

Thurrock Council

Home to School Travel and Transport Policy

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1. Introduction

By law, parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

The number of pupils receiving transport has reduced following the decommissioning of certain streams of school transport, therefore, parents are advised to consider transport arrangements when choosing a school. Parents are also encouraged to include their nearest suitable school as well as any others they may wish to apply for. Please refer to the relevant sections of this policy for more detailed information or contact the Council (See contact details in Appendix 1)

All local authorities have a legal duty to make suitable travel arrangements to and from school for children who meet certain criteria.

These are what the law refers to as "eligible" children. There are several categories of eligible children.

The arrangements we make must be sustainable. Sustainable school travel is travel that improves physical and environmental well-being. It included walking, the use of escorts where necessary, cycling, the use of public services such as buses or trains (the council will then issue bus or train passes) contracted vehicles, car sharing, or the reimbursement of travel costs.

Thurrock Council will decide the type of arrangements it will make generally and for any individual child. Some arrangements are required legally and some are discretionary which means the Council does not have to provide it. In this policy we use the phrase "travel assistance" which covers a range of methods used to travel to school. We provide definitions of words used in this policy in Appendix 1.

Thurrock Council has decided to use its discretionary powers to offer assistance either free of charge, at cost, or at a reduced cost to some other pupils. These arrangements may be changed in future.

The Council has a duty to ensure that it obtains best value and uses its money in the most effective ways possible.

This document sets out the Council's Home to School Transport Policy and describes how the Council fulfils its legal duties and exercises its discretionary powers as required under the Education Act 1996.

2. Eligibility – who benefits from free travel assistance

2.1. A pupil is eligible if they meet **each** of the following criteria.

2.2. Has their principal home in Thurrock

For all transport, at any age, the pupil's principal home must be within Thurrock. Where a pupil lives at more than one address, the one used is usually the one where the parent or carer who receives child benefit for them lives. If no child benefit is paid, the issue will be determined by the Council.

2.3. Is of compulsory school age – that is, broadly, between 5 to 16 years old. (Full details are provided in Appendix 1).

2.4. Is an "eligible child" (as defined by the law)

The pupil must require travel assistance for one of the following reasons:

- distance between home and school
- unsafe route
- special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)

In addition, some low income families have additional rights, if they meet certain conditions.

2.5. Attends the nearest suitable qualifying school, with places available.

A school is suitable if it provides education appropriate to the age, ability, aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs that the child may have.

The term "qualifying school" is defined in the Education Act – see Appendix 1.

3. Extended rights for low income families

3.1. Some low income families additionally benefit from extended rights, relating to:

- distance
- choice of a school based on the parent's religion or belief

3.2. Low income families, as defined by law in this context, benefit from additional rights to home to school transport in some circumstances.

3.3. A low income family is one where the pupil receives free school meals, or would receive free school meals, because of their income (not automatically because they are in Reception to year 2 inclusive), or the parent or carer receives maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC) or the Universal Credit (UC).

3.4. Children of statutory school age, from low income families, will be eligible for travel assistance where they:

- attend primary school and live more than 2 miles from their nearest suitable school
- are in secondary school and attend one of the three nearest suitable schools if it is between 2 and 6 miles from their home
- are in secondary school and attend the nearest suitable school that is between 2 and 15 miles from home if their parent has expressed a wish, based on their religion or belief, for that school, and, having regard to this religion and belief, there is no nearer suitable school

4. Where no place is available at the nearest suitable school

4.1. All pupils must attend their nearest suitable school where a place is available. (or one of the three nearest suitable schools in the case of low income families with extended rights choosing a secondary school). The distance to the nearest suitable school is extended for such families preferring a school on the grounds of religion or belief).

- 4.2. Parents will remain on the waiting list for nearer suitable schools and should take a place if offered in order to continue to qualify for travel assistance. They should renew this application annually, in order to remain on the waiting list.
- 4.3. In some circumstances, parents may decide that it will not be in the best interests of their child to move school at the point when a place becomes available at a school nearer to their home. If a parent decides that their child is to remain at their current school no travel assistance will be provided. Parents may apply for assistance if they can show exceptional circumstances, under the Exceptional Circumstances scheme.

5. What to consider when choosing a school for your child

- 5.1. Parents should always bear in mind the provision of transport when making their choices for school.
- 5.2. All parents are advised to apply to the nearest suitable school if they wish to be considered for travel assistance. This applies even if an older sibling is at a school that is further away and receives travel assistance. Having a sibling at a particular school does not guarantee admission or travel assistance. For information about catchment areas and feeder schools, please see below.

6. Advantages of transferring to a closer school

Advantages of transferring to a closer school include:

- reduced travel time for children; children less tired
- ability to take part in out of school activities
- better for the environment as local schools mean fewer cars on the road and fewer buses
- local schools means that friends live closer
- sense of community

We align the development of our policy and our practice with the current Department for Education (DfE) guidance relating to Home to School Transport. The guidance can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance

7. Distance and eligibility

- 7.1. The council will provide travel assistance free of charge for a pupil to and from their nearest suitable school with a place available if this is:
 - 2 miles or more from their home for children below the age of eight
 - 3 miles or more from their home for children aged eight and above
- 7.2. The council currently uses its discretionary powers to offer travel assistance to children aged 8 to 11 years to their nearest suitable school with a place available. This provision may change at any time in the future.

