the following applies to them:

- the child has changed addresses.
- the child has changed the school they attend.
- the child is moving from nursery school to primary school.
- the child is moving from primary school to secondary school.
- the child is moving site even if the named establishment remains the same

Making a new application will allow LBB to gather the most accurate information and allow it to assess risk and accommodate the needs of the child, more effectively.

Parents/carers will not be required to make a new travel assistance application between academic years if their child's circumstances have not changed.

The SEN Transport Panel (consists of managers from the Transport Brokerage team and SEN Assessments & Placements Team) aims to process applications as quickly as possible; parents/carers should allow a minimum of 30 days from the date of application for an outcome to their application. Whilst a travel request is being made and a solution being identified LBB will not be responsible for your child's travel arrangements.

After the acceptance of an application, we aim to identify travel arrangements within 10 days. This is not always possible, particular in complex situations or where we are unable to source the arrangements. If it goes beyond the 10-day time limit, the Transport Brokering Team will update the applicant and confirm when they should expect a response. The maximum length of time expected for arrangements to be made is 6 weeks (excluding school holidays). During this time the parent/carer remains responsible for travel arrangements for their child/ren. Where, it takes longer than this, a personal transport allowance or mileage expenses can be offered until such a time that the LBB arrangements are in place.

To reduce disruption to the service and plan effectively, LBB has advised dates that applications are to be submitted by. The advised dates are only applicable for applications being made for the next academic year. These dates will be on the local offer web page. The beginning of the academic year is the most crucial time with regards to school travel and we aim to promote continuity in the service we provide the children, therefore early forward planning is essential. Late applications present multiple challenges, which is why a deadline is advised to parents/carers.

Late applications will still be processed and receive travel assistance where agreed; however, delays are to be expected for the start of the academic year. This includes any requests for interim measures.

12. LBB Travel assistance

LBB considers public transport as a suitable method of transportation for most children to travel to their educational provisions. The general expectation is that the parent will accompany their child on public transport where required. Residents of a LBB, all compulsory aged pupils are entitled to free travel on buses to facilitate this.

Where public transport provided by TFL is not currently suitable and more specialised travel assistance is required, LBB operates several different schemes to provide support for children and young people, to allow them to attend their place of learning.

Where assistance is agreed, consideration is then given to how the pupil will travel to school.

Travel options will be appropriate for the needs of the child and considered in the following order:

- Walking to school, accompanied as necessary and appropriate by parent/carer.
- Cycling to school
- Travel pass/ oyster card for the parent/carer/ appropriate adult to a accompany the pupil on public transport.
- Mileage allowance
- Personal Transport Allowance (PTA)
- Independent Travel Training (ITT)
- Shared school transport arranged by the Council.
- Individual transport in exceptional circumstances.

LBB will seek options which promote independence and the well-being of pupils including, for example, encouraging a healthy lifestyle by walking a reasonable distance where the pupil is mobile, and the route is safe.

LBB are also committed to promoting more sustainable travel methods to transport eligible children and young people from their home to their place of learning.
Sustainable travel means modes of travel which may improve either the physical wellbeing of those who use them, or the environmental well-being of the whole or relation to sustainable travel.

The offer of assistance will take account of the distance from the child's home to school, the suitability and availability of public transport, whether there is already transport going to the named school and the efficient use of Council resources.

12.1. Walking to school, accompanied as necessary by an appropriate adult

LBB will encourage and support parents/carers to walk with their child to their nearest school. Sustainable travel benefits children and everyone around them by helping people keep healthy,

improving mental wellbeing, easing congestion, and reducing toxins in the air. This includes identifying the most suitable and safest route to do so. A one-off green allowance of £100 will payable once a year if this travel assistance is chosen. Once paid the child and parent/carer will not be eligible for any other travel assistance.

12.2. Cycling to school

To encourage pupils to cycle to school, the Council will pay a cycling allowance (currently 20p per mile) for pupils to use their own bike. This will be based on four journeys per day.

Please see bike ability scheme: Parent Information (cycleconfident.com)

12.3. Travel pass/oyster card for the parent/carer/appropriate adult to accompany the young person

Children and many young people are entitled to free transport on buses and travel discounts on trains, although it may be necessary for them to be accompanied by an adult to travel to school. In these instances, travel assistance may be provided through funding for an adult travel pass.

12.4. Mileage allowance

A mileage allowance (currently 45p per mile) is paid for parents and carers to use their own car to transport their child(/ren) to school. This will be based on four journeys per day.

