The Royal Borough of Greenwich
Home to School Travel Assistance Policy
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1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Royal Borough of Greenwich ("RBG") is committed to ensuring that every child, young person and family in Greenwich leads independent, healthy lives, feeling safe and secure and achieving their full potential.

1.1.2 This document sets out the policy of RBG in relation to the provision of free school transport for children and young persons of compulsory school age. It also explains how parents/carers may apply, how decisions are made and how parents/carers may appeal against decisions that they are unhappy with.

1.1.3 The policy is intended to provide clarity for parents/carers facing a wide range of circumstances, and to ensure that children and young people with particular and significant needs are appropriately supported.

1.1.4 This policy refers to “travel assistance” rather than free school transport because in practice the form of assistance or transport provided will vary, as explained further below. If RBG agrees to provide travel assistance it will be provided in a safe manner taking account of the child or young person’s specific needs and with regard to the best use of the Council’s resources.

1.1.5 Since September 2006 all pupils up to the age of 16 have been entitled to free transport on buses within London. In light of this, the Royal Borough of Greenwich considers that this is sufficient to meet the transport needs of most children and young people of compulsory school age.

1.1.6 RBG is also committed to reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and reducing the environmental impact of vehicle journeys by promoting the use of alternative forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and use of integrated public transport. In this regard, the Council has adopted the principles contained in its Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy and works closely with schools to develop School Travel Plans that help to achieve this aim. Wherever possible, in the provision of travel assistance the Council will consider travel options that lead to reducing the number and length of vehicle journeys.

1.1.7 This policy has been developed with full regard to the Department for Education’s Guidance on home to school travel and transport.

1.2 Children and young people covered by this policy

1.2.1 This policy applies to all children and young people who are resident in RBG or in the care of RBG and are of compulsory school age (5-16).

1.2.2 Young people of sixth form age (16-19) should refer to the Council’s Transport policy statement for young people of sixth form age.

1.2.3 Children of pre-school age will not be transported by Royal Greenwich other than in exceptional circumstances, for example, where they have special educational
needs, either the parent/carer or child has a disability or there is intervention by RBG on the grounds of safeguarding or social care.

1.2.4 “Resident in RBG” means an address in the borough where your child resides as the only or principal residence. If your child resides equally between both parents, the principal home address will be considered as being the address at which your 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 Credits for your child.

1.3 Schools covered by this policy

1.3.1 This policy refers to “suitable” and “qualifying” schools. “Suitable” means that the school is suited to the pupil’s age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs the pupil may have.

1.3.2 A “qualifying school” means a school maintained by a local authority (“state school”), a pupil referral unit, a non-maintained special school or an Academy (including Free schools and University Technical colleges). In the case of a pupil with a statement of special educational needs, an independent school will be a “qualifying school” if it is the only school named in the pupil’s statement, or it is the nearest of two or more schools named in the statement.

1.3.3 Admissions and travel assistance are separate matters and acceptance at a particular school does not necessarily entitle the child or young person to travel assistance. Any issue about whether there is a nearer suitable school which the child or young person could attend will normally be determined by reference to the availability of that school during the normal admissions round.

1.4 Parental responsibility

1.4.1 Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school. This may include making or assisting with travel arrangements to and from school and/or accompanying their child. No dispensation will be made for parents who are working at the time their children travel to and from school. Parents are expected to make other suitable arrangements for someone else to accompany their children as necessary.

2 All Children and Young People

2.1.1 Children and young people who attend their nearest qualifying school and the distance between their home address and school is over the statutory walking distance are in principle entitled to travel assistance. This is measured by the route that a child or young person might reasonably be expected to walk to school accompanied where necessary by his or her parent or carer and is:

- 2 miles for children under 8 years of age
• 3 miles for children or young people aged 8 or over

2.1.2 However, all children and young people up to the age of 16 are entitled to free travel on buses within London and RBG considers that this will be suitable for the majority of children and young people. As such, travel assistance will only be provided by RBG under this heading where it considers that something additional or different is required.

