

Policy on applying for assistance with home to school travel costs

For 5-16 Year olds only (Reception up to and including Year 11)

Free travel for children and young people

Transport for London (TfL) provides free travel on buses and tram services with the London area (Zones 1-6) for children under the age of 18 in full-time education. Free travel by TfL is provided under the following guidelines:

- **Children aged 5 to 10 years old travel free at any time on buses, Tube, trams, DLR and London Overground services without a ticket or Oyster photocard.**
- **Children aged between 11 and 15 will need to obtain a 10-15 Oyster photocard* to travel free on bus and tram services. Child rates will apply on the Tube and DLR.**
- **Children that turn 16 that are still entitled to free bus/tram travel as long as they remain in full time education.**

* Application forms are available from the Post Office. Visit tfl.gov.uk/sip for further details.

It is expected that children that are resident in Westminster City Council make use of the concessions offered by TfL including free travel across London. However, there may be circumstances where travel assistance is required outside the scope of free arrangements offered by TfL. In this instance Westminster City Council will take account of the statutory requirements.

Pupils aged under 16, who in the judgement of Westminster City Council, have an unreasonable journey to school using bus or tram services, may be entitled to assistance with the cost of rail and/or underground travel to and from school.

To qualify for assistance, your child must meet all the following criteria:

1. Residence – Your child must be a resident of Westminster City Council. Checks will be made using internal Council Tax records to verify your address. We maintain the right to ask for further proof of address if records do not match.

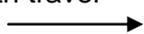
2. Walking distance – Your child's walking distance to the nearest suitable qualifying school is more than:

- 2 miles for a child aged under 8
- 3 miles for a child aged 8 and over

Walking routes are determined using a computerised mapping system, which plots the exact route and calculates the shortest safest walking distance between the home and the school address.

3. Journey time – Your complete journey by bus exceeds:

- 45 minutes for a primary age child (each way)
- 75 minutes for a secondary age child (each way)

4. School – pupils must attend their nearest suitable qualifying school*. Westminster City Council will take into account school preference based on grounds of religion** or belief*** but if an application was not made to the nearest suitable qualifying school(s) of the desired type or a place was offered and not accepted, assistance with travel costs will not be awarded and you will be 

expected to take full responsibility for the cost and arrangements of your child's travel to and from school. **Secondary transfer applicants will not be awarded a travel grant if the school offered to your child was ranked higher in your list of preferences than the nearest suitable qualifying school(s).** If you applied to your nearest suitable qualifying school and you were refused, you might still qualify for a travel grant. In order to qualify, you will need to have been refused a place at all of your nearest suitable qualifying schools. This will be confirmed by the Admissions Team.

If you have an older child that was previously awarded a grant, this does not mean the younger child will qualify. Your younger child must meet all the requirements of this policy.

***Suitable qualifying school' - defined as community, foundation or voluntary aided school, community or foundation special schools; non-maintained special schools; pupil referral units; city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts or Academies.*

***Religion – based on the nearest qualifying suitable school and up to a maximum of 15 miles from the child's home.*

****Belief - based on case law, examples of beliefs that are not included are: a wish to attend a particular category of school e.g. foundation or grammar; preference for a particular type of management or governance which does not affect curricula or teaching at the school; a belief that child should be educated privately; a wish that a child must be taught a particular language; objection to having to wear a uniform, a wish for a single sex or co-educational education, where this is not based on the religious views.*

Westminster City Council will use its discretion in determining whether financial assistance will be awarded. It will also determine whether a full annual travel grant is required or a contribution to the cost.

Consideration will also be given to applicants under the following headings:

Special Education Needs

Assistance will be given if a pupil is in receipt of a Statement of Special Educational Needs and the school named on the statement meets the qualifying criteria.

Exceptional Circumstances

We may find that it is appropriate to offer financial travel assistance if there is a particular medical or social need. In these circumstances professional (doctor/consultant) support will be required.

Low Income Families

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). Assistance will be given where:

- The child is aged between 11 and 16 years old attends once of the three nearest maintained schools or academies between 2 miles and 6 miles from their home ; or
- The child aged between 11 and 16 years attends the nearest maintained school or academy, for which the parent has applied on the grounds of their religion** or belief***, between 2 miles and 15 miles from their home.

If you feel that your child may be eligible for assistance with travel, please complete the attached form and return to:

The School Admissions and Travel Team
Green Zone, 2nd Floor
Kensington Town Hall
Hornton Street
London
W8 7NX

Tel: 020 7745 6433

Email address: schooladmissions@westminster.gov.uk

If you are applying due to your family income, and you will need to provide a copy of the relevant documentation provided by HM Revenue and Customs with your application.

All applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application in writing within 10 working days.

Approved Applications - Successful applicants will be notified in writing that a travel grant has been approved. The Admissions and Travel Team will carry out checks with the school to confirm that the child remains on roll and is attending. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the Travel Officer if the child is no longer attending the school as this will require a proportionate cost of the grant being repaid to Westminster City Council.

Method of Payment - If your child is eligible for financial assistance, payment will be paid into your nominated bank account in **two instalments**. This applies to new applicants, and renewals that are approved for the start of the academic year. A form will be provided with your letter to provide your bank details. Payments will be calculated in accordance with the cheapest fare available at the time (usually this will incorporate concessions available to Oyster card users) and will cover the cost of the return home to school journey during week days and term time only.

The **first instalment** will normally be made in July/August and will cover travel costs up to and including the last Friday before the February half term. The **second instalment** will be issued during January/February and will cover travel costs up until the end of the Summer term. You will not need to complete a renewal form as checks will be carried out with the school to confirm that your child remains on roll and is attending.

