

# Home to School Transport Fact Sheet for Parents

You can find the full Home to School Travel Assistance Policy and application form on the Council's website at:

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-transport-services>

This document provides supplementary information to the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy with some examples of scenarios of where students are eligible/ not eligible for free transport. It is intended to assist parents when they are making decisions about school choices, particularly when choosing a secondary school.

Eligibility for free travel does not guarantee a place at a school, or vice-versa. Parents must still satisfy the admissions criteria for the school they are applying for. Information on school admissions can be found on the council's website at

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-admissions>

When making school choices there is an expectation that parents consider how their child will get to school and weigh up any logistical challenges, such as how to balance work, other child care commitments and availability of public transport. Most children are not eligible for free travel to school, this document will help parents understand if they are likely to be eligible.

## Who is eligible for Home to School Transport?

Eligibility for Home to School Transport is set out in the Council's Policy this is in line with the statutory guidance and is as follows:

The Council will provide free school travel for children of compulsory school age if their nearest suitable school is:

- beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8 years).
- beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16 years).

Free travel will not be provided if there are places available in a suitable school closer to home. The Council will determine what is considered to be the nearest suitable school.

Students on low incomes, who are in receipt of Free School Meals have 'extended rights' when it comes to Home to School Transport and will qualify for transport if:

- The nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children from age 8 and under 11 years).

- The school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11-16 years and there are not three or more nearer suitable schools).
- The school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief<sup>1</sup> (aged 11-16 years)

## What is compulsory school age?

The law defines compulsory school age as the first designated date following a child's fifth birthday up to the end of Year 11, the designated dates are 31<sup>st</sup> Dec, 31<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August. In Redcar & Cleveland we apply discretion and consider a child to become compulsory school age on their fifth birthday.

## What is the nearest suitable school?

In all cases the local authority will decide what is a suitable school, this is a school that is:

“suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.”<sup>2</sup>

“Suitable school' does not mean the most suitable school for a child. Schools are able to meet a wide range of needs. The nearest secondary school to the home of a child of secondary school age, for example, will almost always be their nearest suitable school (provided it would be able to admit them).”

The exception to this rule is where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Their suitable school will be the closest school with available places that can meet the student's needs, this is determined by the Council's SEN Team and will be agreed with parents as part of the EHCP process.

Parents of course have the right to ask for a place at the schools they feel are most appropriate for their child and understandably will do so for a variety of reasons. For example, this might be based on their faith, to fit in with childcare arrangements, because of the extra curricular or special educational needs offer at a school. Where a child is not attending their nearest school (or their 3 nearest suitable schools if they are in receipt of Free School Meals due to low income) they will not be eligible for school transport.

## How is distance measured?

To determine if a school is within statutory walking distance, the Council uses the shortest walking route on Google maps. To determine the distances for the three closest schools for students receiving Free School Meals (where this is beyond the statutory walking distance), the driving distance on Google Maps is used.

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<sup>1</sup> A certificate of baptism is required.

<sup>2</sup> [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#) – Statutory Guidance, DfE

## **I am applying for my nearest school but I know it is likely to be full, if my child is placed at a different school will I get free transport?**

Students might be eligible for transport if their school is beyond the statutory walking distance. When assessing transport applications the transport team will ask the School Admissions Service for information about the school preferences you specified when applying for a school place. Where applications were made for schools closer to your home address and you were unsuccessful you may qualify for transport assistance in the following circumstances.

- The allocated School is the next nearest suitable school and there is no safe walking route and/or the distance is over the statutory walking distance (if a student is eligible for Free School Meals due to low income this is extended to the three nearest suitable schools).
- There are no other suitable schools with available places which are closer to your home address.

Where a student has not obtained a place at their first choice of school and they are offered their second or third choice, but there are closer schools they could have been considered for, they will not be eligible for transport assistance.

Please note, that when checking school preferences, the Transport Team can only check with the School Admissions service and are not able to check with individual schools. Therefore, if you are applying for a mid-year school transfer please do this via the Council's School Admissions service if you require travel assistance. If you wish to apply for a school in a different local authority area you can still include these schools on the Redcar & Cleveland Admissions form.

