



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Further Steps

Oxfordshire County Council's information for parents and carers of children applying to a UTC or Studio School in September 2025.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

Don't Forget!

Check UTC and Studio School websites for application deadlines.

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Introduction



As the number and diversity of Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges for 14 to 18-year olds increases, one role of the modern Local Authority is to ensure that parents and pupils have the information that they need to make informed choices about the best educational provision to meet their current and future needs.

Young people currently in Year 9 have the opportunity to continue their education at their current secondary school or transfer to a University Technical College (UTC), or Studio School to start Year 10 in September 2025.

There is currently one Studio School and one University Technical College in Oxfordshire, which are:

[Futures Institute, Banbury](#)
[UTC Oxfordshire, Didcot](#)

In Oxfordshire, the UTC and Futures Institute deal with applications for Year 10 to Year 13 themselves, so you should contact them direct about their admissions processes, requirements and deadlines if you are interested.

I would advise you to read the prospectuses and admissions arrangements and also to read our Home to School Transport Policy. It may also be possible to visit UTCs or Studio Schools.

Most importantly, I would also advise you to apply by the establishments' published deadlines. Applying on time is likely to maximise the chance of your child being offered a place at your preferred Studio School or UTC.

Further information is available at:
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

Lisa Lyons
Director of Children's Services

Section 1 – Application Process

Parents of children born between 1 September 2015 and 31 August 2016 (inclusive) are able to apply for places for their children in Studio Schools or University Technical Colleges (UTCs).

Parents do not need to do anything if they want their children to continue at their current secondary school.

UTC and Studio School websites should be used to access information regarding application deadlines and processes.

There is currently one Studio School and one University Technical College in Oxfordshire, which are:

[Futures Institute, Banbury](#)
[UTC Oxfordshire, Didcot](#)

Applying

If you are interested in applying for a place at a UTC or Studio School, either in Oxfordshire or beyond, you should view their websites or contact them direct regarding their application process.

Applying on time

It is very important to apply on time. This maximises the chances of being offered a place at a preferred establishment. We advise you check the application deadlines with the relevant establishments.

Preferences

Before deciding which establishments to list, parents are advised to read through the information available online www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions and in the “Further Steps” booklet and check Studio School and UTC websites and prospectuses. It may also be possible to visit these establishments

It is important to understand the admission rules for a particular establishment in order to assess the likelihood of being able to obtain a place for a child. If a place is not offered it will be because there were other children who had a higher priority for a place under the admission rules. The admission rules for every state funded school in Oxfordshire can be found on our [schools search results](#) webpage.

Applying late

If you miss the deadline to submit an application, you should contact your preferred UTC or Studio School and ask if there are any circumstances under which they can consider

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extenuating circumstances for applications being received late. They will also be able to advise on their process for late allocation rounds where relevant.

The Allocation Process

The Admission Rules

Places are offered according to the priority of each individual establishment's admission rules. These are all available online via links on the individual school pages of the Oxfordshire County Council website (see Section 2) for the Futures Institute and UTC Oxfordshire.

What happens on National Offer Day – 3 March?

The Studio School and the UTC will contact families direct on 3 March with the outcome to their application. Details will be on the establishments' websites as to whether they will contact families by email, by post, or if they will use both methods.

Responding to an Offer

The Studio School and UTC will advise successful applicants on how and when to respond to offers, and what action may be taken if a response is not received.

If a preference cannot be offered

It is not always possible to offer a child a place at a preferred educational establishment. If this happens, parents will have the option to add their child's name to the Waiting List and/or request a change of preference and/or appeal for a school place.

Waiting Lists

Parents are able to place their child's name on the Waiting List for schools where a requested place could not be offered.

Children living in Oxfordshire are not automatically placed on the Waiting List for any school. Parents must advise the Studio School or UTC if they want their child's name added to a list.

It is also advisable to check Studio School and UTC websites to see how they manage their individual Waiting Lists.

Admission appeals

Parents have a statutory right to appeal for a place at any school where a place was not offered. For notifications sent on 3 March 2025, the deadline for returning the appeal form is 31 March 2025 (20 school days after national offer day).

Anyone who has an application for a place at a school turned down (for the years Reception to Year 13) has the right to appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. For most but not all

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schools, appeals are organised by the Clerk based at County Hall who can be contacted on 01865 328215 or at schoolappeals@oxfordshire.gov.uk

UTC Oxfordshire use the Council's Schools Appeals Service. Futures Institute Banbury should be contacted direct about their independent appeals process.