2.1.3 Consideration will be given to:

• The age of the child or young person.
• The school attended, reasons for attendance at a specific school and if a closer appropriate school is/was available at the time of allocation.
• Distance from home to school.
• Length of journey.
• The nature of the route to be travelled.
• Ability to travel alone or accompanied.
• Whether the child or young person has been permanently excluded or a managed transfer has been negotiated.
• Any other exceptional circumstances applicable to each case.

3 Low Income Families

3.1.1 “Low income family” means one where one or both parents are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. Families or carers need to provide evidence that they are in receipt of one of the following support payments:

• Income Support; or
• Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; or
• Income-based Job Seekers Allowance; or
• Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190; or
• Working Tax credit 'run on' - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit; or
• Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit; or
• Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Note: Between 2013 and 2017 a number of the above benefits will be replaced by Universal Credit. This will include: Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income-related Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit.

3.1.2 Children or young people in such families who do not qualify for travel assistance under the criteria in section 2 above are nonetheless entitled to travel assistance if
they satisfy the following criteria:

- 8-11 year olds: Children aged between 8 and 11 years of age from low income families are entitled to free travel assistance where they are attending their nearest qualifying school and that school is more than 2 miles from their home.

- 11-16 year olds: Children and young people aged 11-16 from low income families are entitled to free travel assistance if they are attending a school more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from the home address and it is one of the three nearest suitable qualifying schools from their home. The distance is extended to 15 miles if the parents or carers have selected the nearest qualifying school based on their religion or belief and, having regard to that religion or belief there is no suitable qualifying school nearer to home.

## 4 Children and Young People with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

### 4.1.1 RBG has a duty to make particular travel arrangements for children and young persons with special educational needs and disabilities to facilitate their attendance at an appropriate education provision. These responsibilities are set out in the Education Act 1996, as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It is important to note that the 2006 Act refers to travel rather than transport. Therefore travel assistance can consist of a range of options depending on the needs of the child and young person.

#### 4.1.2 The statutory minimum walking distance for children or young person with SEN to be eligible for assistance from RBG are:

- 2 miles from school for children aged eight years or under
- 3 miles from school for children aged eight years or over

#### 4.1.3 In addition to considering the distance from the child or young person’s home to school, RBG will also consider:

- The needs of the child.
- The complexity of the home to school journey.
- The use of public transport whenever possible and appropriate.
- Promoting independent travel and travel training.
- Promoting a healthy approach to travel assistance as far as possible by.
- Encouraging the child or young person to walk to school.
- The most cost effective travel assistance arrangements.

### 4.2 Eligibility criteria

#### 4.2.1 For the purposes of section 508B (travel arrangements for eligible children), Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 defines “eligible children” – these categories of children or young persons will always be given transport by RBG if they are:
Attending or have secured a place at the nearest appropriate qualifying school and
Unable to walk to school by reason of their SEN, disability or mobility problem (including temporary medical conditions);
Unable to reasonably be expected to walk because of the nature of the route
Living outside “statutory walking distance” where no suitable alternative arrangements have been made
Have any other exceptional circumstances (applicable to each case).

4.2.2 The majority of Royal Greenwich children and young people with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) do not receive specialised travel assistance from the RBG. Wherever possible RBG expects parents/carers of children and young people with a SEN statement to make arrangements for their child to attend school in the same way as for parents/carers of children without a statement, as this is an important factor in developing the child or young person's independence, social and life skills.

4.3 **Preference for a particular school**

4.3.1 If, as a result of the parent expressing a preference for a particular school, a pupil secures a place in a school other than the school(s) identified by RBG as appropriate to the child’s special educational needs or the nearest suitable school(s), RBG will draw to the attention of the parents that there is no obligation to provide travel assistance to the more distant school if it is further away from home than the school(s) proposed by RBG.

