

BRIEFING FOR
EDUCATION AWARDS (REVIEW) SUB COMMITTEE

EDUCATION TRANSPORT

BACKGROUND

The Education Act 1996 (Section 509) sets out a minimum level of provision required of Local Authorities for providing transport assistance between home and school. It also gives Local Authorities considerable discretionary powers.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Part 6) has inserted Section 508 to the Education Act 1996. This means that from September 2008 this act has extended provision for some pupils from low income families.

Transport assistance can be in the form of a travel pass for use on public transport, or as necessary, specialised transport such as taxis, minibuses, wheelchair accessible vehicles, etc.

POLICY

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In Birmingham the statutory walking distances are modified by discretionary power to the benefit of pupils up to 11 years of age. Bus passes will be issued to those pupils who have to travel more than the following distance criteria to the nearest available school measured by the shortest available walking route. Where pupils are attending denominational schools to fulfil religious beliefs then the nearest school requirement is modified:

Up to 8 years of age – 1 mile

Between 8 years and 11 years of age – 1.5 miles

11 years and over – 3 miles

LOW INCOME FAMILIES (YEAR GROUPS 7 to 11 ONLY)

From September 2008 children from low income families (children who are in receipt of free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum of working tax credit) may be eligible for free transport assistance to either:

- one of the 3 nearest qualifying schools, where they live more than 2 miles but less than 6 miles from that school;

OR

- the nearest qualifying school preferred on the grounds of the parent's religious or philosophical beliefs where that school is more than 2 miles but less than 15 miles from their home.

Sub Committee will consider those applications that fall outside these criteria. Applications will either have been refused because (a) the distance criteria has not been met or (b) there are nearer schools available within the stated distance.

SPECIALISED TRANSPORT

This will be provided for those pupils who hold statements of special educational need on the recommendation of the Head Teacher concerned.

APPLICATIONS FOR REVIEW

If parents are not entitled to assistance then they can request that their application is reviewed. Evidence would need to be provided of severe financial hardship as well as other exceptional reasons.

EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONAL CRITERIA

- Has there been a sudden drop of income? Has there been a sudden change in family circumstances?
- Is there a supported medical reason as to why the pupil cannot walk? Has medical evidence been submitted together with support from the school concerned or other agencies
- Mobility problems occurring as a result of the disability of a parent are referred to the Adults and Communities Directorate.
- Are there any other available schools within walking distance?
- Has the pupil moved house after deciding in Year 9 GCSE options? Have family been forced to move house?
- Have exceptional reasons been provided as to why a pupil cannot attend a particular school? E.g. bullying, harassment etc.
- Secondary Transfer Choices – what choices did parent make? What schools were offered?
- Medical Reasons – has evidence been provided by a medical practitioner to show that a pupil would have difficulty either walking or using public transport e.g. broken bones, temporary medical conditions, etc? Do parents have a car? Could pupil travel on public transport with an escort?
- Is there some exceptional reason as to why pupil cannot walk or go on public transport, e.g. bullying, harassment, etc?