8. How distance is measured

- 8.1. The council uses Datamap to measure distance between home and school. This software calculates home to school distances, and does not include unsafe routes. An unsafe route is a route to school along which a child, even when accompanied as necessary, could not walk with reasonable safety.

9. Forms of travel assistance the council provides

- 9.1. The arrangements for all travel assistance must be suitable and in some instances parental consent is necessary.
- 9.2. Assistance may take the form of a mileage allowance when the parent's vehicle is used, a public transport pass, and a seat on a coach/taxi, an escort, travel training or a walking bus.

10. Situations where the council does not provide travel assistance

The council does not provide travel assistance for:

- pupils who are below compulsory school-age – that is, those who are in Reception, but not yet of statutory school age
- school activities taking place after or before school
- Year 6 induction/transition days
- pupils attending a selective school
- foreign exchange pupils
- inter-school travel (were a school is on two, or more, sites)
- work placements
- where the parent is unable to take their children to school due to work commitments
- where the parent has children in more than one school

The council may offer assistance in exceptional circumstances.

11. Application timetable and process

- 11.1. Awards of travel assistance are given for a specified period of time, which will not exceed an academic year.
- 11.2. First time and repeat applications for assistance to start at the beginning of the next school year should be made as soon as possible in the current school year. Applications must be completed in full and received by us in the window between the start date of the current school year and 30 June of the same academic year. All required evidence must be provided before the application can be accepted as complete.
- 11.3. When a pupil requires assistance part way through a school year an application should be made as soon as possible. Applications for pupils moving into Thurrock should be submitted as soon as a place has been offered and accepted.
- 11.4. The council processes all applications as soon as practicable. Awards will be made from the date the completed form is received with the required supporting evidence.

12. School catchment areas and feeder schools

- 12.1. Some primary, secondary Schools and academies operate a catchment area for admissions. Some schools have feeder schools. Being in or out of catchment, or having attended a feeder school are not relevant to eligibility for travel assistance. Distance will be measured in accordance with this policy.
- 12.2. Parents are advised to check distances with the Council before choosing a school if they are considering the need for travel assistance.

13. Safe Walking Route

- 13.1. All routes from home to school in the borough are considered using the shortest available safe walking route. The council will consider whether the pupil could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied by a responsible person, such as a parent or other adult... The council will also consider the age of the child and whether one would ordinarily expect a child of that age to be accompanied.
- 13.2. Routes are inspected by officers of the council initially and where a decision cannot be reached they are referred to a panel to make a decision. Where a route or part of a route is considered unsafe to be walked, travel assistance will be provided to those pupils who would otherwise have to use that route to get to and from school because there is no alternative available safe walking route.
- 13.3. The council reviews unsafe routes. It will re-inspect and declare the route safe once steps have been taken to remove the risk. Where a route previously considered to be unsafe becomes safe, entitlement to travel assistance will be reviewed.
- 13.4. Parents have the right to appeal against a decision that the route is safe.

14. Parental preference

- 14.1. Parents are able to express their preference for a particular school. Where a child which is given a place at a school chosen by the parent is not the nearest suitable school the pupil would not benefit from home to school travel assistance because there is a nearer suitable school.
- 14.2. As noted above, there are special considerations for families in receipt of benefits under the provision for extended rights.
- 14.3. In addition, the council will have regard to a preference that is based on the parent's religion or belief, or the pupil's religion and belief where they pupil is in post-16 provision.

15. Pupils who are 4 years-old or younger

- 15.1. The council does not provide transport for children below compulsory school age unless they have special educational needs or disabilities. Such cases will be considered if an application is made under the Exceptional Circumstances scheme.

16. Post-16 transport

- 16.1. The council does not make provision for post-16 home to school transport except in exceptional circumstances.
- 16.2. There are, however, travel options for post-16 pupils. The local bus companies, Ensignbus Company and First Essex Buses are offering a Post-16 Student Bus Pass that can be issued either via the colleges in Thurrock or by contacting Ensign bus directly on 01708 865 656. This pass will allow students unlimited travel including evenings and weekends on all services offered by the two companies in and around Thurrock and as far as Basildon Bus station.

17. Post-16 SEND educational transport

- 17.1. Post-16 SEND pupils are not automatically eligible for free educational transport, but they are entitled to a needs assessment. If any transport assistance is awarded as part of this assessment they may be offered a maximum of 12 journeys to residential placements. Journeys to non-residential college provision will be considered as a part of the needs assessment.

If a parent or carer wishes to accompany their child to their residential educational facility this will be done at their own expense. If the parent or carer is in receipt of benefits or earning a low income they may opt to complete an exceptional circumstances form requesting support with travel expenses. If additional journeys are required then an exceptional circumstances form must be completed.

- 17.2. It is the expectation that travel training be offered to all post-16 pupils with SEND. In all other cases, Travel training should be offered as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, an offer of transport.

