

Home to School Transport

- Overview for children 0-16



Please note: 'child' = 'child or young person'

Introduction

When choosing which schools or colleges to apply for, it is important to consider how your child will get there. Some children are eligible for free travel, but this isn't the case for everyone, even where a child or young person has SEN or an EHC plan.

No child of compulsory school age* should be prevented from accessing school due to a lack of transport or the cost of transport. The local authority (LA) **must** make free-of-charge travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance at school of **eligible** children resident in their area.

*Compulsory school age starts on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first and ends on the last Friday in June which falls in the academic year in which they turn 16.

To help make these decisions the local authority has several criteria that need to be considered.

Whilst the LA may have its own local policies to help them consider these, law and statutory guidance will trump local policy where any differences occur. These are the [Education Act 1996](#), namely sections 508 & 509 ("the Law") and [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#) updated May 2026 ("Statutory guidance").

The LA is expected to act reasonably, and this may vary according to the circumstances in which it is being considered. In general, it should seek to act in a way that is fair and rational and takes into account relevant factors.

Eligibility for free school transport (compulsory school age)

A child is eligible for free home to school transport if they are of compulsory school age, attend their nearest suitable school **and**:

1. live more than the **statutory walking distance** from that school (Under 8 years old: 2 miles from home to the nearest suitable school. 8 years old & over: 3 miles. The distance is calculated using the 'shortest safe walking route') **or**
2. could not **reasonably be expected to walk** to that school because of their special educational needs (SEN), disability or mobility problem, even if accompanied by their parent **or**
3. would not be able to walk to that school **in reasonable safety**, even if they were accompanied by their parent (known as 'unsafe walking route')

There are also 'extended rights' for children from low-income households (where eligible).

Where a child has an EHCP (of compulsory school age or under), the LA has a statutory duty to secure the special educational provision set out in Section F of the EHC plan and would struggle to fulfil this if your child or young person cannot get to school to access that provision. The LA must consider each situation individually where this might apply.

What if my child is not full time?

Local authorities must make arrangements to enable a child to travel to school for the beginning of the school day, and to return home at the end of the school day. They are not required to make arrangements:

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

Where particular classes, year groups or pupils have a different start or finish time from most pupils at the school, schools may need to make arrangements to accommodate them. This might include situations where the school is insisting on part-time hours.

There may be a small number of circumstances in which the LA could consider it appropriate to arrange transport at an alternative time of day, for example if a child has a medical condition which means they are not well enough to attend school for the whole day.

Children under compulsory school age.

Children **under** compulsory school age are not automatically entitled to transport to an early-years setting or school. However, the LA can use its discretion to make travel arrangements for your child (under the Education Act 508C) and cannot refuse to make a transport arrangement simply because it does not have a strict duty to make it.

The LA is to make such school travel arrangements as it considers necessary for the purpose of facilitating your child's attendance at school.

What to do if you do not agree with the LA's decision

If you disagree with a decision made about your child's transport to school, you will need to make an appeal through the LA's own internal appeals procedures. Please see further information regarding WSCC policies and procedures below.

Although the LA can decide its own appeals process, statutory guidance recommends it has a two-stage process with stage one being a review by a senior officer and stage 2 being a review by an independent appeal panel.

If you think that there has been a failure to follow the rules of an appeal or if there are any other problems in the way the appeal was handled or decided, you may be able to then complain to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) (LGSCO).

Further Information:

- [WSCC Home to School transport](#)
 - [SENDIAS Factsheet and Guide Pages](#)
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Service Statement

The role of the SENDIAS service is to ensure all parents, children and young people have access to impartial information, advice and support so they can make informed decisions related to their situation. Any information that is shared with the service is in confidence unless permission has been obtained to share this with any individuals, services and agencies that may be able to help in the circumstances. For more detail, view our [policies and privacy notice](#) on our website.

How to contact us: Tel: 0330 222 8555 / Email: send.ias@westsussex.gov.uk or cyp.sendias@westsussex.gov.uk (up to age 25) / Website: www.westsussexsendias.org

To view factsheet online and access all links: <https://tinyurl.com/btwbxzep>

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