



FREE SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

General Principles

In considering each application the Authority will have regard, amongst other things, to the age of the child and the nature of the route from home to the suitable school.

Applications are approved in accordance with Government policy as follows:

- qualifying walking distance is assessed in accordance with statutory regulations i.e. for children aged up to 8 years the distance is 2 miles and for those aged over 8 years, 3 miles
- distance for eligibility criteria is calculated as a measurement of the shortest suitable walking route from the Eastings and Northings¹ of the home to the Eastings and Northings of the nearest suitable school with availability which a child could reasonably be expected to walk, accompanied by an adult as necessary
- For applications processed during the normal school admissions round, a school will be determined as having availability if a place would have been offered according to the allocations made on the national offer day, assuming the parent either made or could reasonably have made an application. For applications made after the normal admissions round and those made during the school year, a school will be determined as having availability if, at the point of processing the child's school application, a place could have been allocated to the child.
- routes used for measurement purposes must be made up and/or lit at intervals of least 50 metres

The Council does not assist pupils with free school travel who obtain places at independent fee paying schools and not normally at maintained secondary schools outside the Metropolitan Borough of Stockport, even if they meet the other criteria for free school travel.

Exceptions to the above criteria, excluding attendance at independent fee paying schools, are made for:

- i. pupils who move house in Year 10 or Year 11 whose new address is in Stockport and is more than 3 miles away from their school.
- ii. pupils attending a Pupil Referral Unit or provision maintained by the Authority for permanently excluded pupils, if they live more than 3 miles away (2 miles in the case of a child up to 8 years of age or if parents of children of secondary school age are in receipt of qualifying benefits as indicated at (b) above). Pupils

¹ For the purpose of determining eligibility for free school travel, distance will be measured via the nearest available walking route, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system as follows:

- Property point – Eastings and northings of the centre of the property as defined within the Council's Local Land and Property Gazetteer
- School point - Eastings and northings of the main school gate as defined within the Council's Local Land and Property Gazetteer

who live closer than this may be granted free school travel in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Corporate Director for Services to People.

Eligibility - Eligibility for free school travel is based on the following:

- distance between home and the nearest suitable school suitable school with availability
- receipt of qualifying benefits
- to facilitate school attendance (see exceptions above)

(a) Standard Eligibility Criteria

where the distance between home and the nearest suitable school with availability in Stockport exceeds 2 miles, for a child aged up to 8 years or 3 miles for a child aged 8 years and over (the statutory minimum distance)

and

where the distance between the home and the school attended (if in Stockport) also exceeds the statutory minimum distance.

(b) Extended Eligibility Criteria Where Parents are in Receipt of Qualifying Low Income Benefits

Parent/Carer is in receipt of and has supplied documentary evidence confirming:

- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Child Tax Credit but not entitled to Working Tax Credit and whose income does not exceed £16,190*
- Working Tax Credit

and

the school attended is one of 3 nearest suitable schools whose distance between home and that nearest suitable school is between 2 and 6 miles

or

the distance between home and school attended is between 2 and 15 miles and the school attended is deemed the nearest suitable school, suitability determined on the denomination of the school and the religious beliefs of the child's parents.

Review and Appeal

- The Council reserves the right to review a route used for measurement purposes or other criteria used to determine eligibility for free school travel at any time and may withdraw passes in cases which subsequently fail to qualify

- Parents may request that a decision not to grant free school travel be reviewed by email (admissions.support@stockport.gov.uk) or in writing to the Service Manager (Admissions Support and Advice Team, Upper Ground Floor, Stopford House, Piccadilly, Stockport, SK1 3XE) stating clearly the grounds for review

The Council will review cases within 20 working days from the date of the request, it cannot be guaranteed that this will take place before the time the child actually starts travelling to school. However, if the outcome of review results in the approval of free travel, the parent will be reimbursed the cost of school travel (at the cheapest rate) from the date of application or first day of travel (as applicable), based on actual attendance at school.

If a parent remains dissatisfied following the above review they will have the right to appeal to a Free School Travel Appeal Panel – see Appendix 1

Cycle allowances

A cycle allowance is available to secondary aged pupils instead of a free travel pass, subject to the above criteria being met and the approval of the Headteacher of the school to be attended.

The above policy is in compliance with the Department for Education 'Guidance on home to school travel and transport' July 2014 and related legislation.

Summary of Home to School Travel & Transport Review and Appeals Two Stage Process

The letter refusing free school travel explains the reason why the application does not meet the Council's policy and has been turned down. However, there may be some questions the applicant may still have regarding the decision.

If this is the case applicants have the opportunity to have their application reviewed. A parent has **20 working days** from receipt of the Local Authority's home to school transport application decision to make written request asking for a review of the decision. This would take the form of a reassessment of the application. If the applicant remains unsatisfied with the outcome after review they will have the opportunity to lodge an appeal to the Independent Transport Appeal Panel.

Appeal cannot be made unless the application has been reviewed.

Review of your application (Stage 1) – upon request, all applications will be reviewed on the following points:

- The route used will be detailed (if applicable)
- The distance re-measured and confirmed
- The nature of the route used considered
- Consideration of relevant grounds stated by parent

The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

To request a review of your application, please email the School Transport Team on travelcoordination@stockport.gov.uk stating clearly any further grounds for review you may have.

Reviews will take place within **20 school days** from the date the request is received.

Appeal (Stage 2)

The parent has **20 working days** from receipt of the Local Authority's stage 1 decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage 2 – appeal to an Independent Transport Appeal Panel, who will take into account the family's personal circumstances when making their decision.

Appeals will be heard **within 40 working days** of receipt of the appeal request.

Appeal dates and information about the appeal process can be obtained from The Secretary to the Independent Appeals Panel, Corporate and Support Services, Democratic Services, Town Hall, Stockport, SK1 3XE

Tel: 0161 474 3216, email: admission.appeals@stockport.gov.uk