18. Excluded pupils and pupils attending alternative provision

- 18.1. Any pupil attending alternative provision because they have been excluded or directed to attend a place other than their registered school and this place is outside the statutory walking distance will be treated as an eligible child.

19. Looked-after children

- 19.1. It is the responsibility of the foster care or residential care provider to ensure that looked-after children placed with them attend school.
- 19.2. Looked-after children may be eligible for travel assistance, if they qualify under the rules. If the cost of transport to school is included in the placement fee no other transport assistance will be provided.

20. Choosing a school for reasons related to religion or belief

- 20.1. Following consultation and changes to policy, no discretionary transport to schools chosen for reasons of religion or belief will be provided. Applications

21. Proof of religion or belief

- 21.1. Parents must confirm on the application form that they have chosen the particular school for reasons of religion or belief.

22. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 22.1. Travel assistance for pupils with special educational needs, a disability and/or challenges with mobility.
- 22.2. The council must make travel arrangements free of charge to pupils who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school where a place is available because of mobility issues or because of health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND).
- 22.3. Each case is considered individually and suitable arrangements are made for each pupil. Appropriate information regarding the needs of the individual will be considered as part of this process and this will be reviewed regularly.
- 22.4. Where a route has been formally identified by the council as an unsafe route, and a child with SEND is required to access that route the council will assess whether the child can reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied by a responsible adult and if so, whether the child's parent or carer can reasonably be expected to accompany the child. It is expected that parents will accompany the child unless there are exceptional circumstances that make this impractical – for instance, where the parent cannot accompany their child because of illness or disability. In such cases, the council will use its discretion to award transport provided suitable evidence of their circumstances is provided and accepted.

23. Children with an educational health care plan (EHCP) or statement of special needs

- 23.1. The council will provide travel assistance, free of charge, to the nearest suitable school named in an educational health care plan (hereinafter referred to as an "EHCP") or statement of special educational needs (SEN) if the pupil cannot reasonably be expected to walk there.
- 23.2. Sometimes an EHCP or Statement of SEN names two schools, this is because the council has agreed that the pupil will attend the parent's school of choice. Transport will not be arranged or paid for by the council in cases where a place is granted based upon parental preference. In such cases, parents/carers will be expected to make their own travel arrangements and pay for any expenses incurred.

24. Travel Assistance for children with SEND

- 24.1. As with all travel assistance, for pupils who have SEND and who qualify as an "eligible child", it is given free of charge.
- 24.2. If parents agree to drive their child to school a petrol allowance of 40p per mile may be provided to support such travel.
- 24.3. Any assistance given using the council's discretionary powers may not be free from charge, as with all discretionary awards.

25. Children with SEND weekly or fortnightly boarding placements

- 25.1. Subject to a needs assessment, where children attend a special education provision outside of Thurrock, the council will consider transport to take the child to school on a Sunday evening, or Monday morning, as agreed with the school and to collect the child to take them home at the end of the school week or fortnight, or earlier as agreed with the school. The council will only offer funding for planned travel or travel required in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances will be reviewed by the council and only if they are found to be exceptional will transport will be provided.

26. SEND – residential placements in an independent special school

- 26.1. Residential placements are usually for one of either:
 - 39 weeks (termly)
 - 52 weeks
- 26.2. Subject to a needs assessment, children who are not looked after, but attend a special education provision outside of borough may be eligible for a maximum of 12 single journeys from home to school and school to home each academic year. This will consist of trips required at the start and end of each term and half term breaks.
- 26.3. Any travel assistance will be subject to an assessment which will take into consideration the age, needs and ability of the pupil and the individual circumstances of the parent or carer concerned.
- 26.4. If agreed, it is the direct responsibility of the parent and or school to notify the Passenger Transport Unit of the requirement for transport at least 10 days in advance of the expected date of travel. Any additional trips will be the responsibility of the parent.
- 26.5. When public transport is assessed as the most suitable method of transport the council will reimburse parents at the rate of a standard ticket. Payment will be made in arrears, on receipt of proof of travel and cost. Where parents opt to use any other form of transport such as a private taxi such transport will be procured entirely at the parent / carer's expense.
- 26.6. Where there is a risk of a placement breakdown the SEN Team may consider providing reimbursement of fuel or public transport costs in order to support additional trips on a short

term basis so that the child can be supported back into his / her full time boarding arrangement.

27. Facilitating inclusion in main stream provision for children attending special schools

- 27.1. Where a child with a Statement or EHCP on roll at a special school is attending a designated mainstream secondary school for whole day sessions as part of a formal integration programme, transport will be considered in exceptional circumstances by the SEN Case Management panel.

28. Annual review

- 28.1. The council will carry out an annual review, and more frequent reviews where required, of any travel assistance agreed for pupils with SEND.