Appeals are heard by an Independent Panel. A decision by an appeal panel whether or not to offer a school place is binding on the relevant Admissions Authority.

Acceptance of a place at a school does not affect a parent's right to appeal for a place for their child at another school. However, if a parent decides to appeal for any of the listed preferences, it is wise to secure a place for a child at an alternative school in case the appeal is unsuccessful. This is because transfer appeals are normally heard during the second half of the summer term.

A parent's statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied will not apply if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group. In addition, if the request to be admitted to a different year group has not been accepted and a parent then appeals for a place for their child, any appeal that is heard would relate to the child's normal age group, i.e. the appeal would not be for admission to the requested year group.

Further information about the appeals process can be found at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schoolappeals

Second (or Late) Allocation Round

Applicants who miss the deadline to submit applications should contact UTCs and Studio Schools direct and ask for information on any dates and deadlines for late applications to be submitted and the expected dates for late allocation rounds.

Section 2 – Oxfordshire Studio Schools and the University Technical College (UTC)

Details for every state funded Oxfordshire school can be found on our [schools search results](#) page. On this webpage you can find each school's location, contact details, catchment area (where it has one), admissions rules and information about how places have been offered in previous years.

Establishment	Address Oxfordshire web details (where a link to admissions rules can be found)	Published Admission Number
Futures Institute Banbury	Ruskin Road, Banbury, OX16 9HY www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/school/4006	60
UTC Oxfordshire	Greenwood Way, Harwell, Didcot, OX11 6BZ	150

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	www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/school/4008	
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Looked After and Previously Looked After Children

Looked After Children

A 'looked after child' is a child who is:

- (a) in the care of a local authority; or
- (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions at the time of making an application to a school (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

Previously looked after children

The School Admissions Code 2012 introduced a requirement for all admission authorities to broaden the existing priority for 'looked after children' or children in care (defined in section 22 of the Children Act 1989) to also include 'previously looked after' children. Children who were 'previously looked after' were defined for admissions purposes as those who immediately after being in care became subject to an adoption, residence, or special guardianship order.

A revised School Admissions Code came into force on 19 December 2014 and this states that previously looked children include those who were adopted under the Adoption Act 1976 (see section 12 adoption orders) and not simply those children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see section 46 adoption orders). In addition residence orders have now been replaced by child arrangements orders. Those who previously received a residence order are now deemed to have a child arrangement order.

If applying on behalf of a "previously looked after" child the parent will need to provide the following evidence:

- an adoption order under section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002; or
- an adoption order under the Adoption Act 1976; or
- a child arrangements order; or
- a residence order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under section 8 of the Children Act 1989; or
- a special guardianship order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's special guardian(s), under section 14A of the Children Act 1989.

It is important that the evidence is provided since without it there is no basis for considering a child as being "Previously Looked After". Therefore failing to provide the necessary evidence could have a significant impact on whether a place is offered at the school listed as the first preference.

Children previously in state care outside England

Guidance was issued by the school's minister in 2018 asking Admission Authorities to consider prioritising children who were previously in state care outside England. When reaching a decision whether to offer a place under Criterion 2, the Admissions Authority will use the guidance to determine whether a child should be considered under this Criterion, requesting evidence from the applicant and taking a pragmatic approach to the decision-making process where evidence is lacking.

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Catchment areas

Many, but not all, schools have catchment areas which are part of the admission arrangements and help establish the priority for a school place. Our [schools search results](#) page has details of a school's location and catchment area, (where it has one).

Living within a particular school's catchment area, where it has one and where it uses this in its over-subscription criteria, gives a high priority for admission but there is no guarantee that a place will always be offered.

Please note that attending the catchment area school does not mean that the child concerned is entitled to free home to school transport (see Section 4).

Time of entry

For most schools the admission arrangements give some priority to those with a brother or sister attending the relevant school at the applicant's "time of entry". This means that, in the normal admissions round, there will be no sibling connection for admission purposes for entry to Year 10 if they have a brother or sister in Year 13.

All Year 11 students are required to continue education or training and Year 11 students do not need to apply for a place in Year 12. Therefore, applications made on behalf of children who have a brother or sister in Year 11 at the preference school may be considered as having a sibling connection for admissions purposes, where that school has a Sixth Form.