12.5. Personal Travel Allowance (PTA)

A Personal Travel Allowance is to assist with the cost when the parent/carer agrees to take full responsibility for getting their child to school.

The PTA is a regular cash contribution paid into the parents/carers' nominated bank account each month. The parent takes full responsibility for ensuring the child's regular attendance at school. Due to LBB auditing and fraud prevention processes, receipts for public transport fares, taxi journeys or fuel purchases may be requested.

Attendance will be monitored. The PTA may be amended or withdrawn if attendance is not satisfactory.

12.6. Independent Travel Training (ITT)

Independent Travel Training (ITT) gives children and young people the skills and confidence to travel independently on public transport by reducing reliance on specialist provided transport and/or on parents and carers. Specialist travel trainers work one to one with the child or young person to ensure they have the skills to make journeys independently. Those who undertake the training achieve increased life choices and opportunities; greater access to the local community and its facilities; and better socialisation. The travel training programme can

support many modes of transport, including bus, train, tube, walking, cycling or a combination of different types of transport.

The principle is for a child to participate in ITT sessions on a regular basis. On days when a child is not receiving a one-to-one ITT session, they will travel to school with parents, implementing the skills they have developed during the ITT sessions on a daily basis.

12.7. Shared school transport arranged by LBB

Provisions of travel assistance using shared transport will only be granted when it is deemed essential to the child's or young person's needs. All vehicles and drivers will be sourced by a qualified, registered contractor, working to enhanced contractual standards set by the Council.

In a bid to reduce congestion and make best use of council resources, children and young people will mostly travel together on communal bus routes.

Vehicles are routed to pick up several children from different locations who attend a particular school. Therefore, journeys can be relatively long, and the child or young person will spend more time in the vehicle than with other forms of travel assistance. On some routes, the transport may arrange for a designated pick-up point for pupils to access the transport. This can help reduce journey times so that pupils spend less time on the bus to and from their school.

12.8. Exceptional circumstances – Individual transport

In the case where the above travel assistance options are not appropriate due to the needs of the individual or other contributing factors. The Local Authority will consider the necessity of providing individual transport, in line with the risks assessed.

13. Students attending residential special schools outside Barnet.

In general, it is expected that parents/carers will take and collect their child to and from residential schools. Where the distance exceeds the statutory walking distance and prior approval has been given, parents/carers will be eligible for a personal travel allowance or a contribution to fuel costs. The parent/carer is responsible for making the most appropriate arrangements for the child.

In some cases, transport from a central London pick-up/drop off point may be included in the cost of the residential school fees. In these cases, the Council will meet the cost of the main journey but expects the parent/carer to collect and deliver their child to the central pick-up point.

Depending on the type of placement, travel assistance will be offered as follows:

- where the pupil attends on a termly basis: at the beginning and end of each term and half term, and at other official school closures.
- where the pupil attends on a weekly basis: at the beginning and end of each week and at other official school closures.

Where the Council arranges transport, it is likely to be in a shared minibus or an ordinary saloon car taxi, with reasonable but limited space for luggage. The Council will not incur extra expense to provide larger or additional vehicles to transport extra luggage.

14. Guidelines for the provision of Passenger Assistants

The provision of Passenger Assistants is covered by the general requirement on local authorities when arranging transport, to take account of the needs of the individual child. There is no automatic statutory entitlement to a Passenger Assistant.

The Council will undertake an individual risk assessment to determine whether a passenger assistant(s) is required. Examples of situations when a Passenger Assistant will normally be provided include:

- where five or more pupils are travelling in the same vehicle. For larger groups or where individual pupils have severe physical or behavioural difficulties, more than one escort may be required.
- where the pupil's SEND needs present a hazard for the driver if no other adult is present.
- Where a pupil requires emergency medication to be administered.

Passenger Assistants are employed to supervise pupils on vehicles. They will assist pupils to board and leave the vehicle but will not collect pupils from their homes, collection points or take them into the classroom. It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to take the child to and from the vehicle. At school, Passenger Assistants will ensure that children are handed over to school staff in the parking area, keeping in mind that other children on the vehicle must not be left unattended.

Passenger Assistants will not administer treatment or medication without the written consent of the parent/carer or without a health care plan. If a pupil has specific medical needs/interventions which the parents/carers have been trained to provide, they will normally either need to act as an escort or will be provided with a personal transport allowance.

The provision of Passenger Assistants will be the subject of regular review.

Part 3: General Information

15. The partnership with parents/carers

The efficient operation of the travel assistance policy requires the Council and parents/carers to work in partnership. The Council welcomes the support of parents/carers in:

- making timely applications for assistance with accurate information about the child's needs
- ensuring the child is ready in good time at the pick-up point / or if collected from home.
- being ready to receive the child at the drop-off point or child's home at the end of the day at the allocated time.
- prompt notification of changes to arrangements, for example in the event of illness and
- willingness to use the family car and to act as driver/escort where appropriate. This may include where we are unable to put in place alternative arrangements in the event of vehicle breakdown or lack of personnel due to illness for example.
- Keep the Council up to date with any change in medication or diagnosis.
- Inform the council of any change of address.

Parents/carers are expected to have pupils ready at the arranged times and be there to collect them at the end of the day. Where this is not the case, drivers have been instructed to adopt the following procedures:

- in exceptional circumstances, the driver will wait no more than five minutes beyond the scheduled pick-up time in the morning. Following the five minutes wait, drivers will move on and the responsibility to ensure the young person's attendance, will fall onto the parent/carer.
- if there is no-one to collect a child at the end of a school day, the child will stay on the vehicle for the remainder of the journey. The driver will return to the residence either upon completion of the entire journey, or when feasible.
- if there is no alternative, the child will be taken to a place of safety.
- at no time will a child be left unsupervised or left with anyone other than the parent/carer or at a place of safety unless the parent/carer has given written authorisation.

A very small number of parents/carers fail to fulfil their role in the partnership, adversely affecting the journeys of other children and possibly impacting on the education of their own child. Section 12 sets out the steps the Council will take if there are frequent failures in timekeeping which result in delays and inconvenience for other pupils and their parents/carers.

16. Passenger Assistants/drivers safeguarding & training

Drivers and Passenger Assistants are provided with and must always display their identification badge. All Passenger Assistants and drivers have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check prior to being employed.

As per the Bus Services Act 2025, bus and coach operators must carry out enhanced criminal record checks for all drivers of closed-door school services, who drive such services on more than three days in a 30 day period.

Drivers and passenger assistants are required to undertake the necessary safeguarding training and training on how to report concerns about the children in their care.

Any concerns regarding drivers or passenger assistants will be he handled in accordance with standard disciplinary and code of conduct procedures. Where necessary, concerns will be reported to the necessary licencing authority or DBS.

All staff members must uphold key safeguarding principles. All staff are to be trained in:

- First Aid.
- Securing passengers and wheelchairs.
- Safeguarding.
- Emergency Evacuation.
- Additional training, dependent on route and passenger's needs.

17. Challenges with self-regulation

"Self-regulate" in the context of children with special needs refers to their ability to manage their emotions, behaviours, and responses to various stimuli independently. For children with special needs, such as autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, or sensory processing disorders, selfregulation can be more challenging due to differences in neurological processing or sensory sensitivities.

Self-regulation skills encompass a range of abilities, including:

- Emotional regulation - Recognising and managing one's own emotions, such as anger, frustration, or anxiety, in appropriate ways.
- Behavioural regulation - Controlling impulses and behaviours in different situations, such as staying calm in a noisy environment or following instructions.
- Sensory regulation - Managing sensory input from the environment, such as noise, light, or touch, which may be overwhelming for some children with sensory sensitivities.
- Attention regulation - Focusing attention and maintaining concentration on tasks despite distractions or difficulties.

There may be times when a child or young person is unable to self-regulate which is likely to put themselves or others at risk. Where this happens the Council will initially contact the parent(s) or

carer(s) and/or the school to seek advice and implement any reasonable strategies that will support them to self-regulate. We will also consider and utilise where appropriate products such as special harnesses that will secure the child or young person safely.

We have found that by working with the parents/carers and or wider professionals we are normally able to reduce the stress the child or young person is feeling and thus reduce the risk to themselves and others. For this reason, it is essential to receive the support of the family, school or wider professionals.

Very rarely, and where all reasonable steps have been tried, the risks to the child or young person and others remains. In those cases, the Transport Brokering Team may have no other choice but to remove the child or young person from the existing transport arrangements. The only option available in these cases would be to provide to parent/carer with a personal Transport Allowance and will be responsible for making their own arrangements to get their child to school.