29. Primary school-age and SEND children – school to home transport

- 29.1. On arrival at a child's home at the end of the school day, the driver will use his discretion, and any requirements of the contract, to decide how long to wait for the parent or carer to collect the child.
- 29.2. Should the parent not collect their child from the vehicle within a reasonable time (maximum 3 minutes) the vehicle will proceed to the next stop. The driver will advise their base of the failure of the parent or carer to collect the child from the vehicle within the set time frame.
- 29.3. The driver will then complete the route and once the remaining children have been collected, the child will be brought into the Thurrock Council Civic Offices and placed into the care of the Social Care Duty Officer. The parent will need to make arrangements to collect the child from Social Services.
- 29.4. This action is for emergencies only and transport will be suspended if the behaviour persists and the child is not collected on 3 occasions within a term.
- 29.5. If a parent is likely to be late to collect the child they must inform the school and make alternative arrangements for the child to be collected directly from school or at the drop-off point.

30. SEND children arriving and departing from school

- 30.1. Drivers and passenger assistants are not allowed to leave children and young people unaccompanied in their vehicles or in school premises. Consequently, schools are required to ensure that they have sufficient staff available to support transport providers at both the start and finish of the school day.
- 30.2. Subject to an assessment of need, transport may be provided for children with special educational needs to their nearest appropriate school if the pupil:
- is under 11 and lives more than 2 miles from the nearest appropriate school

- is aged 11 years or older at the start of the school year and lives more than 3 miles from the nearest appropriate school
- has a physical or sensory impairment which makes it impossible for them to travel to school by any other means and prevents them from walking safely to school even when accompanied by a responsible adult
- has a severe, profound and multiple learning difficulty or disability preventing them from walking safely to school, even when accompanied by a responsible adult
- has a disability which places them on the autistic spectrum and prevents them from walking safely to school, even when accompanied by a responsible adult
- has a disability that prevents them from accessing the form of transport generally available to take other pupils from their area to school

30.3. The guidance is that any transport provided for SEND pupils should be reviewed on an annual basis, and more frequently where circumstances may change within the term – that is, after medical treatment. Parents must advise the council of any change that would result in transport no longer being required.

31. Additional considerations and exceptional circumstances for SEND transport

31.1. Parents / carers should note that:

- all SEND travel assistance to be re-assessed on at least an annual basis
- the most appropriate travel assistance must be provided
- a taxi will only be awarded after all other options have been considered
- parents and carers will be offered a maximum of 40p per mile payment to transport their child using their own vehicle to and from school
- where transport is provided the default option is public transport
- parents and carers may upgrade their transport at their cost

31.2. Exceptional circumstances – SEND

The exceptional circumstances provisions can be used for SEND pupils that do not fully satisfy the SEN needs assessment.

Parents and schools are encouraged to explore, and where possible, implement, travel training as an alternative to transport and to increase the child's or young person's skills around independent travel while decreasing their reliance on transport.

Parents and carers will be offered mileage in circumstances where they are in a position to transport a child to and from school using their own vehicle. Such mileage will be calculated based upon a flat rate of 40p per mile. Where a parent or carer is not in a position to drive – for example, due to the lack of a licence or a medical condition – or where a child requires transport due to a medical condition, medical evidence from a qualified medical officer is required to support the assessment of the case.

32. Managed moves

32.1. If a child has changed school under a managed move parents should re-apply for assistance and eligibility will be reconsidered.

33. External moves – child moving into Thurrock

33.1. Families moving into the Borough should apply for school transport as soon as they have been accepted by a Thurrock school.

34. Internal moves – child moving within Thurrock

34.1. Parents moving within Thurrock will need to reapply for travel assistance. Eligibility will be assessed under this policy. Assistance will only be given to the nearest suitable school.

34.2. In cases of hardship, parents can apply under the Exceptional Circumstances scheme.

35. Temporary arrangements including disability or illness of carer

35.1. Where the normal arrangements for home to school travel are no longer appropriate, for example, because a child, young person or in exceptional circumstances a parent, has a temporary disability or illness parents can apply under the Exceptional Circumstances form.

35.2. Travel assistance may be offered for a specified period of time, and kept under review.

36. Suitability of travel assistance

All transport arrangements must be suitable:

- it must enable the pupil to reach school without stress, strain or difficulty
- It must enable the pupil to travel in reasonable safety and comfort
- it does not have to be a door-to-door service – council-arranged transport may collect and drop-off pupils at designated pick up points and it is the parent's responsibility to get them to this point and collect them from it, on time

The council will have regard to the Department for Education guidance about length of journey time and number of changes required when considering suitability.

37. Permission for designated adult to collect child

37.1. When parents are unable to collect their child, and have arranged for another adult to do so, the parent must inform the Council's Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) in writing as soon as possible. PTU staff will inform the transport provider.

37.2. Parents must give full details of those adults who may drop off or collect their child. Details must include:

- names
- telephone numbers
- addresses
- relationship to child

37.3. The permission statement must also be signed, and dated, by the parent.

38. Reimbursement

38.1. Mileage reimbursement

Mileage reimbursement may be offered to parents/carers of pupils who are entitled to free home to school transport, where this offers best value for money to the county council.

