

Provision of Home to School Transport for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Policy Statement

September 2003



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Introduction

This statement explains the policy of the London Borough of Barnet towards home to school transport for pupils with complex special educational needs or other exceptional circumstances. The policy will take account of the individual circumstances of each pupil taking into account all relevant considerations and any representations made. It outlines how decisions are made concerning the entitlement of these pupils to travel allowance or transport and how parents may appeal against a decision they disagree with. The Council will seek to assist and encourage independent travel where this is compatible with the individual pupil or student.

If the Council decides it is necessary to transport a child to school, it will arrange travel in the most cost-effective way bearing in mind the needs of the child. The Council will work with parents to enable them to transport and escort their own children wherever possible. If possible this will involve the issue of bus or travel passes, travel warrants or the payments of car mileage. If these are not appropriate due to the nature of the pupil's complex special educational needs then transport by minibus will be arranged or, in exceptional cases, transport by taxi.

The children and young people covered by this Policy Statement

Children and young people may be eligible for the provision of free home to school transport if they have complex special educational needs such that it is not possible for them to travel independently between home and school. Where pupils have statements of special educational needs, transport may be required to meet needs and, if so, will be clearly specified on the statement of special educational needs.

When assessing entitlement, the Council will pay regard to supporting medical or other evidence that indicates that a pupil or student cannot travel independently. Due regard will also be given to the age of the pupil or young person as young children, for example, do not normally travel independently between home and school.

The general Barnet policy towards the provision of home to school transport will apply to all children and young people who do not have needs as described above. This includes journeys between home, special schools and Pupil Referral Units. (See attached policies – Appendix A and Appendix B)

Eligibility for transport for pupils with complex special needs

For pupils with statements

The SEN Panel, having sought and considered professional advice, the views of parents and the needs of the individual child, will make a decision on the most appropriate school. The Panel will consider:

The special educational needs of the child

The age of the child

Any particular medical/physical needs

The distance from home to school

The nature of the route to school

Alternative routes which may be possible

Whether the child is particularly vulnerable and /or at risk if using public transport

The need for specialist transport

The efficient use of resources

Any wish of the parent that the pupil be provided with education at a school which provides religious education of the parents' religion or denomination

Reports gathered during the course of the statutory assessment will provide detailed information on the special educational needs experienced by children and young people. Where a child's special educational needs are such that the child is unable to walk to school, the doctor carrying out the medical examination for the statutory assessment will consider the need for transport. When transport is agreed on this basis, a note to this effect will be included in Part 6 of the child's statement of special educational needs. Such transport will normally be at the beginning and end of the school day and will usually be door-to-door, although in some circumstances this could be from designated pick up points.

Many pupils with statements have learning needs that do not affect their mobility or ability to travel between home and school in the same way as other children. Statements will not specify the need for home to school transport in such circumstances and the general Barnet policy for home to school transport will apply.

Some pupils who attend special schools do not have such complex needs. In these circumstances provision for home to school transport will not be included in a statement. Transport may still be provided because of the distance that a pupil lives from school but this may not be on a door-to-door basis. The general Barnet policy towards the provision of home to school transport will apply in such circumstances.

For pupils in their early years with complex needs without statements

Some pre school children may be entitled to home to school transport as a result of their complex special educational needs. This may be provided following a statutory assessment or because there is clear medical or other evidence that a pupil has complex special educational needs or difficulties with mobility. Transport will not be provided for reasons of age alone.

Entitlement to special transport 16+

Students up to the age of 19 years may benefit from the provision of transport in some circumstances. This may be provided in cases where there is clear medical evidence that a student has difficulties with mobility of such complexity that it is impossible to travel independently between home and school or college. To be eligible, students must be following a full time course of further study at the nearest appropriate college leading to, or working towards, a recognised qualification.

The SEN Panel will consider whether or not students over the age of 16 are eligible for the provision of transport. Decisions will be based upon medical advice and/or evidence of need in previous reports or statements of special educational need.

Students between the ages of 19 and 25 may be eligible for transport if they attend the nearest appropriate provision and if such transport is necessary to enable them to complete a full-time course of further education study leading to a recognised qualification.

Students over the age of 25 are not eligible for transport as outlined in this policy.

Entitlement when parents express a preference for a school when a pupil does not have a statement of special educational needs

Transport to mainstream schools will be provided for eligible pupils or students to the nearest appropriate school or college with space if the school is more than two miles away for children under 8 years and more than three miles for over 8s. On occasions, parents may decide to send a child to a mainstream school of their choice that is

further from a pupil's home. The Council will not provide free home to school transport in such circumstances.

The provision of transport to support inclusion

Barnet Borough Council supports the inclusion of children and young people within mainstream settings whenever possible. Where this is compatible with the efficient operation of home to school transport, every effort will be made to vary routes to enable pupils, who normally go to a special school, to attend a mainstream on a part-time basis. Such transport will normally be provided only at the start or end of the school day.

The school that a pupil normally attends will be responsible for any other transport required during the school day.

It is the aim of Barnet Council that all children and young people should lead lives that are as independent and free of restriction as possible. Home to school transport will be reviewed at least annually to determine whether or not it is still required. Where children and young people are able to travel independently they will be encouraged to do so.

For pupils with statements, the annual review will include consideration whether home to school transport is still required. Annual reviews will consider pupils' independent travel skills and school will draw up independent travel training programmes where appropriate.

Escorts on home to school transport

Escorts will be provided on home to school transport where they are necessary to support the safe operation of vehicles and care of children. Decisions about whether or not an escort is required will be made in consideration of:

- The age of the pupils being transported
- Medical needs and disabilities
- Other health and safety issues
- The number of children in a vehicle.

Escorts will provide assistance where it is necessary to lift a child onto transport provision.

Transport to residential schools

Transport to residential schools will normally be provided on the same pattern as school provision, i.e. weekly transport for weekly boarding; at the start and end of each half term for half termly boarding; at the start and end of each term for termly boarding

Some children attend schools for 52 weeks of each year. Transport between home and school for these pupils will be assessed individually and will take into account their care and education needs as outlined in Care Plans and Personal Education Plans. It will not normally be weekly.

The Council will not provide additional weekend or midweek journeys except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Transport will only be provided on Saturdays and Sundays in exceptional circumstances.

Appeals

Every effort will be made to resolve any concerns of parents or carers. Every pupil with a statement of special educational need has a named Barnet Council caseworker.

Access to the Parent Partnership service is also available to parents.

If a parent remains dissatisfied they may appeal to the Chief Education Officer.

For pupils with statements of special educational needs the provision of home to school transport may be specified. However, if it is not, then the normal home to school transport policy for Barnet will apply and special transport will not be provided. Parents have a right of appeal to the SEN and Disability Tribunal where they are unhappy with the contents of a new or amended statement and where they are unable to resolve their concerns locally.

Complaints

The Barnet complaints procedure will apply in cases of complaint about home to school transport provision.