**The London Borough of Sutton**  
**Policy for Home to School Travel Assistance**  
*(Reception to Year 11) – 2016/17*

**Introduction**

1. This policy explains the assistance that may be available to support a Sutton resident child’s access to school. It applies to new applications for pupils travel to school from September 2012 onwards. Those already in receipt of travel assistance will continue to receive it until the end of year 6 or 11, providing their circumstances remain the same.

2. This policy does not apply to:
   - children with Statements of Special Educational needs (there is a separate SEN Transport policy), Education, Health & Care Plans or Learning Difficulty Assessments.
   - children not of compulsory school age (separate information is provided in relation to students of sixth form age)
   - children attending private schools

   This policy applies to children attending “qualifying schools” which include all community, foundation and voluntary schools, pupil referral units and academies or city technology colleges or a city college for the technology of the arts. It may also apply where alternative educational provision has been arranged for a child by Sutton education authority.

3. Children living and travelling in London aged under 16 can travel free of charge on Transport for London buses and trams provided they have a child Oyster photocard. Children under 11 also travel free on the London Underground, DLR, London Overground and TfL Rail if they are accompanied by an adult or with a 5-10 Zip Oyster photocard. Please go to [https://tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s/zip-oyster-photocards](https://tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s/zip-oyster-photocards) for details.

4. Travel assistance normally available will be in the form of a Travelcard to enable a child to use the London Underground or a train. Where a pupil is eligible, Travelcards are not issued to parents.

5. A Travelcard will not normally be awarded if a timetabled journey of under 45 minutes for a primary school child or 75 minutes for a secondary school child, is available on free transport in ‘3’ above.

6. Assistance will not normally be provided where the child has been subject to a voluntary change of address. This includes a temporary Council Housing move where the family has rejected local housing options.


8. Sutton will provide assistance with home to school transport under five headings:
• Distance to school and nature of route to school
• Low income families
• Faith or belief based preferences
• Disability awards
• Local Authority directions

Within each of these, where school applications are made within coordinated schemes for starting school and transferring to secondary school, the school application(s) must normally have been made by the relevant closing dates.

**Distance to School**

9. Assistance available (see also paras 3-5) under ‘distance to school’ is based upon statutory walking distance and reasonable travel time.

10. Statutory walking distance is defined as 2 miles for a child under 8 and 3 miles for a child 8 and over. It is measured by the shortest reasonably safe route along which a child (accompanied as necessary) may walk and may include footpaths, bridleways, pathways and other recognised roads. Assistance will be given if the distance from the child’s home to school is greater than the statutory walking distance or the child could not reasonably be expected to walk to school because of the nature of the route to school. Assistance will not be given if the child could travel to school in a reasonable travel time using free bus, tram or train travel. Consideration will be given to any special circumstances which prevent the parent accompanying a child to primary school, such as if the parent has a disability, provided that appropriate medical evidence is supplied.

11. Reasonable travel time is defined as 45 minutes for a child at primary school and 75 minutes for a child at secondary school, by a timetabled journey. Sutton will normally use the Google Maps journey planner for this purpose.

12. To be eligible for assistance the child must attend the nearest qualifying school to their home or be attending alternative education provided by the authority. Assistance may also be given if the child is required to attend alternative education provision following an exclusion from school, and that provision is further than the statutory walking distance from the child’s home.

13. Assistance will be given if the parent is unsuccessful in applying to all qualifying schools within these definitions. By this we would also consider qualifying schools that a parent would have been awarded a place at if they had applied to them and were closer than those named on the application. No assistance will be given if, by preference, the child attends a school which is not the nearest qualifying school to the home address.

**Low Income Families**

14. A low income family is regarded as one where the child is eligible for Free School Meals or where the parent/carer that the child normally lives with is in receipt of the highest level of Working Tax Credit (i.e. they have no deductions from their award based on income).