A pupil's home to school or college mileage will be calculated by the county council and the rate paid will be 45p per mile, for 2 journeys per day. Mileage allowances will cover the cost of the parent's journey:

- to school or college with their child in the morning, and home again afterwards
- to collect their child in the afternoon, and home again afterwards

38.2. Reimbursement of expenses

Occasionally, the council may reimburse parents for payments made for other forms of transport where these offer best value to the council or are necessary as an exception for some other reason.

Such payments will only ever be made when details of what they cover are agreed in advance in writing. They will be agreed on a case by case basis using principles set out within this policy – for example, relating to the number and nature of journeys, the need to accompany a child and best value.

Details of what is agreed will be set out in writing to a parent to reflect the particular situation. No parent should make arrangements without the council's advance agreement nor expect that unless expressly agreed any payment will be reimbursed.

39. Reporting a change in circumstances

39.1. Parents/post 16 pupils must report all changes in circumstances to the Awards and Benefits team. These include, but are not limited to:

- moving house
- moving school
- changes in safety of the route
- change in income for families qualifying as low income families
- changes in health, disability or special educational needs of pupil or other family member that affect getting to school
- other

40. Exceptional circumstances applications, including post-16 transport

40.1. An application for travel assistance for a pupil who does not meet the criteria for any category of award described in this policy may apply to be considered for an award paid as an exception. These are only made in exceptional circumstances. Applications should be made as soon as possible on the relevant form and cannot be backdated.

- 40.2. Applicants must provide all evidence listed or requested by the council. Where a form is incomplete and/or evidence is not provided as requested, within any given time limit, no award can be made. Assistance will not be backdated.

41. Eligibility checks

- 41.1. The council has a duty to ensure that it protects public funds. The Council may contact families during the academic year, to ensure they are still eligible for travel assistance.

42. Awards made in error

- 42.1. Where an award of travel assistance has been made in error, the council has the right to withdraw this after first considering the circumstances of each case to determine whether there are exceptional reasons for provision to continue.
- 42.2. Where it is decided to withdraw transport, up to one term's notice will be given. If the error was discovered before the commencement of the academic year the transport will be withdrawn straight away.

43. Fraud

- 43.1. Where an award of travel assistance has been made as a result of fraud it will be withdrawn immediately. The council will require all monies paid to be repaid. It will refer the matter to its legal department.
- 43.2. If the pupil requires travel assistance following this, a fresh application should be made. The matter may be dealt with by the police.

44. Appeals

- 44.1. The council has adopted the appeal procedure recommended by the Department for Education guidance. This procedure applies to all applications.
- 44.2. Parents and carers may complain or appeal if they:
- believe a mistake has been made in the consideration of their child's transport entitlement
 - are dissatisfied with the service they have received or the way in which they have been treated
 - are of the view that their child's circumstances are not covered by the policy and that there are exceptional circumstances that should be taken into account – in such circumstances, their case would be considered through the appeal process and as an exception, under the exceptional circumstances process
- 44.3. In the first instance parents and carers should contact the council's Complaints Team at 0800 021 3016 or complaints@thurrock.gov.uk. Correspondence will be dealt with as Stage One of the complaints procedure.
- 44.4. If the parent or carer remains unhappy with the response received, they may request that their complaint be re-considered at either:

- Stage Two of the complaints procedure, if dissatisfied with the service or treatment they have received
- a transport appeal, if disputing the accuracy of the transport entitlement decision or submitting an exceptional case for transport

44.5. If the matter cannot be resolved at Stage Two or transport appeal the complainant will be informed that they can refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

45. Information about other forms of support available to pupils and students

45.1. Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS)

In order for young people to prove their age and be able to obtain student / half price fares the UK Government has introduced the Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS). All official Proof of Age cards carry the "PASS" hologram. These schemes are particularly useful for those pupils who live under the statutory distance requirement, i.e. under 3 miles, or for non-eligible / entitled children.

45.2. Benefits of a Proof of Age Card

The PASS Card helps prove your age to the bus driver so you can have the reduced fare you are entitled to under the bus company's terms and conditions. Also, if you look younger than your age, it will help prove your age when buying age-restricted goods.

45.3. The following bus companies have confirmed that they accept Proof of Age cards for journeys in and out of Thurrock:

- Arriva Essex
- Ensign Bus Company
- PASS Scheme for Essex, including Thurrock
- Be Identified Throughout Essex (BITE)
- Amber Bus Company
- First Essex Buses

45.4. The BITE Card is Essex County Council's proof of age card for young people aged 11 and above. The card is obtained by completing an application form obtainable from school or libraries:

<http://www.essexhighways.org/Transport-and-Roads/Getting-Around/Bus/Fares-and-bus-passes/BITE-cards.aspx>

45.5. There is a requirement for a colour passport quality photograph and for an authorised person to verify the young person's age and to sign the application and the photograph.

For Thurrock students, there will be a cost of £5 per card. It takes between 2 to 4 weeks to obtain. Replacement cards cost £5.

45.6. Additional benefits associated with the PASS Scheme

Retailers

As the card has the PASS hologram, endorsed by the Home Office, the card should be accepted by major retailers but this cannot be guaranteed. Please call Consumer Direct on 0845 4040506 if you encounter a problem.