4.3.2 If a parent applies for travel assistance for a child with special educational needs as a result of the family moving house and wants their child to remain in a particular school, RBG will draw to the attention of the parents that there is not an obligation on the authority to provide travel assistance for that child. It can reasonably be expected that the family will work with RBG and the relevant schools to secure a place in a school nearer to the family home.

5 **What Assistance May be Offered**

5.1.1 Travel assistance will only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day or at the beginning and end of the week/term in the case of boarding schools. Travel assistance will not be provided to facilitate attendance at non-statutory school activities, such as breakfast or after school clubs or for medical check-ups or if the child or young persons has to be collected from school because of illness except in exceptional circumstances. Activities that form part of the national curriculum will not be affected.

5.1.2 Once travel assistance has been agreed, a solution will be determined. It is for the RBG to decide what type of assistance will be provided. This decision will be based
on the identified needs of the individual child or young person. RBG has a commitment to continuously ensure value for money. It should be noted that the mode of travel assistance offered will be reviewed regularly and may change as the needs of the child or young person change.

5.1.3 Priority will always be given to travel assistance solutions that help to develop travel independence skills to enable children and young people to lead independent lives as they grow older.

5.1.4 The following options will be considered when assessing travel assistance solutions. Over time additional innovative solutions may be developed and therefore, the options considered are not necessarily limited to those described below;

- RBG will offer financial support to cover the cost of an oyster card for the parent to enable them to accompany their small child.
- **Freedom pass:** To enable the child or young person to travel to school accompanied as necessary using London underground services.
- **Travel pass:** To enable the child or young person to travel to school accompanied, if necessary, by an adult via public transport solutions other than the free London bus scheme or the London Underground.
- **Independent travel training:** Independent travel training, focused on the needs and capabilities of a young person, can increase independence by developing personal, social and life skills. By working closely with parents/carers, the child or young person and the school, travel training will contribute to greater independence for the child or young person and thus will always be given priority as an option when considering suitable solutions.
- **Parental reimbursement** – Parents/carers may receive reimbursement at the HMRC rate for using their own vehicle to transport their eligible child or young person to and from school. (This is currently 45 per mile for the first 10,000 miles, see [http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/rates/travel.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/rates/travel.htm)).
- **Direct payments** – It may be possible for RBG to provide parents/carers with direct payments where parents/carers agree to arrange transport for their children themselves.
- **Pupil Support Escorts:** It may be possible for a child or young person to walk or to travel on public transport if they have some assistance and where it is deemed impossible for the child or young person’s parent/carer to accompany their child. The Council may provide a pupil support assistant to accompany the child or young person and help build a level of independence over time.
- **Transport vehicles:** Where assessed as essential, RBG may provide a vehicle to transport a child or young person to and from school. Where transport vehicles are provided, these will be vehicles and drivers provided by a suitably qualified, registered, commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. Whenever possible, children and young people will travel together in buses. These will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those travelling on them. Each route will be planned on the basis of school start and finish times and the shortest possible route for all children and young people travelling on a
particular vehicle. Children and young people will be picked up and dropped off at a safe and convenient location, within a reasonable distance from their home. In many cases this will be from a recognised bus stop.

- **Home pick up:** A home pick up and drop off will only be made where it is deemed essential due to the child or young person’s significant needs.
- **Taxis and private hire vehicles** - Under very exceptional circumstances RBG may transport a child or young person in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the child or young person.

5.2 **Provision of Escorts**

5.2.1 An Escort may be provided to accompany a child or young person to school in exceptional circumstances whether using public transport or on provided transport. Escorts will only be provided where they are necessary for the safe operation of vehicles and/or the care of children or young people. This will be determined during the assessment process.

5.2.2 An Escort will not be provided simply because of the child or young person’s age or because he/she does not know the driver. In these instances, it is expected that a parent would accompany their child to and from school.

6 **The Application and Assessment Process (This Applies to All Children and Young People Under Sections 2 - 4).**

6.1.1 The application process is designed to be as simple as possible whilst ensuring that full consideration is given to the specific needs of the child or young person. Parents should allow up to 30 working days from the date of application to the start of any assistance provided.

The application process is dealt with in three stages;

6.2 **Stage 1: Application**

6.2.1 The parent/carer must make a formal application for travel support before any assistance is considered. Application forms can be obtained from:

- RBG’s website
- Telephone

6.2.2 Applications should:

- state the basis upon which it is said that the child or young person is entitled to travel assistance and how the eligibility criteria set out above are met
- give the name of the school the child or young person is attending or, if the application is in relation to a future school, the name of that school and whether or not the child or young person has a place there yet;
- give any particular reason for the choice of that school;
• state what form of travel assistance (tube pass, taxi etc.) is sought
• provide details of any social security benefits which are or may be relevant to the application
• provide full details of any exceptional circumstances relied upon
• include any evidence in support of the application you wish RBG to take into account

6.2.3 Each application will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt of application.

6.3 Stage 2: Assessment

6.3.1 This stage will include the gathering and evaluation of written evidence and family circumstances. This may include a home visit, consultation with the child or young person’s school/caseworkers and any other relevant specialists.

6.3.2 This stage will normally be completed within 15 working days following stage 1 depending on the complexity of the circumstances. It is possible at this stage that the application may be declined.

6.4 Stage 3: Implementation

6.4.1 It is for RBG to decide what type of travel assistance would suitably meet the needs for each individual child or young person. The parent/carer will be informed in writing of the outcome of the application and receive details of the travel assistance solution and any contact details they may require. The parent/carer should allow up to ten working days, from the receipt of the outcome letter, for the travel solution to be implemented.

6.5 Making the decision

6.5.1 In making decisions about travel assistance, RBG will take into account all relevant legal considerations and guidance. RBG will also take into account any exceptional circumstances of which the following are examples:

• a child who is statemented at pre-school age
• a vulnerable child or young person
• a child or young person who has been temporarily moved out of their home in Royal Greenwich due to violence or eviction
• a child or young person who has been excluded and a new place or managed move has been negotiated
• a child or young person in his or her final year of primary or secondary school where there have been a change of care arrangements.

6.5.2 The following will not normally be considered exceptional circumstances:

• difficulties caused by parents/carers attending work or looking after other children
• difficulties with parents/carers getting children to or from collection and drop off points

6.5.3 Each case will be considered on its own merits, examples listed here are not exhaustive and do not automatically qualify or disqualify a child or young person.

7 Appeals

7.1.1 Where an application for travel assistance is refused or RBG proposes arrangements for travel assistance or changes to existing travel assistance that a parent or carer does not agree to, the appeal process is as follows:-

7.1.2 An appeal must be submitted in writing within 28 calendar days of the letter refusing travel assistance or proposing changes to existing arrangements to:-

7.2 SEN appeals

7.2.1 Appeals must be sent to the Head of SEN, Royal Borough of Greenwich, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London, SE18 6HQ or by email to special-needs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk within 28 calendar days of receiving the decision not to provide travel assistance.

7.2.2 Stage 1

• This will be considered either by the Assistant Director Inclusion, Learning and Achievement or Assistant Director Commissioning and Resources.
• The letter of appeal must provide the reasons for challenging RBG’s refusal of assistance or changes to proposed arrangements and include any fresh documentary evidence.
• Your application will be reviewed and the evidence will be considered. The original decision may be upheld, overturned or alternative solutions may be identified. If the application is not approved the person who is appealing will be informed of this and will be informed of the next and final stage of the appeal process within 28 calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

7.2.3 Stage 2 – final appeal

• This will be considered by the Director of Adults and Older People Services. Final appeals must be submitted in writing within 28 calendar days of the date of the Stage 1 decision. The letter of appeal must provide the reasons for challenging the stage 1 decision and may include any fresh documentary evidence available.
• The parent will be informed of the decision in writing within 28 calendar days of receipt of the final appeal application. This decision is final.
7.3 **Other appeals**

7.3.1 Appeals must be sent to the Head of Admissions at Royal Borough of Greenwich, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London, SE18 6HQ or by e-mail to school-admissions@royalgreenwich.gov.uk within 28 calendar days of receiving the decision not to provide travel assistance.