It is advisable to check Studio School and UTC websites to understand their time of entry and sibling rules for admissions purposes.

Addresses

Home address

The address on the application should be the child's address at the time of application. This is the address at which the child spends the majority of term-time school nights (Sunday night to Thursday night).

The "time of application" is the entire time period from the point when applications can be made in September 2024 until National Offer Day on 3 March 2025.

Sometimes an application is made based on an address at the time the application is written and the address then changes after the application has been submitted. It is important to tell the Admissions Authority about changes of address so that places can be offered fairly and so notification can be sent by post to the correct home address.

If the application address is found to have subsequently changed after the application was submitted and this information could have been provided when the application was first made or before places were offered, the Admissions Authority will consider the application to have been made on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading address. This will normally result in the offer of a school place being withdrawn (see Fraudulent Applications).

If an application is made on the basis of a new address or intention to move to an area, information about the new address must be provided in order for it to be taken into account.

Change of address

Changes of address which occur after the deadline for applications can normally be taken into account if received by a Studio School's or UTC's given deadline. We advise you contact the relevant establishment to confirm what dates they require notification of address changes by and what they require as proof of a new address.

To confirm a new address, the following are generally accepted, but you are advised to check this with the relevant Studio School or UTC:

- a solicitor's letter advising contracts have been exchanged (if the property is being purchased); or
- a copy of a tenancy agreement (if the property is to be rented) but if this tenancy agreement comes to an end before September 2025 the address may not be accepted for admissions purposes; or
- a copy of the Council Tax Bill showing the same name(s) on the school place application (CAF); or
- a letter from a new employer (e.g. University college) where accommodation is being provided by them and is tied to the new post/job giving details of this new address; or
- new Quarter information if this is an accompanied military posting; or
- an Assignment Order if this is an accompanied military posting but details of the new quarter have not yet been given to the family. In this case the base address will be used for admissions purposes.

Please note that a parent may also be asked to provide proof of address from correspondence they have received from HM Revenue & Customs, Child Benefit Division or Tax Credits Division.

Any correspondence from HM Revenue & Customs, Child Benefit Division or Tax Credits Division must pre-date the application made by the parent.

Multiple addresses

Where children spend time with parents at more than one address then the address given on the form should be the one that they live at (i.e. sleep at) for the majority of term-time school nights (Sunday night to Thursday night).

If children spend time at more than one address the address used for admissions purposes will be the one registered and confirmed as the main address by the nursery/school. If it is not possible to establish the main address from the nursery/school records and the parents state that the child spends 50% of time with each parent, the parents will be asked to agree which address will be used as the main address for admissions and transport purposes or they will be required to have this determined legally via a Court Order.

Fraudulent Applications

If a place has been obtained on the basis of a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application (for example, a false claim to residence in a catchment area) and this results in the denial of a place to a child with a higher priority for that place, the admission authority for the school may withdraw the offer of that place. This follows the guidance in paragraphs 2.13 and 2.14 of the School Admissions Code 2021 published by the Department for Education:

2.13 An admission authority **must not** withdraw an offer unless it has been offered in error, a parent has not responded within a reasonable period of time, or it is established that the offer was obtained through a fraudulent or intentionally misleading application. Where the parent has not responded to the offer, the admission authority **must** give the parent a further opportunity to respond and explain that the offer may be withdrawn if they do not. Where an offer is withdrawn on the basis of misleading information, the application **must** be considered afresh, and a right of appeal offered if an offer is refused.

2.14 A school **must not** withdraw a place once a child has started at the school, except where that place was fraudulently obtained. In deciding whether to withdraw the place, the length of time that the child has been at the school **must** be taken into account. For example, it might be considered appropriate to withdraw the place if the child has been at the school for less than one term.

Measuring Home to School Distances

For admissions purposes for all schools where Oxfordshire County Council is the admissions authority for the school, and any Own Admission Authority schools that have adopted the Local Authority's measuring system, the route from home to school will be measured using the straight-line distance as calculated by Oxfordshire County Council. A number of educational establishments will measure home to school distance using a different method, such as the shortest designated route.

You should check with Studio Schools and UTCs which method they use to measure home to school distances.

The details below are provided to explain how Oxfordshire County Council measures home to school distances using straight line and shortest designated route methods. This is also relevant for home to school transport – see section 4.