18. Handover of medication and medical equipment

If the young person takes any emergency intervention medication (such as Buccolam Midazolam) or an adrenaline injector (Epi-pen), this must be handed over to the Passenger Assistant with clear labels, intact and in date. The Health Care Plan (HCP) must also be provided with the medication so that the Passenger Assistant has clear instructions, in the case of an emergency.

Failure to provide either one gives the Passenger Assistant the authority to refuse the young person access to transport; this includes if the medication is out of date or not intact, as allowing the passenger to travel without either one would be putting them at risk.

The medication and HCP are handed to the school upon arrival and then received from the school when the pupil is collected. When returning the child to the home address, the Passenger Assistant should hand back the medication and HCP directly to the parent/carer.

If the passenger is required to travel with medical equipment, the equipment must be in working order and charged to an acceptable level (if battery powered). If the Passenger Assistant notices the equipment is not up to working standards, they have the right to refuse the passenger from transport, to avoid putting the passenger at risk.

Parents/carers are to make the Passenger Assistant aware if the passenger has already taken any medication prior to boarding the vehicle, so that the Passenger Assistant does not exceed the dosage allowance.

19. Wheelchairs/buggies

All wheelchairs/buggies must be checked to ensure that they are suitable and safe for transport before any transport arrangements commence. This may include a full wheelchair assessment to create a fully detailed wheelchair passport, which will act as an instructional guide for all staff members so they can safely secure the wheelchair on transport. If an assessment does not take place but the wheelchair model is safe for transport (this can be confirmed in the wheelchair manual), a temporary passport will be provided until an assessment has taken place. If a wheelchair does not have a passport, the passenger cannot sit in the wheelchair on board transport.

20. Journey times

As a *general guide*, the maximum journey time for a child of primary school age should be 45 minutes each way, and 75 minutes each way for a child of secondary school age, including any time taken to *walk* to a pick-up point. However, there will be circumstances where this is not possible, for example in rural areas where children live in remote locations, where a child needs to travel a long way to the school named in their EHCP, or when journey times are extended by traffic delays.

Where long journeys are unavoidable, the Council may consider whether they can take measures to minimise negative impacts for the child, for example if the child becomes distressed on long journeys the parent/carer or school may be able to offer advice on effective ways of keeping them calm.

21. Designated pick up and drop off points

Dedicated door to door transport will only be offered where all other options are not practicable and is essential to a child's individual needs. In all other cases, LBB will inform the parents of a local pick up/drop-off point. These locations are usually communal areas where we can pick up/drop-off children. The reasons for using these are:

- to support independence and preparation for adulthood for children.
- to reduce the journey times for children/ young people.
- to ensure that the route taken is the most efficient.

We offer two types of pick up & drop off points. They are:

- designated pick-up & drop-off points
- home pick-up & drop-off

When assessing if a child/young person will access their travel arrangements from a local collection point, LBB will consider both the individuals and the parents/carers need.

This will include but not exhaustive to:

- the health needs and/or medical conditions of the child.
- any sensory impairments of a child.
- the personal safety of the child.
- public safety.
- family circumstances.

Designated pick-up points will be individually assessed for suitability and will be approved by LBB before they are used.

When assessing the suitability of a local pick-up point, we will consider the following:

- if the pick-up/ drop off location is within a suitable distance of the child/young person's home address.
- if the vehicle can access the area and can effectively allow children and young people to board safely.
- if the location allows safe access for young people with mobility needs e.g., wheelchair access.
- if the location is an area where there is low traffic/pedestrian congestion e.g., avoiding busy car parks where possible.
- if the location has suitable shelter in the event of adverse weather conditions.

Parents/carers will be responsible to ensure their child's safe passage to and from these designated locations.

22. Bullying on transport

Please note that any form of bullying on transport is unacceptable. We will seek parent/carer and the school's support to address this, but where bullying persists despite reasonable steps, transport may be suspended. Where transport is suspended for 2 weeks or less the parent/carer is responsible for making their own arrangements. Where this is the long-term option for the parents/carers will be provided with a Personal Transport Allowance and will be responsible for making their own arrangements to get their child to school.

In any case where a young person is placing themselves or others at risk, the Transport Brokering Team may suspend transport at short notice until the risk is managed, or until a feasible control measure is in place, in line with its risk assessments. The suspension would only take place due to the risk being present, and not as a disciplinary measure. Where transport is suspended for 2 weeks or less the parent/carer is responsible for making their own arrangements. Where this is the long-term option for the parents/carers will be provided with a Personal Transport Allowance and will be responsible for making their own arrangements to get their child to school.

