

SCHOOL SUPPORT AND BENEFITS · GUIDE 3

School Transport: Free Travel and Help with Costs

SHORT ANSWER

Your child may get **free home-to-school transport** from your local council if they attend their **nearest suitable school** and it is too far to walk, the walking route is unsafe, or your child cannot walk because of special educational needs, a disability or a mobility problem. Extra rights apply to **low-income families**. Apply through your **local council**.

When does a child qualify for free transport?

Children of compulsory school age qualify for free transport to their nearest suitable school if **any** of these apply:

- The school is more than **2 miles** away and the child is **under 8**
- The school is more than **3 miles** away and the child is **8 or older**
- There is **no safe walking route** between home and school
- The child cannot reasonably be expected to walk because of **special educational needs, a disability or mobility issues** — whatever the distance

Extra rights for low-income families

Children qualify for free transport on low-income grounds (for example, if they get free school meals or the family receives the maximum level of Working Tax Credit) if they are:

Aged 8-11	Attending their nearest suitable school and it is at least 2 miles away.
Aged 11-16	Attending a school 2 to 6 miles away, if it is one of their 3 nearest suitable schools .
Aged 11-16	Attending a school 2 to 15 miles away, if it was chosen on grounds of religion or belief .

Other reasons families may need help

Distance is not the only issue. A child may have special educational or physical needs that make travel difficult, or — if your child has been **bullied** — you may have chosen a different school further away. These and other circumstances can be grounds for applying for transport assistance. If your child is **16 or over** and still in education, ask your council about its post-16 transport policy.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children may face unique challenges in accessing education — including **distance from sites, frequent moves, or a school place that is not the nearest**. You may be entitled to support on a case-by-case basis. We encourage families to seek advice if they are unsure about eligibility or the application process.

How to apply

- 1 Find your council's school transport policy.** Search "school transport" plus your council's name, or start at gov.uk/free-school-transport.
- 2 Gather your evidence.** This may include proof of address and benefits, details of your child's needs, or evidence that there is no safe walking route.
- 3 Apply before the school year starts.** Councils have application deadlines — apply as early as you can and keep a copy of everything you send.
- 4 Refused? You can appeal.** Every council must have a review and appeals process. Contact The Traveller Movement if you need support to challenge a decision.

Need advice?

Call The Traveller Movement on **020 7607 2002** or email us at info@travellermovement.org.uk