Measuring Home to School Distances for admissions purposes using straight-line distance

The straight-line distance used to determine proximity of the home to the school will be measured on behalf of schools by the LA, except where schools state they will use another method (see below). The start point of the measurement will be the geographical placement of the address (address point using the Easting/Northing British Co-ordinate system) as available to Oxfordshire County Council from information compiled from Royal Mail and/or district or city councils. This placement is accurate to 10 centimetres. The end point of the

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measurement will be determined by the Admissions Authority of the OAA school and provided to the LA. The calculation of the distance will be made in metres using a Pythagoras calculation. This calculation will be converted into miles by dividing the distance by 1609.344 to achieve a distance in miles accurate to three decimal places.

Measuring the shortest designated public access route

A number of Own Admission Authority schools use the shortest designated public access route to measure home to school distances. The method to calculate distance in this way is set out below.

This route is defined on the LA's Geographic Information System.

The start point of a measurement is the "seed point" of the home address. The "seed point" is provided by Ordnance Survey from information compiled from Royal Mail and/or district or city councils. The seed point normally falls within the bounds of a property. The accuracy of seed points is to the nearest ten centimetres. It is possible to move the location of an individual seed point, but this is not necessary for most addresses. It is not possible to verify the individual location of every seed point prior to measuring due to the number of addresses in Oxfordshire and surrounding areas.

From the seed point the route firstly connects to the nearest point of the digitised network. The positioning of front doors, driveways and back gates is not relevant to the route or the measurement and they are not programmed to be used by the measuring system.

The digitised network is constructed from road data supplied by Ordnance Survey called the Integrated Transport Network (ITN). The Integrated Transport Network has been accurately digitised to measure along the centre of roads and takes corners at right angles. This is the same underlying information as used by internet-based mapping solutions (e.g. Google Maps). However, the LA has a more accurate start **point than internet-based mapping solutions and the ITN has been augmented by the LA** to take into account other available public routes (e.g. alleyways, public footpaths, bridleways, etc). The augmented ITN used by the LA is accurate to at least 1 metre.

All 548,000 kilometres of roads in Great Britain are accurately mapped in a consistent and logical network. The network does not include routes that are not defined as public; these include crossing parks with no paths where the park is not open and available all the time, "short-cuts" across patches of open land without paths, or footpaths across private land which are not defined by Ordnance Survey as public routes.

The end point of the route is the nearest open gate of the school first arrived at from the direction of travel from the seed point that is officially available for use by students for entry and exit to the school site at the start and end of the school day. The location of these gates has been set by the LA. The LA consults with each individual school annually to ensure accurate placement of the gate and its availability for use.

The shortest designated route is established using an algorithm within the bespoke software used by the LA. This software is called RouteFinder and is produced by Higher Mapping Solutions (www.highermappingsolutions.com). This programme integrates with the LA's database (ONE) which is supplied by Capita Children's Services (www.capita-cs.co.uk).

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RouteFinder measures in kilometres and the measurement is converted into miles accurate to three decimal places, which gives an accurate reading up to 1.609344 metres.

The shortest designated route is not necessarily a driving route because it may use, in whole or in part, a non-driveable route (e.g. footpaths). The shortest designated route is also not necessarily a walking route because, for example, where the measurement uses a road, the route is along the centre of the road not along the edge (pavement or equivalent) of the road.

Other measuring systems may give a different measurement but the LA cannot take a measurement from another measuring system into account because this would lead to inconsistency in the method used to measure the shortest designated route and would constitute maladministration of the admissions process.

For addresses which are outside the digitised network (approximately 6 miles outside Oxfordshire's county boundary) an internet mapping solution will be used. For addresses in the UK and Europe, we use Google Maps (www.google.co.uk) which allows measuring by shortest routes when set to 'walking' mode. For addresses outside Europe we measure a straight line distance using longitude and latitude. Firstly, we derive a start point (the home address) using itouchmap.com/latlong.html. We then measure the straight line distance in statute miles from this start point to the end point (the school gate) using www.nhc.noaa.gov/gccalc.shtml

Measuring Home to School Distances for transport purposes

The shortest safe route is defined on the LA's Geographic Information System.

This is measured using the same software and the same algorithm as for the shortest designated route (see above). However, in this mode of calculation, certain parts of the network of roads and/or paths have been specified as unsafe and the route will use an alternative direction which will be longer. This longer distance will be used to determine whether a child is eligible for free home to school transport.