Libraries

The BITE Card can be used as a library card in Thurrock, Essex and Southend.

Other National Proof of Age cards

CitizenCard

The standard cost of the card is £15, additional charges if required quicker.

Anyone can apply for a card, but if you are under 16 you do need parental consent: www.citizencard.com/online-application

ValidateUK

The standard cost of the card is £15 (includes postage and packaging). Anyone can apply for a card: www.validateuk.co.uk

46. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- 46.1. All drivers, passenger assistants and anyone else providing direct travel assistance are required to have a current DBS check at the Enhanced level and to have their DBS certificate re-issued at least every 3 years.
- 46.2. The DBS certificate should be shown when requested.

47. Accessibility of pick up and set down points

- 47.1. Most transport provided operates from defined pickup and set down points which, in most cases, will be local bus stops as these are considered to be the safest locations.
- 47.2. Details of the pick-up points are sent out to parents by letter, shortly before the commencement of term. Any problems in relation to these should be emailed to: passengertransport@thurrock.gov.uk
- 47.3. The council cannot give a specific time when the transport will arrive at the pick-up and set down points and consequently parents are advised to arrive at least 10 minutes earlier than the arrival time stated, in the award letter.
- 47.4. The vehicle will not wait more than a couple of minutes when collecting pupils and will leave at a time that will enable the driver maintain the vehicle's schedule.
- 47.5. Transport assistance cannot be tailored to meet individual timetables, but consideration will be given whenever possible to minimise inconvenience to pupils.
- 47.6. Please note that times cannot be adjusted for work commitments or other siblings.

48. Primary school-age and SEND children drop-off – dealing with emergencies

- 48.1. When returning children home the transport will wait for up to three minutes for the Parents to collect their children. Should the parent or carer not collect their child from the transport within this time the vehicle will proceed to the next drop-off point. The driver will advise their office of a missed drop-off and keep the child safe within the vehicle.
- 48.2. The vehicle will continue on its journey and once the remaining children have been collected, the child will be brought into the Civic Offices and placed into the hands of the Social Care Duty Officer where the parent or carer will be able to collect the child.
- 48.3. There will be a charge for this service which will be set on a cost recovery basis and will be reviewed annually.
- 48.4. This action is for emergencies only and transport will be suspended if the behaviour persists and the child is not collected on 3 occasions within a term.
- 48.5. If a parent or carer knows they are going to be late they should arrange for the school to keep their child at school for them to collect rather than allow them to go home on the vehicle as this could lead to delays for other children and their parents.

49. Managing risk

- 49.1. The transport operator is responsible for assessing the risks associated with the route and vehicles used.
- 49.2. Parents and carers are responsible for the safety of their children between the home and the pick-up and drop-off points and while waiting for the vehicle to arrive.
- 49.3. Parents and carers should advise the SEND team of any special requirements prior to transport being approved.
- 49.4. The council has quality standards for the monitoring of vehicles and equipment used in the operation of education transport.
- 49.5. The council will monitor each provision and route at least once every year.

50. Seatbelts and safety

- 50.1. These are provided on all vehicles commissioned by the Council where required by law. Where provided, pupils **must** wear these. If a pupil is 14 years-old or over, they carry legal responsibility and could face a fine of up to £60 if a police officer boards a vehicle and they are not wearing a seat belt where one is provided, without a reasonable excuse or medical exemption. Parents and carers should check that their child understands what is required of them, and pupils should ask drivers and passenger assistants if they are unsure.
- 50.2. Pupils must comply with all other safety requirements stipulated by transport providers.

51. Severe weather and transport delays

- 51.1. The decision on whether or not transport will operate during periods of severe weather rests with transport contractors who will be aware of localised weather conditions. They will liaise as necessary with the Passenger Transport Unit.
- 51.2. Schools advise when they are unable to open due to severe weather, via BBC Essex and Heart Essex. Parents and carers should tune to these radio stations during bad weather.
- 51.3. Some schools may also send text messages to parents and carers.
- 51.4. Drivers are responsible for advising their companies of any delays, caused by bad weather, heavy traffic, and so on. Parents and carers can contact the transport provider directly on the number advised in their transport award letter if there has been more than a 15 minute delay.

52. Provision of passenger assistants

- 52.1. Passenger assistants will only be provided where either:
 - transport is to a primary school
 - there are more than 8 pupils in a vehicle – applies to primary schools only
 - a child with disabilities needs a personal assistant to use the school transport
 - a health and safety issue is apparent and the journey time is one hour or more
 - a majority of pupils on the vehicle are in Year 1 or 2
- 52.2. Passenger assistants for SEND purposes are assessed on a case-by-case basis as outlined in the SEND passenger assistants section.
- 52.3. Passenger assistants on council-contracted vehicles require a Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) certificate that is checked, and deemed satisfactory.

