

Transport for children with special educational needs

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Introduction

There is no automatic entitlement to transport assistance for children who have an [Education, Health and Care Plan \(EHC plan\)](#).

If you apply for a place at your designated school or the nearest school to your home address, your child will get free transport if they live further than the statutory walking distance from the school.

Walking distance is defined as over:

- two miles from home to school for children of primary school age
- three miles from home to school for children of secondary school age

You can find out which is your designated mainstream school at [School designated areas](#).

If your child's EHC plan says that their needs can be met at a mainstream school, the normal eligibility criteria will apply, unless a disability or medical condition means they cannot walk the specified distance for their age.

Where a school is named in accordance with parental preference and is not the nearest suitable school, nor the designated school for the home address then there is no obligation for the Authority to assist with transport.

[Please review our Education Travel Policy](#).

The information contained in this guide is also summarised in the [Transport for children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health Care Plan leaflet](#).

Types of transport and support available -

We provide coaches, wheelchair-accessible vehicles, mini buses, taxis or pay a parental acknowledgement to carers, depending on the needs and location of the young people requesting transport. Passengers will be issued with booster seats where required.

Where appropriate, we also provide [Independent Travel Training](#) (ITT) and support to enable young people to gain further independent life skills and build confidence. ITT may be to assist a young person in learning road safety, walking safely to a pick-up point, or to be able to travel on public or coach transport.

Disability pass holders can be provided, if required and requested, to those pupils issued with a bus pass. These can be used to notify the driver that they are a young person with a disability.

Our Transport Co-ordination Officers will work with families to discuss a young person's needs when traveling and identify which transport can be utilised. [Transport arrangements are regularly reviewed](#) to adapt to the needs of all pupils traveling.

Should an [Escort](#) be required, a Transport Co-ordination Officer will discuss with families, schools and professionals who know the young person, what the escort needs to do to ensure the safety of passengers is maintained while traveling. This could be to provide basic medical support or to help maintain safety in the vehicle that could be at risk due to the behavioural needs of the passengers traveling. The requirement for an escort to travel in a vehicle is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Attending a special school -

If your child has been placed at a special school because it is the only school that can meet their needs then this school will become their designated school and the normal eligibility criteria for transport will apply.

However, if you have chosen a different school for your child, transport will only be available if it is the nearest or designated school to your home address.

Applications -

If your child is due to start a special school in September, we will aim to contact you during the spring term. If you do not hear from us by the end of May, or if your child is starting a special school at any other time of year and you have not heard from us, please complete an online transport application form.

When your transport application form has been received, a member of the School Transport Team will contact you to discuss the transport requirements.

For education transport-related queries, please contact the School Transport Team on [0345 155 1019](tel:03451551019) or by emailing schooltransportservicequeries-mailbox@devon.gov.uk.

Apply now

Primary school-aged children

- [Application form for **primary** school-aged pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan*](#)

*Please read our [guidance on making primary school applications](#) before starting your application.

Secondary school-aged children

- [Application form for **secondary** school-aged pupils with an Education, Care and Health plan*](#)

* Please read our [guidance on making secondary school applications](#) before starting your application.

Post-16 transport assistance -

We provide post-16 transport assistance for students eligible under the [Education Travel policy](#). However, we are aware that some parents or carers of pupils with special educational needs may not be aware of the constraints of the policy when selecting a further education establishment for their child.

Visits to further education establishments often start as early as year 9 but transport is often not considered until the pupil applies for transport to the new school or college when they are in year 11. This can cause difficulties for the families if the transport request is then refused.

In an effort to make you aware of this we have [produced a flyer](#) which we hope will encourage you to make enquiries about transport earlier and before any firm plans are made for transition for your child to a further education establishment.

Low income families -

If your child is entitled to free school meals, or your family gets the **maximum** level of Working Tax Credit, then your family is considered to be on a low income.

Your child may be entitled to free transport on the grounds of low income provided they attend one of the three nearest schools to your home address and that school is between two and six miles from your home address. This entitlement is reviewed annually and transport provision may be withdrawn if your circumstances have changed.