Section 3 – Studio Schools and UTCs in Other Areas

Admissions to Studio Schools and UTCs in other areas may not be part of a local co-ordinated admissions scheme. Parents of Oxfordshire children who want a place at one of these establishments outside Oxfordshire, should find out whether an application should be made direct to the establishment or to the local authority where the establishment is situated or to Oxfordshire County Council. Oxfordshire County Council will accept any application made for any Studio School or UTC in England where required by the relevant educational establishment and will liaise with the relevant admission authority on behalf of the parent and child.

Region	Establishment	Address	Telephone	Web details
Buckinghamshire	Aylesbury UTC	Oxford Road, Aylesbury, HP21 8PB	01296 388688	www.aylesburyutc.co.uk/
Gloucestershire	SGS Berkeley Green UTC	Gloucestershire Science & Technology Park, Berkeley, GL13 9FB	0800 4701516	www.berkeleygreenutc.org.uk/
Northamptonshire	Silverstone UTC	Silverstone, Towcester, NN12 8TL	01327 855010	www.utc-silverstone.co.uk/
Reading	UTC Reading	Crescent Road, Reading, RG1 5RQ	01189 381020	www.utcreading.co.uk
Swindon	UTC Swindon	Bristol Street, Swindon, SN1 5ET	01793 207920	www.utcswindon.co.uk/

Section 4 – Travel to School

Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Parents have a legal duty to make necessary arrangements to ensure that their statutory aged children attend school regularly. The council is only required to provide free school travel to children resident within the administrative area of Oxfordshire County Council who are eligible under the law and this policy. If children move to an address outside the administrative area of Oxfordshire County Council, the responsibility for determining and, where appropriate, providing free or assisted travel passes to the child's new home authority.
- 1.2 The legal basis for the provision of home to school transport is set out in sections 508A, 508B, 508C, 508D and 509AD and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) and, where appropriate, the Equality Act and English and European case law. In addition, local authorities are under a statutory duty to have regard to the statutory guidance "Travel to school for children of compulsory school age" issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in January 2024 and the statutory guidance "Post 16 transport and travel support to education and training" issued in January 2019.
- 1.3 Oxfordshire County Council is keen to encourage young people to walk or cycle to the school or college they attend, or to make use of public transport.
- 1.4 Those who are not resident in Oxfordshire are advised to contact their own home local authority for details of any policy that their local authority may have regarding home to school/college transport.
- 1.5 Free and subsidised transport **is not provided to children of pre-school age** who attend nurseries or other Early Years settings, irrespective of whether they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Travel to nursery/early years settings is the responsibility of a child's parent. This is the case both for children who have an EHCP and those who do not have a such a plan.
- 1.6 There is no legal right of appeal should a parent believe the policy regarding free travel to nursery/early years settings should be set aside in the case of their child or any other child.
- 1.7 Normally eligibility for free travel will be determined at the time that a school place is allocated through:

- Oxfordshire County Council's Coordinated Admissions Scheme for entry at the normal points of admission; and/or,
- the issuing of an Education, Health and Care Plan; and/or,
- the operation of the Fair Access Protocol; and/or,
- the In-Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme.

In addition, the School Admissions Team determines whether free transport should be provided for a temporary or permanent placement funded by the council at an alternative education centre, such as Meadowbrook College.

- 1.8 Parents applying for places in-year at schools that are not part of the in-year coordinated admissions scheme for Oxfordshire need to check the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy to see whether their children may be eligible for free transport. At that point, if they believe their children are eligible, they need to apply directly to the School Admissions Team. The School Admissions Team will then determine whether free travel should be provided. The schools that are not part of the In-Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme are listed online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransfer
- 1.9 Having an Education, Health and Care Plan does not give an automatic entitlement to travel assistance, free or subsidised. Therefore, if a school has been named in an Education, Health and Care Plan in accordance with parental preference and it is not the nearest suitable school, and there is no other basis in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for agreeing free travel, there is no obligation on the council to provide free or subsidised travel. In these circumstances transport to school is wholly a parent's responsibility.
- 1.10 When, under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy, children and young people are entitled to free travel it is provided by the most cost-effective means. This will usually be by the provision of a free bus pass. However, where numbers are small, children may sometimes have to be transported by taxi. If parents wish to take their children to school and it is therefore possible to avoid the provision of a taxi, the council may agree to the payment of a mileage allowance. The mileage allowance is provided for the child's journey to school and the return to the child's home. Parents are not provided with a mileage allowance for their own return to home in the morning or their journey to the school in the afternoon, i.e., the council pays a mileage allowance for two journeys per day rather than four. The mileage allowance is £0.40 per mile. If, through a change in circumstance, the payment of the mileage allowance proves no longer to be the cheapest means of transporting the child to school, the alternative means of travel will be offered, and the parent will be given up to 6 weeks to consider the new arrangement. At the end of that period, or when the alternative means of transport is taken up, whichever is the sooner, the mileage allowance will be withdrawn.
- 1.11 Where free travel is provided or a seat is purchased through the Spare Seat Scheme, travel is provided for attendance at the beginning and end of the