53. Managing pupil behaviour

- 53.1. The council expects all pupils to behave in an acceptable manner, respecting other users of the vehicle, staff, drivers and other road users.
- 53.2. Pupils must:
 - wear their seat belt where it is provided
 - follow the driver's instructions
 - always have their ticket or pass with them
 - keep their belongings with them and not obstruct gangways
 - take litter with them
- 53.3. Pupils must not:
 - consume food or drink
 - smoke or drink alcohol
 - interfere with emergency exits, doors, windows or safety equipment
 - play music, unless using personal headphones
 - distract the driver by any means

- make excessive noise

Extreme behaviour actions may result in an immediate and permanent suspension.

- 53.4. If a pupil causes damage to a vehicle or other property they or their parent will have to pay for this and could be prosecuted. Thurrock Council will support transport operators and the police in taking action against anyone who acts in a way that puts the safety or well-being of other users of the transport at risk.
- 53.5. Drivers will report incidents of poor behaviour to the pupil's school. The head teacher of a school is able to take action for poor behaviour that takes place outside school premises.
- 53.6. Thurrock Council will not tolerate bullying or discrimination on the transport it provides. Pupils should report any poor behaviour and action may be taken both by the council and the Head Teacher and/or police.
- 53.7. Any sanctions imposed by the council as a result of poor behaviour will be reviewed. As with all aspects of home to school transport there is a possibility of appealing or complaining to the council.

54. Sanctions for inappropriate behaviour

Sanction are:

- 1st offence – 5 school days transport suspension
- 2nd offence – 10 school days transport suspension
- 3rd offence – 1 calendar month transport suspension
- 4th offence – 1 term transport suspension
- 5th offence – permanent suspension of transport

55. Sustainable travel to school

- 55.1. Thurrock Council actively endorses and supports schools to take responsibility for encouraging school journeys to be taken by sustainable modes of travel to:
- mitigate acute and localised congestion
 - mitigate local air quality issues
 - improve road safety
 - improve childhood physical activity rates
 - reduce childhood obesity
 - improve wellbeing of school pupils
- 55.2. Sustainable modes of travel include travelling:
- on foot
 - by bike
 - by public transport – bus and rail
- 55.3. School journeys undertaken by motorised vehicles should be avoided wherever possible, with suitable alternatives in place to encourage the uptake of sustainable travel. This includes initiatives and incentives.

56. School travel plans and accreditation

- 56.1. A school travel plan is a document produced by schools that sets out the framework for encouraging pupils to travel to and from school by sustainable modes of transport.
- 56.2. It plays an important part in improving road safety and encouraging pupils to walk, cycle and use public transport.
- 56.3. A school travel plan should include:
- a description of the school and its environment
 - a baseline survey
 - a summary of established good practice initiatives – specifically pedestrian training, cycling skills, road safety in the curriculum
 - a summary of any road safety or schools transport problems
 - proposed initiatives with objectives and targets – for example, a walking bus
 - a delivery action plan to achieve objectives and targets
 - plans for monitoring and review
 - school transport provision
- 56.4. Every school in Thurrock has a school travel plan and they are required to monitor travel behaviour and to review and update their plans annually.
- 56.5. Modeshift STARS provides an online portal for schools to monitor and report on initiatives undertaken by pupils, staff and parents, setting different criteria to meet in order to be accredited bronze, silver or gold.

Assessments take place three times during the course of an academic year, with schools being awarded in September of each year.

Please check with the school your child attends / would like to attend to view a copy of their Travel Plan or to find out the level of accreditation they have been awarded.

57. Initiatives and resources

- 57.1. In order to support schools to encourage more pupils to travel sustainably to school, Thurrock Council provides a range of initiatives and resources. The initiatives and resources are dependent on the funding available and rely on school staff to work with council officers to deliver the initiatives.
- 57.2. Please check with the school your child attends or would like to attend to see what initiatives and resources are available.
- Pedestrian Training for parents of reception pupils
 - Scooter Training for Year 1
 - Kerbcraft for Year 2
 - Level 1 Bikeability for Year 4
 - Level 2 Bikeability for Year 6
- 57.3. Park and stride – Parents and carers are encouraged to park a short distance from the school and then walk with their children the rest of the way. Park and stride provides an ideal opportunity for children to be physically active, which is important to their wellbeing.

- 57.4. School crossing patrol service – There are currently 18 school crossing patrol sites in Thurrock. Although it is a parent's responsibility to ensure their child's welfare on the journey to and from school, the school crossing patrol officers are there to provide safer places to cross.
- 57.5. Walking Bus – A Walking Bus is a great way to encourage more children to walk to and from school. Each 'bus' consists of a group of children, who are escorted by a minimum of two parent volunteers – a 'driver' at the front and a 'conductor' at the back. A walking bus can take up to 16 children who walk in pairs.
- 57.6. Cycle Train – A Cycle Train is similar in approach to the Walking Bus scheme. Each cycle train follows a planned route and consists of a group of children wearing hi-visibility clothing escorted by parent volunteers.

58. Volunteers

- 58.1. Volunteer helpers may be recruited for any of the Council organised Walking Buses or Cycle Trains. They will be recruited in accordance with the Department for Education's Keeping Children Safe in Education Guidance and be given suitable training.