An application must be renewed at the beginning of each academic year if internal checks with the school indicate a change in circumstances. Applicants that apply mid-year as a result of moving to the borough will have their travel costs awarded based on the first date the child was placed on roll at the school but not back dated for more than 4 weeks. Westminster City Council will not be held responsible for the loss of Oyster cards or any credit that it may contain.

Unsuccessful Applications - Where an application has been unsuccessful and yet you feel that, having due regard for the qualifying criteria, there are still extenuating circumstances which you would like to bring to our attention, please write to:

Admissions & Travel Manager, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8 7NX

Your case will be considered by a panel of tri-borough senior officers.

Data Protection Notice

The personal information that you provide will be handled by Westminster City Council in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. It will be used by the School Admissions and Pupil Benefits Section for the purpose of determining eligibility for financial assistance and will be used for this and related purposes.

Examples for low income families

Child A is an eleven year old child entitled to free school meals. Their nearest suitable school is 2.5 miles from their home; the second nearest school is 3 miles away; and the third nearest is 5 miles away. Child A would be entitled to free transport to each of these three schools.

Child B is an eleven year old child whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit. Their nearest school – “x” – is 1.5 miles from their home; the second nearest – school “y” – is 2.2 miles from their home; and the third nearest – school “z” – is 5.5 miles away. Child B would be entitled to free transport to either school “y” or “z”, but not to school “x”.

Child C is an eleven year old child who is entitled to free school meals. School “x” is their nearest school, and is 4 miles away. School “y” is their second nearest – 4.5 miles away, and the next suitable school is school “z” – 10 miles from their home. Child C would be entitled to free transport to school “x” and “y”, but not to school “z”.

Examples relating to eligibility based on a parent’s religion or belief

Child A is entitled to free school meals. Child A’s parents are members of the Church of England. Because of their religion, A attends a voluntary aided Church of England school which is 4 miles from the family home. However, there are three community schools closer to the home. This child is an “eligible child”.

Child B’s parents are in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit. Child B’s parents are Roman Catholics. Because of their religion, B attends a school designated as Roman Catholic which is 10 miles from the family home. However, there are three community schools closer to the home. This child is an “eligible child”, and will be protected from charges in scheme areas.

Child C is entitled to free school meals. Child C’s parents are Jewish. Because of their religion, C attends a school designated as Jewish which is 35 miles from the family home. There are three community or C of E schools closer to their home. This child should **not** be an “eligible child” under these provisions.

Child D is entitled to free school meals. Child D’s parents are atheists. They do not wish their child to attend a faith school. The three schools closest to their home are a designated C of E school, a designated Roman Catholic school, and an academy that is designated as Christian. Child D attends the nearest community school which is 7 miles away, and should be considered an “eligible child”.

Child E is entitled to free school meals. Child E’s parents are Jewish. Because of their religion, E attends the nearest school designated as Jewish which is 14 miles from the family home. There are three schools closer to their home, one designated as Church of England, and two community schools, one of which offers Hebrew Studies, the other the National Curriculum. This child is an “eligible child”.

Child F is entitled to free school meals. Child F’s parents are Jewish. Because of their religion, Child F attends a school designated as Jewish which is 14 miles from the family home. There are three community schools and a voluntary aided school designated as Jewish, which the parents do not wish their child to attend, closer to the home. This child is not an “eligible child”.

Child G is entitled to free school meals. Child G's parents believe in selective education, and want their child to attend a grammar school that is 14 miles from their home in preference to one of the four comprehensive schools that are closer to their home. In the Department's view support for selective education does not amount to a 'philosophical belief', and the child is **not** an "eligible child" under these provisions.

Children H and I. Child H's parents are in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit. Child H's parents are Roman Catholics. Because of their religion, H attends School X, a school designated as Roman Catholic which is 9 miles from the family home. There are three community schools closer to the home. H is an "eligible child". Child I's parents are in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit. Child I is a neighbour of H and is a Muslim child. Her parents also want her to attend School X because they believe that a faith school (of whatever religion) would be able to provide education more in line with their religious beliefs than a non-faith, community school. There are three community schools closer to I's home. I is an "eligible child".

Child J is entitled to free school meals. J's parents believe that their daughter should be taught Biology, Chemistry and Physics as separate subjects. None of the three nearest schools can guarantee that she will be able to be taught the subjects in way which accords with the parent's beliefs. The fourth school 9 miles away, can. In the Department's view an opinion that these subjects should be taught separately is not a "philosophical belief", and the child should not be considered eligible to free transport.

Children K and L live next door to each other, and are both entitled to free school meals. K's parents are Roman Catholics, and L's are Muslims, and both sets of parents believe – because of their religion that their daughters should be taught at a single sex school. None of the three nearest schools are single sex girls' schools. The nearest single sex girls' school is 14 miles away. Both Child K and Child L are eligible to free transport.

Child M is entitled to free school meals. M's parents do not believe that children should be obliged to wear school uniform. Their nearest school is 5 miles from their home and requires pupils to wear a uniform. The second nearest school is 12 miles away, and does not require pupils to wear a uniform. Child M would not be an "eligible child" as, in the Department's opinion, a view that children should not wear school uniform does not amount to a "philosophical belief".

Child N is entitled to free school meals. Child N's parents are Humanists and do not want their child to attend a faith school. Child N attends school Y, a non-faith community school which is five miles from the family home. There are three faith schools closer to the home. This child is an "eligible child".