On occasion, we may seek a multi-agency approach from professionals already involved with the young person, to obtain their advice around suitable control measures to best support the

young person. The Transport Brokering Team would also consult parents/carers as part of this process.

Transport may also be suspended if the service is not being utilised by the service user.

Part 4 – Travel Assistance Appeals

23. Grounds on which the decisions can be appealed

I. Eligibility.
II. The transport arrangements offered.

24. Stage 1 of the appeals process

The first stage of the appeal is for the decision to be reviewed by a senior officer. Please see the requirements from all parties below.

Requirements of the requestor for Stage 1 of the appeal:

- The parent/carer can nominate a representative on their behalf.
- The requestor has 20 working days from date of LBB decision, to make a request for the decision to be reviewed.
- The requestor must send their request in writing to the Transport Brokering Team.
- If the requestor does not meet the 20 working days deadline, LBB is not under any obligation to consider but can use its discretion to do so in exceptional circumstances.
- The requestor must provide reasons to why they believe the decision should be reviewed.
- The requestor should provide information on their personal and/or family circumstances if it is relevant to the case.
- The requestor should also provide any supporting evidence for their request.

Process of Stage 1 appeal:

- The senior officer must confirm receipt of the request.
- The senior officer then has 20 working days from the date of request (when emailed) to review the original decision. In exceptional circumstances, there might be a delay, which the applicant will be advised of, and the estimated response time.
- The senior officer must also have sent the parent written notification of the outcome from the review within 5 working days of the decision being made. All responses will be via email or by post (although that does not guarantee that the decision will be with the requestor if it is sent by post within the 20 working days period)
- The written outcome should include information on how the decision was reached, how the review was conducted, information about other parties that may have been contacted for information, the rationale and factors behind the decision.
- Within the written notification, the senior officer must also include details on escalating the appeal to Stage 2 if the requestor is not satisfied.

25. Stage 2 of the appeals process

The second stage of the appeal process is for the decision to be reviewed by an independent appeals panel.

The requirements for all parties are outlined below.

Requirements of the requestor for Stage 2 of the appeal:

- The parent/carer can nominate a representative on their behalf.
- The requestor has 20 working days from date of LBB decision from Stage 1 of the appeals process, to make a request for the case to be escalated to Stage 2.
- The Transport Brokering Team should send the appeal form to the requestor which should be completed within the 20 workings.
- If the requestor does not meet the 20 working days deadline, LBB is not under any obligation to consider but can use its discretion to do so in exceptional circumstances.

At this point the requestor should provide any new additional/supporting information that may have not been provided earlier or that may act as grounds, to challenge the stage one decision.

Process of Stage 2 appeal:

- The independent appeal panel members should not have been involved in the original decision-making process. They must be independent of the process thus far.
- LBB generally aims to have a senior representative from the Barnet Education Learning Service department, a medical/health professional, and a member of the public present at the independent appeals panel.
- The independent appeals panel has 40 working days from date of the parents/carers request to reach an outcome.
- The independent appeals panel must send written notification of the outcome within 5 working days of its decision. In exceptional circumstances, there might be a delay, which the applicant will be advised of, and the estimated response time.

26. Raising a complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

If the requestor has gone through all the stages of LBB complaints procedure and they are still dissatisfied, the requestor can ask the LGSCO to review the complaint. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) looks at individual complaints about councils. The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way - it does not take sides. It is a free service.

LBB would generally advise that where a requestor is not satisfied with the panel's decision following the appeal process above, they can raise a complaint with the LGSCO once LLB own appeals/complaints process has been completed.

However, the requestor can raise a complaint at any point if:

- The LA did not comply with the procedural rules or
- There were any irregularities in the way the appeal was handled.

For more information you can visit their website - http://www.lgo.org.uk/

27. Sanctions to support the efficient running of the transport service

A very small number of parents/carers fail to fulfil their role in the partnership, adversely affecting the journeys of other children and possibly impacting on the education of their own child. These are the steps the Council will take to maintain a high level of service for all families:

- The young person's school will be consulted in case the parent is also in dispute with the school and some form of joint action is appropriate, e.g. as part of a broader homeschool approach.

- Parents/carers/carers may be charged if the Council incurs additional costs because of wilful or repeated failure to meet their responsibilities.

- Travel assistance may be suspended until a resolution is found.