To confirm that you receive the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit we need to see your new TC602 Tax Award Notice each year.

However, if your financial circumstances have not changed since the previous financial year you will not have to complete the HMRC annual review and will not be sent a TC602 Tax Award Notice automatically.

We advise you to request a copy of the TC602 Award Notice by phoning the Tax Credit Helpline on 0345 300 3900 and explaining you need it as evidence for transport assistance for your child.

Please do this as soon as possible as it can be several weeks before you receive the TC602 form.

Escorts -

Escorts may be provided for children who have severe medical or social needs. All escorts undertake mandatory training and they and drivers are checked by the police and are issued with identification badges. If they do not have this identification, and parents wish to check their identity, they should call [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019).

Escorts will have information about your child, but you should make sure that they are fully aware of your child's medical condition, any behaviour issues and the best way to deal with problems.

We try to maintain continuity of escorts but sometimes it is necessary to arrange relief escorts at short notice.

Route safety -

Walking to school

If you live under the statutory walking distance (2 miles) but feel the route to school is too dangerous to walk please call [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019) and ask to speak to the transport officer for your child's school.

The route may already have been checked and deemed to be 'unavailable' and there may be transport in place. If not, the transport officer will send you a form to outline your concerns and a route walk will be organised at the same time as your child would walk to school. You will be contacted with the results of the route walk.

However, it is important to understand that in a rural county such as Devon there are many lanes where there are no pavements or street lights, but this does not necessarily mean the road is unsafe to walk. These factors will be taken into consideration as will the width of the road, the volume of traffic, the number of accidents recorded and poor visibility.

It is a parent's responsibility to accompany their child to and from school and therefore the assessment will be made as if the child is accompanied on the journey. This responsibility also applies if your child has to walk in the dark.

On the bus

We want everyone to stay safe and travel in comfort. Our [code of conduct](#) outlines the standard of behaviour that is expected as well as what to do in bad weather and if the bus is late.

If you become aware that there is bad behaviour or bullying on your child's bus please report the matter to the Education Transport Team by calling [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019).

They will ask the contractor and school to investigate. The contractor will speak to the driver and the school should interview the pupils involved and also any witnesses.

They will then report back to the Transport team who will take the appropriate action. This can be a warning letter home to parents, a one or two week ban, or with serious or repeated incidents an indefinite ban can be imposed.

If a child is banned from school transport it is the parent's responsibility to make arrangements to get him or her to school.

Independent travel training -

Independent Travel Training is a free scheme to help young people who are eligible for transport assistance to learn how to develop the skills required for safe, independent travel.

Accredited travel trainers work with students from mainstream and special schools, pupil referral units and colleges of further education. Before any training commences the travel trainers liaise closely with parents, tutors, social workers and transport officers. For more information please see our designated [Independent travel training](#) pages.

If you would be interested in using this scheme please phone [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019).

Reviewing transport arrangements -

Over a period of time the children and young people travelling to a school changes – some children will leave and new children will join. Sometimes the needs of the children travelling also change.

It is important that we regularly review transport arrangements to each special school to make sure that they meet the needs of the children travelling as much as possible as well as delivering best value for public money.

The leaflets below are to inform parents as to what happens during a review of transport to a special school and who they can contact to address their concerns.

- [Special Schools Transport Review guide](#)
- [Reviewing your child's transport to a special school – information for parents leaflet](#)

Code of conduct -

All new pupils travelling on school transport, including those with special educational needs, are required to sign a statement on the application form to agree to abide by [a code of conduct](#) which sets out the behaviour expected on every journey.

Parents are also required to sign the code of conduct statement to indicate that they are aware of the sanctions which can be imposed if their child fails to comply with the code of conduct.

If the child is very young or has special educational needs and is unable to sign the statement we ask that parents explain as fully as possible to their child the need to behave appropriately on school transport and sign the statement to indicate they have done so.

There is [a special simplified version of the code of conduct](#) for very young pupils or those with severe learning disabilities. We will try to send you the most appropriate code of conduct for your child but if you feel we have sent the incorrect version please contact us on [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019).