school day only and not for extracurricular activities. This applies both to children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan and those who do not have such a plan.

- 1.12 Free or subsidised travel is not provided for children attending induction, taster or transitional days or sessions before joining the school/establishment.
- 1.13 If free or subsidised travel is provided to an educational establishment there is no free or subsidised travel between sites at that educational establishment or from that educational establishment to any other educational provider/providers.
- 1.14 The responsibility for determining entitlement to free travel rests with the School Admissions Team since transport decisions relate to the school attended. The responsibility for organising transport rests with the Supported Transport Team.
- 1.15 Any information regarding Oxfordshire County Council's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy obtained from any source other than the School Admissions Team of Oxfordshire County Council or the Oxfordshire public website should be disregarded.
- 1.16 Buses and coaches used on contracted home to school transport routes are public service vehicles and are subject to specific safety legislation. This is enforced by an initial inspection and certification of the vehicle followed by subsequent annual checks. Vehicles are also subject to random roadside checks undertaken by the 'Vehicle and Operator Service Agency' (VOSA). VOSA may prohibit the use of any vehicle that is non-compliant, i.e., is in a dangerous condition, not roadworthy and/or the driver's hours are irregular. Any service provider using sub-standard vehicles may lose their operator's license.
- 1.17 No free transport is provided to address poor attendance or non-attendance unless this is attributable to permanent or temporary medical/disability/mobility issues that mean a child cannot walk to the nearest available school. This applies both to children who do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan and those do have such a plan.
- 1.18 If free travel is agreed, children and young people will normally be expected to use public transport (ordinary scheduled bus or train services) or, if this is unavailable, contracted transport such as a coach or minibus. Up until the end of Year 5 children of primary school age who receive free travel to school by public transport will normally be expected to travel with a parent and the parent as well as the child will be eligible for a free bus pass. However, in normal circumstances once a child is of Year 6 age and above only the child will receive free travel. Parents will not normally be able to accompany their children on contracted home to school transport routes.
- 1.19 Taxis will only be used where there:

- is no public transport; or,
 - it would be too onerous to use public transport due to multiple changes of bus; or,
 - it can be demonstrated that a young person is unable to travel on public transport or a contracted coach/minibus because of specific permanent or temporary disabilities/special needs; or,
 - the journey would take longer than 1 hour 15 minutes for secondary school age pupils, or 45 minutes for primary school age pupils, and it would be a significantly shorter journey time by taxi.
- 1.20 There are circumstances in which a young person will travel alone in a taxi. However, this is normally when there are no other travellers to be carried rather than because there is an actual requirement for the child to travel alone.
- 1.21 Specialised tail-lift vehicles will only be agreed after an assessment by the Supported Transport Service or following a successful Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal.
- 1.22 Lone taxi travel will also only be agreed after an assessment by the Supported Transport Team or following a successful Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal. Assessments will be made by specialist officers within the Supported Transport Team.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the Parent

- 2.1 Parents should ensure that a child of statutory school age receives appropriate full-time education. In all, except a small number of cases, this involves attending a school.
- 2.2 Parents are responsible for making any necessary arrangements for attendance at an appropriate school or other setting, including submitting timely applications for admission.
- 2.3 Regarding travel to school, parents are expected to:
- accompany their child as necessary when walking to and from school; and/or,
 - accompany their child as necessary when walking to and from a pick-up point for transport to school and waiting with their child until the vehicle arrives; and/or,
 - ensure that their child has any travel pass that has been issued before their child leaves home; and/or,
 - ensure that their child knows what to do if they lose their travel pass and are refused travel, or if for any reason the vehicle does not arrive, for example, this could be return home, go to a neighbour or telephone the parent for assistance; and/or,

- provide evidence of personal circumstances in support of any appeal for free transport; and/or,
- submit any Stage 1 or Stage 2 appeal; and/or,
- inform the School Admissions Team of any change of address or school and return any pass issued because of living at a previous address; and/or,
- inform the council of any change in financial circumstances that may affect entitlement under the extended rights arrangements set out in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy.