15. Assistance (see paras 3-5) will be given to a low income family where:
- The child is aged 8-10 to their nearest qualifying school if it is more than 2 miles travel distance
- The child is aged 11-16 to their nearest 3 qualifying schools if they are over 2 and under 6 miles travel distance
- The child is aged 11-16 to their nearest school chosen by reason of faith or belief if it is over 2 but under 15 miles travel distance (see 18-21)

16. In calculating these distances, the minimum distance will be by shortest walking route defined in 9. The maximum distances will be measured along roads.

17. Where assistance is granted to a low income family, their continuing status will be reassessed on an annual basis.

**Faith or Belief Based Preferences**

18. Assistance (see paras 3-5) for low income families (see para 13) on faith based preference will be considered where the parent has a specific requirement based on the parent’s religion or belief for a child aged 11 to 16 to attend a particular school and their nearest school which meets the requirements of the parents’ faith or belief is over 2 but under 15 miles travel distance.

19. No assistance will be given on faith grounds if, by preference, their child does not attend their nearest school of that faith or meeting the requirements of their faith or belief.

20. No assistance will be given on faith grounds if they have a higher preference for schools not of that faith or meeting the requirements of their faith or belief.

21. Assistance on grounds of belief will be considered on a case by case basis, but may include such things as a requirement for a single sex school, providing higher preference schools are not mixed sex.

**Disability Awards**

22. Assistance (see paras 3-5) may be available for a child who has special educational needs or mobility problems or is a disabled child where it is unreasonable having regard to his/her special educational needs or disability or mobility problems to expect him/her to walk to school. To be eligible for assistance, the child must attend the nearest qualifying school to his/her home or be attending alternative education provided by the Authority. Assistance will be given if the parent is unsuccessful in applying to all qualifying schools within these definitions. By this we would also consider qualifying schools that a parent would have been awarded a place at if they had applied to them and were closer than those named on the application.

23. No assistance will be given if, by preference, the child attends a school which is not the nearest qualifying school to the home address.

24. Where a child has a temporary condition that may prevent access to school, assistance may be available through the Special Educational Needs team

**Local Authority Directions**
25. Assistance (see paras 3-5) may be granted where the Local Authority has directed a child to attend an educational establishment, such as a Pupil Referral Unit or other alternative education provision.

26. Assistance may also be granted where a child is placed at a school as a result of Sutton’s Fair Access Protocol to a school, where the child cannot reasonably walk to school or the distance exceeds that defined in 9 & 10 above.

Application

27. Application forms are from the School Admissions Team, and can be returned to them by email or to the address at the bottom of this policy.

28. Parents unsuccessful with an application will be entitled to ask for a review of the decision based on any evidence they may provide to support their case. Details of this will be notified in the decision letter.

29. Parents whose case falls outside of the terms of this policy may ask for their case to be considered under exceptional grounds. All such cases will be considered on an individual basis on the evidence provided at the time of application.

Changes in Circumstance

30. Where assistance is granted and the family circumstances change, these must be reported immediately to assess the continuing need for assistance.

31. If assistance is no longer required, any Travelcard issued must be returned to the School Admissions Team immediately.

Appeals

32. LB Sutton has a two stage home to school transport review/appeals process for parents who wish to challenge a decision about:
   a) The transport arrangements offered
   b) Their child’s eligibility
   c) The distance measurement

33. Stage one: Review by a senior officer
   a. A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority’s home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision. The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
   b. Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent’s written request a senior officer will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written outcome setting out:
      • the nature of the decision reached; how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB);
      • information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process where relevant;
      • what factors were considered;
• the rationale for the decision reached;
• information about escalation to stage two (if appropriate).

34. Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel
   a. A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority’s stage one
decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
   b. Within 40 working days an independent appeal panel will consider written and
verbal representations from the parent and officers and give a detailed written
outcome setting out:
   • the nature of the decision reached;
   • how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road
   Safety GB);
   • information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as
   part of the process;
   • what factors were considered;
   • the rationale for the decision reached;
   • information about escalation to the Local Government Ombudsman (see
   below).
   c. The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the process to
date and suitably experienced, to ensure a balance is achieved between
meeting the needs of parents and the local authority, and that road safety
requirements are complied with.

35. Local Government Ombudsman
   There is a right of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if complainants
consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are
any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled.