

Thurrock Council

Home to school travel assistance – admissions statement

Pupils of statutory school age (5 years-old to 16 years-old)

Parents and carers are given the opportunity to express a preference for one or more schools for their child. Places are allocated in accordance with the school's admissions' policy. All parents and carers need to consider very carefully choice of school and how their child will get there.

The council arranges travel to school for certain groups of children, free of charge, as required by law. It may also assist in other limited cases (using its discretion), where it considers this to be necessary. The council may ask for a financial contribution from the family when doing so.

"Low income" families, as defined by the government, have "extended rights".

Where no award is made by the council, the family must arrange travel and pay for this.

Travel assistance decisions

The term "travel assistance" covers all forms of free transport and travel arrangements made by the council.

The council decides the type of assistance given. This can include travel training, a bus pass or other forms of support.

The council must use public resources wisely and when providing transport must consider:

- the fostering of independence
- sustainability
- suitably
- the overall cost of any support package

There is a right of appeal against all decisions.

Qualifying criteria for free school travel assistance

To qualify for free school travel assistance, pupils must:

- live in Thurrock
- be of compulsory school age – usually between 5 and 16 years-old

Pupils requiring assistance must meet one of the following 4 criteria.

1. They attend the nearest suitable qualifying school with places available and their home to school journey is more than the distance set by law according to their age – this is 2 miles children under 8 years-old and 3 miles for children who are 8 years-old or older.
2. The route to school is unsafe. A child cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because of the nature of the routes they could reasonably be expected to take.

3. They have special educational needs or disability (SEND) or mobility problems, including health and safety issues relating to these, which mean they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school (accompanied as necessary). Different rules apply for children with or without an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).
4. They qualify for "extended rights" of choice of school because of "low income".

"Extended rights" and "low income"

A child will qualify under the "low income" provisions if the child is entitled to the qualifying benefits for free school lunches or the child's parents or carers receive Working Tax Credit at the maximum rate, and additionally the child:

- attends a primary school and the nearest suitable school is more than 2 miles from their home
- attends a secondary school that is one of the 3 nearest suitable schools, between 2 miles and 6 miles from their home
- attends a secondary school that is between 2 miles and 15 miles from their home, and their parents or carers have chosen that school based on their religion or belief, with regard to which there is no nearer suitable school

Measuring distance

The council measures distance by using its specialist mapping software. This gives accurate walking distances from the gate of the student's home to the nearest entrance gate of the school. Some websites give approximate distances, which may differ from our specialist software.

Policy and guidance

If your child meets the qualifying criteria, you can apply online and download full policies at:

- thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-travel-support

For government guidance, go to:

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

Contacts and useful information

To discuss an application for travel assistance, find your nearest suitable school or ask any other question about travel to school, contact Education Awards and Benefits:

- phone 01375 652 511
- email awards@thurrock.gov.uk

For information on bus routes and timetables use Traveline:

- phone 0871 200 22 33
- web www.traveline.info

For information on cycle routes in Thurrock, go to thurrock.gov.uk/cycling