2.4 Parents have a right to express a preference for their child's admission to a specific school or schools. However, this right is solely concerned with admission to school and there is no eligibility for free transport based upon parental preference of school. Therefore, if a child is not eligible for free travel, the parent concerned is wholly responsible for getting their child to that school.

2.5 Similarly, parents who transfer their child to an alternative school for any reason will not be able to claim eligibility for free travel unless the child concerned meets the eligibility criteria shown in this document, for example free transport will not be provided on the basis that a parent believes a child to be unhappy at their original school.

3. Statutory Walking Distance

3.1 In understanding home to school transport and what can and cannot be provided free of charge, it is important to understand what is referred to as "the statutory walking distance." This is 2 miles for children who are under 8 years of age, and 3 miles for those of statutory school age who are aged 8 and over. It is measured along the shortest route along which a child, accompanied by a responsible adult, may walk with reasonable safety. The route may include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads. All such routes need to be open to the public. Even where the distance is calculated to have been longer than the statutory walking distance it will still be measured using this method. If issues are raised over the possible safety of a walking route the School Admissions Team will arrange for an initial assessment and, if necessary, a full assessment by a member of the Road Safety Team.

4. Walking Routes to School

4.1 The council expects that, where necessary, a child will be accompanied to school by a responsible person, such as a parent or other adult. This is a well-established legal point regarding the responsibilities of a parent and means that any assessment of route safety assumes that a child will be accompanied as necessary by a parent or other adult.

- 4.2 It is also well-established in law that the shortest publicly accessible route may include:
- footpaths;
 - shared footpath/cycle tracks;
 - bridleways and other pathways;
 - recognised roads;
 - paths along trunk roads;
 - footpaths along which there is a permissive right of way.

It is important to note that there is no requirement for a route to be maintained by Oxfordshire County Council or by another public body. It simply needs to be available for public use.

- 4.3 If a parent is concerned that a child needs to be accompanied for safety reasons, but the route has been judged by the council to be safe, it is the responsibility of that parent to ensure that the child is accompanied on the route to and from school. Parental perception of risk is not sufficient cause for the provision of free or subsidised travel.
- 4.4 Route Assessments are carried out by a member of the Traffic and Road Safety Team, in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Home to School Travel and Transport Policy, the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2014 and the Road Safety manual 'Assessment of Walked Routes to School' which is issued by Road Safety GB.
- 4.5 In accordance with the law, all routes are assessed with the assumption that pupils are accompanied as necessary by a responsible person (see paragraphs 2.3 and 4.1 above). Routes are not classed as unavailable solely due to any or all of the following factors:
- lonely routes; and/or,
 - routes that pass close to canals, rivers, ditches, lakes or ponds; and/or,
 - routes that require railway crossings if a suitable authorised crossing is present; and/or,
 - the absence of street lighting.
- 4.6 It is clear from relevant case law that assessments must look at the relationship between pedestrians and traffic only and that personal safety/security issues of children travelling alone should not be considered. Therefore, routes are assessed in terms of road safety rather than personal safety/security in any other sense.
- 4.7 The assessment carried out is a road safety assessment. This assessment does not include the weight of the bags carried by an individual, the local weather conditions, temporary surface conditions such as mud or puddles, the presence of uncut hedges, difficult terrain and the arduousness of the route or whether the accompanying responsible adult will also have a younger child or pram with them.