### **NEAREST SCHOOL EXAMPLES**

#### **ELIGIBLE**

- Billie only applied for one school (the nearest), this school was full and the Council placed them at the nearest school with an available place. Billie's school is 3.2 miles away (beyond the statutory walking distance which is 3 miles).
- Lacey only applied for two schools close to her home, both these schools were full and the Council placed her at the nearest school with an available place. Lacey's school is 5 miles away (beyond the statutory walking distance which is 3 miles).
- Kieran applied for three schools including two close to him home, all these schools were full and the Council placed him at the nearest school with an available place. Kieran's school is 4.5 miles away which is beyond the statutory walking distance.

All these students are eligible for transport because they were unable to get a place at their preferred schools and were placed at the nearest school by the Council.

## **NOT ELIGIBLE**

Ellie lives in Normanby, she does not receive free school meals. Ellie's parents' first school choice was Outwood Normanby (the closest school), their second choice was St Peter's Catholic College in Eston (the second closest school), their third choice was Laurence Jackson in Guisborough. Unfortunately, both Outwood Normanby and St Peter's were full so Ellie was offered a place at Laurence Jackson.

Ellie is not eligible for Home to School Transport, this is because there are several schools that are closer to her home (Outwood Ormesby, Nunthorpe Academy and Outwood Redcar). Because Ellie's parents asked for a place at Laurence Jackson she was not considered for any of the closer schools. She is attending Laurence Jackson because this is her parents' choice.

## **ELIGIBLE (Free School Meals)**

Jack lives in Eston and receives Free School Meals due to low income. Jack's parents' first school choice was Outwood Normanby, their second choice was St Peter's Catholic College, their third choice was Outwood Redcar (5 miles away). Unfortunately there were no places available at Outwood Normanby and St Peter's Catholic College, so Jack was offered a place at Outwood Redcar. Jack is eligible for free travel assistance to school, even though there are two closer schools he could have applied for (Outwood Ormesby and Nunthorpe Academy),

Jack is eligible for free transport to Outwood Redcar because he receives Free School Meals, the school is between 2 and 6 miles away and it is one of his three closest schools.

## **NOT ELIGIBLE (Free School Meals)**

Sally lives in Southbank and receives Free School Meals due to low income. Sally's parents' first school choice was Outwood Normanby, their second choice was St Peter's Catholic College, their third choice was Laurence Jackson (6.5 miles away). Unfortunately there were no places available at Outwood Normanby and St Peter's Catholic College, so Sally was offered a place at Laurence Jackson.

Sally is not eligible for free travel assistance to school. There are three closer schools that she didn't apply for (Nunthorpe, Outwood Ormesby and Outwood Redcar) however, even if there were only two closer schools Sally wouldn't be eligible because Laurence Jackson is more than 6 miles away. (Free School Meals status extends school to the nearest three schools but only if they are between 2 and 6 miles away).

## **When determining the nearest suitable schools does this include schools in other local authorities?**

When assessing school transport applications we will measure the distance for any closer schools. Where Redcar and Cleveland residents live near the boundary lines to another local authority a child's nearest school may be in a neighbouring local authority area . Distance measurements will therefore be considered to non Redcar and Cleveland Schools (for example Outwood Ormesby).

## Would a faith school be considered as my nearest suitable school, even if my child does not follow this faith?

Yes, for example, if a Catholic School is your nearest school this would be included by transport when determining if a child is attending their nearest school or one of their three nearest schools, even if the student isn't Catholic.

## I want my child to attend the nearest Catholic school, but there are other schools that are closer to my home. Would my child be eligible for transport assistance?

For most children they would not be eligible for transport on this basis, even if they have a baptism certificate. However, if a student receives Free School Meals they would be eligible for transport to their nearest faith school if they are aged between 11 – 16 and live between 2 and 15 miles away (and where evidence of their faith is provided).