59. Payment of charge, where applicable

- 59.1. Any charge will be payable in advance in either one instalment or in multiple instalments as agreed with the Awards and Benefits Team. The first instalment or full amount is due in the month of August of each year.
- 59.2. Where transport is awarded due to eligibility against criteria in this policy, any changes in circumstances should be notified to the Awards and Benefits Team who will reassess eligibility.

60. Advice on benefits

- 60.1. Advice on entitlement to benefits can be obtained from the council's Awards and Benefits Team or from www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Word	Definition
The Act	the Education Act 1996
Borough	the Borough of Thurrock
Child	also means Children
Compulsory school age	Between the ages of 5 and 16 years old. "beginning at the start of the term following a child's fifth birthday" and "ending the last Friday in June of the school year in which they are 16".
Council	Thurrock Council
Council contact details	<p>Awards and Benefits phone: 01375 652 511 email: awards@thurrock.gov.uk email: awdsandbenefits@thurrock.gov.uk</p> <p>School Admissions phone: 01375 652 883 email: school.admissions@thurrock.gov.uk</p> <p>Special Education Needs (SEN) phone: 01375 652 555 email: sen@thurrock.gov.uk</p> <p>Passenger Transport Unit phone: 01375 413 883 email: passengertransport@thurrock.gov.uk</p>
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). The DBS enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that involve children. DBS certificates are valid for up to 3 years.
Denominational school	A school associated with a particular religious denomination or faith. A school funded, sponsored and / or controlled by a specific religion or faith.
EHC plan	Education, Health and Care Plan. A unique plan heavily focused on the individual personality and requirements of each child. The plan contains details of the special education, health and care needs of the individual child or young person.
Eligible child	As defined in Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996; a child attending their nearest suitable school that also meets the Home to School distance requirements.
Entitled child	A child that the School accepts is practicing in the faith to which the Denominational School subscribes to. The school may require evidence that the child, and their family, attend the Church, Chapel, Madrasa, Mosque, Synagogue or Temple, etc. to which the school is associated with.

Word	Definition
Nearest suitable school	Nearest suitable school is defined as a school designated by the Council as the nearest appropriate school to the home address with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs that the child may have. The nearest suitable school for a child with special educational needs may well be different than for other children.
Non-eligible	A child attending a school, selected by their Parents, which is not their nearest suitable school, but who meets the Home to School distance requirements.
Non-entitled child	A child that is not practicing the faith to which the Denominational School subscribes Looked After Children Children that are "Looked After" by, or in the care of, the Council as defined by the Children Act 1989
PAN	The published admission number or PAN is the number of pupils in each year group that the admission authority has agreed will be admitted without causing problems for the school.
Parent	The term includes mother, father, carer or guardian
Passenger assistant (escort)	A Passenger Assistant assists the child / young person, helping them to get on and off the vehicle, ensuring their safety and comfort and supporting them during the journey to and from school.
Qualifying benefits	<p>Maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC).</p> <p>Free school meals – children in school years 1 and 2 receiving "free" schools meals as a result of the government's Universal Infant Free School Meals policy will not automatically be considered eligible for free school transport.</p>
Safe route	A safe route is one which is considered safe to be walked, accompanied as necessary by a parent or other responsible adult. Also see Unsafe routes.
Selective schools	A school that admits students on the basis of some sort of selection criteria, usually academic.
SEN and SEND	A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

Word	Definition
SEN assessment	The identification and statutory assessment of children with special educational needs of a kind and degree which requires the council to determine the educational provision, equipment required to support a child as well as advice to parents, schools and other agencies School Any institution at which people receive formal education. Includes Academies which are distinguished by the fact that they usually come under the direct control of the central government as opposed to schools that usually fall under the jurisdiction of local governments. An academy is rather independent in terms of curriculum, and may also receive support both financial, as well as material, from various sponsors.
Travel assistance	Any of the arrangements the council
Unintentionally homeless	A person who through no fault of their own has become homeless. Those who have not deliberately done, or failed to do, something that caused them to become homeless
Unplaced	A child has been refused a place at their nearest school or schools; due to no place being available the child is defined as "Unplaced". It is the Council's duty to ensure that Unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are offered a place at a suitable school as quickly as possible.
Unsafe route	An unsafe route is defined as where 'the nature of the route is such that the child cannot be reasonably expected to walk, accompanied if necessary, in reasonable safety'. Such routes are assessed thoroughly against set criteria (including nature of footways and crossings, traffic flow and visibility).

Words in the masculine also include the feminine, and vice versa.

Words in the singular also mean the plural.

The definitions are taken from the Education Act 1996.

Section 444(5) of the Act defines the statutory walking distances.

Schedule 35B of the Act defines:

- 'eligible children' (paragraphs 2-7 and 9-13)
- 'qualifying school' (paragraph 15)
- 'disabled child' (paragraph 15(4))
- 'religion and belief' (paragraph 15(6)) and 509AD of the Act
- 'low income family' (paragraphs 9-14)

Section 579 of the Act defines 'child'.

Section 509AC of the Act defines 'compulsory school age'.

The Equality Act 2010 defines 'religion or belief' for the purposes of this Act.

The Children's and Families Act section 10 defines 'SEN'.