28. Feedback regarding the service

We welcome constructive feedback about the service and are committed to reviewing opportunities to improve the service provided to children, young people and their families.

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the team if they wish to provide feedback, raise a concern, or highlight an aspect of the service that has worked well.

Glossary

Academic year	Defined in the School Information (England) Regulations 2008 as a period commencing with 1st August and ending with the next 31st July.
Bursary	a grant, especially one awarded to someone to enable them to study at sixth form or college
Council arranged transport	Transport which exclusively carries children and young people to and from their place of education and cannot be boarded by members of the public.
Disability	Defined in section 6 of the Equality Act 2010. A person has a disability if they have (a) a physical or mental impairment, and (b) that impairment has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A chronic physical or mental health condition may constitute a disability. Not all disabilities are visible.
Education Health and Care (EHC) plan	An Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has special educational needs or a disability. It is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies. Home to school travel arrangements are not normally considered to be special educational provision. In exceptional cases travel arrangements may be deemed to constitute special educational provision because they fulfil an education or training function. In these circumstances the travel arrangements should be recorded in section F of the EHC plan. Travel costs can also be provided as part of a Personal Budget, where one is agreed and included in the EHC plan as part of the special educational provision. This should be recorded in section J of the plan.

Home	The place where a child is habitually and normally resident. Local authorities should make clear in their school travel policies how they will determine a child's home address for the purposes of assessing their eligibility for travel, including in circumstances where their parents do not live together and the child spends part of the week with each parent. In these circumstances, there is no expectation that local authorities should provide travel to and from two separate addresses.

Independent travel training (ITT)	Independent Travel Training (ITT) develops the skills for children young people to travel independently on public transport.
Individual healthcare plans	Drawn up by schools in consultation with parents and relevant health professionals. They capture the key information and actions that are required to effectively support a child with medical needs in school. For more information about supporting children with medical needs in schools see Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school. This guidance suggests that schools may wish their policies on supporting pupils with medical conditions to refer to home to school travel.
Local government and social care ombudsman (LGSCO)	The Ombudsman investigates complaints in a fair and independent way - it does not take sides. It is a free service.

Medical need	A health need that has the potential to put a young adult safety or wellbeing at risk while travelling to and from school.
Mobility problem	A physical impairment that impacts a young adult ability to walk to school.
Normal admissions round	The period during which parents apply for school places. The deadlines for applications are 31 October for secondary school places and 15 January for primary places. Places are offered to parents on National Offer Day. Secondary National Offer Day is 1 March, or the next working day. Primary National Offer Day is 16 April, or the next working day.
Parent	References to parent in this document include birth parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, carers or legal guardians with parental responsibility.
Personal transport allowance (PTA)	A PTA is financial contribution to assist with the cost when the parent/carer agrees to take full responsibility for getting the young person to school.
Qualifying school	Qualifying schools are: • community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided and 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 of compulsory school age) • city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts. For children with special educational needs, an independent school is a qualifying school if it is the only school named in their EHC plan, or the nearest of two or more schools named in the EHC plan. (See paragraph 20 to 28 for more information about children with EHC plans and paragraphs 38 to 48 for more information about suitable schools and qualifying schools.)
Resident	anyone who is a resident in the Borough of Barnet.

Safeguarding	Defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as: • protecting children from maltreatment • preventing the impairment of their mental and physical health and development • ensuring they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care • taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
School day	Schools are responsible for deciding when their school day will start and end. The expectation is that local authorities will arrange travel for eligible children to enable them to attend for the 'normal' school day. Schools should organise the school day and school week in the best interest of their pupil cohort. They are expected to act reasonably when making changes to their school day or week. It is unacceptable for them to shorten their day or week unless it is a direct action to enhance pupils' education.
Selective school	A school that can select all or some of the children it admits by testing for aptitude or ability, for example a grammar school.
SEND Local Offer	Sets out, in one place, information about the provision local authorities expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have SEN or are disabled, including those who do not have an EHC plan. Further information can be found in the Special education needs and disability code of practice: 0 – 25 Years.
Special educational needs (SEN)	Defined in section 20 of the Children and Families Act 2014. A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.
Walk	In this guidance walk has its literal meaning. A child could not be considered to be able to walk to school if they would need to travel in a wheelchair, but a local authority may decide, for example, that suitable travel arrangements for a child would be an assistant to push them in a wheelchair.
Wheelchair bound	Refers to people who use wheelchairs and mobility scooters and may not identify with walking.