## I live within the statutory walking distance\* can I get help with transport?

(\*statutory walking distance is 3 miles for children over 8 and 2 miles for children under 8 or for students over 8 in receipt of Free School Meals due to low income)

Most students will not be eligible for transport if they live within the statutory walking distance but there are some exceptions to this rule they are:

- **If the child is unable to walk the distance safely even when accompanied by an adult** - supporting documentation will be required to evidence this, for example an award letter for the High Level Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance.
- **If there is no safe walking route to school** – The Council determines unsafe walking routes, more information about this is available in the Policy. Examples of unsafe walking routes are busy roads with no pavement and unlit foot paths

### UNSAFE WALKING ROUTE EXAMPLES

#### ELIGIBLE

Bella is 12, she attends her nearest suitable school. It is 1 mile from her home. The only walking route to this school is down a country road with the national speed limit, there is no footpath or stepping off points along some of this route. The Council carries out an assessment of the route and decides it would not be possible for a child to walk it in reasonable safety, even if they were accompanied by their parent. Bella is eligible for free travel to school.

## NOT ELIGIBLE

Mikey is 11 he lives 1.7 miles from school, to get to school he needs to walk down a busy main road with lots of traffic. There is a foot path but Mikey's Mum is worried that he doesn't have the road safety awareness to make this journey alone. The Council review the journey to school and determine there is a clear and safe walking route for pedestrians. Although it is acknowledged that Mikey might struggle with the journey he would be safe if he was accompanied by an adult. Mikey is not eligible for free transport.

## STUDENT UNABLE TO WALK SAFELY EXAMPLES

**ELIGIBLE** James lives 0.7 miles away from his school, he can walk short distances and get around at school but also uses a wheelchair. James receives the high level mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, this evidences that he would be unable to walk the distance to school even if he was accompanied by an adult. James is eligible for free travel to school.

**NOT ELIGIBLE** Mila is 14, she has autism and does not receive free school meals, she lives 2.3 miles away from her school. Mila has no physical health conditions that affect her ability to walk, but at the moment she doesn't have the confidence to walk places alone, she can get very anxious when she is not in familiar places. Mila is not eligible for free travel to school because she is able to safely walk the distance to school accompanied by an adult.

## I have moved house and no longer live within walking distance of school, can I get help with transport?

When families move home there is an expectation that they apply for a place at the schools that are closest to their new home. However you might be eligible for travel assistance if:

- Your child receives Free School Meals due to low income, the school is between 2 and 6 miles of your home and it is one of the closest three schools.
- You have applied for a school move through school admissions and this shows you have been offered a place at the nearest suitable school with an available place. In this circumstance a student would be eligible for transport if the school is beyond the statutory walking distance.
- You have moved home unexpectedly and the circumstances are temporary, for example families who have been made homeless or are fleeing domestic abuse.
- Students who are in year 10 or 11 and where moving schools would impact on their final year of education. Transport assistance may be available.

For the last two bullet points the Council have no legal obligation to provide free transport but will consider requests and may provide some assistance on a discretionary basis.

## **My child gets free transport but they want to attend after school activities, can I arrange for them to be collected later?**

No, the Council will only provide transport at the start and end of the school day, this is in line with our statutory duties. If students need to leave school early or finish late parents will need to make their own travel arrangements.

## **Are there other circumstances where the Council will consider providing transport?**

Yes, the Council has the power to provide 'discretionary transport' this means providing help even though there is no legal duty to do so. There are various circumstances in which the Council will consider providing discretionary assistance this is set out in the policy.

## **How do I apply for Home to School Travel Assistance?**

You will find the application form on the Council's website at <https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-transport-services>.

## **Further information**

For further advice on eligibility for transport please email [transportrequests@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:transportrequests@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk) we are happy to provide advice to parents ahead of making an application.

For a list of secondary schools in Redcar & Cleveland please see the guide for parents on the Council's website

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-admissions/starting-secondary-school>.

For a list of primary schools in Redcar & Cleveland please see the guide for parents on the Council's website

<https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-admissions/starting-primary-education>

If you live close to a neighbouring local authority you may wish to enquire with other Council's for a list of schools in their area.

**If you require this information in an alternative format, or language, please email [transportrequests@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:transportrequests@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)**