7.3.2 **Stage 1**

- This will be considered either by the Assistant Director Inclusion, Learning and Achievement or Assistant Director Commissioning and Resources.
- The letter of appeal must provide the reasons for challenging RBG’s refusal of assistance or changes to proposed arrangements and include any fresh documentary evidence available.
- Your application will be reviewed and your application will be considered. The original decision may be upheld, overturned or alternative solutions may be identified. If the application is not approved the person who is appealing will be informed of this and will be informed of the next and final stage of the appeal process within 28 days calendar days of receipt of the appeal.

7.3.3 **Stage 2 – final appeal**

- This will be considered by the Director of Adults and Older People Services. Final appeals must be submitted in writing within **28 calendar days** of the date of the stage 1 decision. This letter of appeal must provide the reasons for challenging the stage 1 decision and may include any fresh documentary evidence available.
- The parent will be informed of the decision in writing within 28 calendar days of receipt of the final appeal application. This decision is final.

7.3.4 If the parent/carer is unhappy with the decision reached they have a further right of appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman if it is considered that RBG has failed to comply with procedural rules or there were any irregularities in the way the appeal was handled.

7.3.5 If the parent/carer considers that the decision made at the appeal stage is flawed on public law grounds, they may apply for a judicial review.

7.3.6 During the appeals process no new travel assistance will be provided or in the case of existing arrangements, no change will be implemented. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring that their child attends school until the outcome of the appeal is determined.

7.3.7 There is no right of appeal if a decision is made to vary the form of travel assistance. There is only a right of appeal if an application for travel assistance is refused or if existing travel assistance is ceased.
8 Cessation and Complaints

8.1 Cessation of support

8.1.1 RBG may remove travel assistance with immediate effect from children and young people where it is proven that assistance was obtained on the basis of fraudulent or misleading information.

8.1.2 Where the child or young person’s individual circumstances have changed, which results in either the child or young person no longer being eligible for support or being assessed as not requiring such support, the parent/carer will be given a week’s notice before support is ceased. It may also cease on the written request of the parent who, if necessary has made alternative arrangements for their child or young person’s travel to school.

8.1.3 RBG expects children and young people to behave appropriately on transport and must ensure health and safety of all passengers and staff is maintained. Any behavioural issues whilst on transport will be dealt with by RBG in conjunction with the child or young person’s school. Transport will be suspended whilst an investigation is undertaken. In such circumstances, it will remain the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure the child or young person attends school in the interim period.

8.1.4 On-going or serious behavioural issues may result in transport being permanently removed.

8.1.5 Parents/carers must ensure their child is ready at the pick-up point by the allocated time in the mornings and must be ready to receive their child at the end of the day. Where a parent/carer is repeatedly not ready in the mornings or not available in the evenings, transport may be removed. The duties under the Education Act 1996 are unaffected.

8.2 Complaints

8.2.1 Once travel assistance has been agreed any concerns regarding the daily provision of the service should be made in the first instance to RBG’s transport provider, parents/carers will be given these details.

8.2.2 Any formal complaints should be handled through RBG’s formal complaints process by contacting:-

Gerard Murphy, Complaints Manager
1st Floor, The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street, Woolwich, SE18 6HQ
Tel: 020 8921 3082, e-mail: gerard.murphy@greenwich.gov.uk
9 Appendix

9.1.1 Details as to how to apply for free bus pass/oyster cards can be found at http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tickets/