- 4.8 If a footway is over ½ metre in width the footway is classed as an available route.
- 4.9 If a footway is less than ½ metre in width, then traffic volumes and speeds are included in the assessment to determine whether the footway is an available route.
- 4.10 Even if there is not a footway, the walking route will still be assessed as available if it is safe to walk, accompanied, as necessary, by a responsible adult. The assessment will take account of traffic flows and whether drivers have enough time to slow down, or pedestrians have time to step-off the road or verge. It is the responsibility of a parent to ensure that a child is accompanied as necessary on the walking journey to school.
- 4.11 No walking route can be absolutely safe. The term used in the Road Safety GB guidance to describe the accepted standard is “reasonable safety.”
- 4.12 Assessments will usually take place in the morning during the times children will be travelling to school and assessments may also be undertaken when returning home in the afternoon. Visits will be timed, where possible, so that crossing assessments of main roads take place at the times when the number of children travelling to school is highest.

5. Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND)

- 5.1 Children who cannot walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND), will not automatically be refused free travel on the basis that they live within the statutory walking distance of the school attended, if that school is the nearest that they could attend.
- 5.2 Parents who believe their child is unable to walk to the nearest school that they could attend because of mobility problems or associated health and safety issues will be expected to provide supporting evidence from a GP or consultant. In the case of a child with an EHCP, the Plan may provide all the information required.
- 5.3 **Free transport will not be agreed to any school irrespective of distance, journey time or number of other suitable schools that are closer to the family home. Free travel will only be provided to the nearest suitable school.**
- 5.4 The Supported Transport Team may need to assess the mobility problems, or associated health and safety issues, related to a student’s

special educational needs or disability (SEND) to determine the type of free travel that can be made available to that student.

6. Children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

- 6.1 The Children and Families Act received the Royal Assent in March 2014, and this resulted in the gradual replacement of Statements of Special Educational Need with Education, Health and Care Plans.
- 6.2 Having an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) does not give automatic eligibility for free or subsidised travel. Therefore, if a school has been named in a Plan in accordance with parental preference, and there is a nearer suitable and available school, and there is no other basis in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for agreeing free travel, transport to the named school will be wholly the responsibility of that child's parent.
- 6.3 Some children with EHCPs may have specific needs that require the use of specialist transport that is not widely available. If a specialist vehicle is not required, it may still be necessary to use more expensive transport provision, such as taxi transport, to meet the specific needs of the children concerned. However, in all cases, the council will provide the most cost-effective means of travel that will meet a child's need.
- 6.4 Parents of children with EHCPs may, in certain circumstances, be given the option of a personal budget to meet some or all of the provision detailed in the Plan and special transport will be an element of the personal budget.
- 6.5 Whether there is a requirement to assist in meeting a child's travel needs will be considered when an EHCP is issued or amended. Liaison will take place between the School Admissions and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services to ensure the needs of the child are fully understood, as they relate to travel arrangements.

7. Assessments regarding travel arrangements

- 7.1 If free travel is agreed, an assessment regarding a child's mode of travel will be made by the Supported Transport Service. This will normally only be necessary for children with significant disabilities/special needs. In most cases the child will have an EHCP. Options will include:
 - direct travel payments; or,
 - independent travel; or,
 - directly procured travel assistance.
- 7.2 A parent will be formally notified, in writing, of the travel arrangements

that the council believes to be appropriate. At that point, the parent may appeal against the mode of transport decided upon through the normal transport appeal process set out in this document. The first stage of this process is to request a review from the Admissions and Transport Services Manager. Prior to any appeal the council will only make available the transport decided upon in the assessment. The result of any transport appeal is binding on the council.

8. Children in Public Care (Looked After Children)

- 8.1 Children in Public Care (Looked After Children) and children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a Child Arrangements Order or a Special Guardianship Order) receive free travel to school if they meet the criteria set out in the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. If a child is not entitled to free travel, it is the carer's responsibility to ensure that he/she will be able to get the child to and from school.
- 8.2 If the professionals working with the child believe that there are extenuating circumstances that should be considered, the child's social worker may refer the issue to the Admissions and Transport Services Manager for a Stage 1 review.

9. Split site schools

- 9.1 In the case of split site schools, as with all other schools, when assessing whether a child should receive free travel because of the walking distance to that school, the distance will be measured to the site they initially attend. This decision will not be reviewed because a child subsequently moves to a different site of the same school.
- 9.2 The following Oxfordshire secondary schools currently have split sites:
- The Cherwell School;
 - King Alfred's Academy;
 - Lord Williams's School;
 - Heyford Park School.

10. Distance measurement for Free Transport for children of Low-Income Families

- 10.1 The 2 mile limit is measured in the same way as the "statutory walking distance". However, the 6 mile and 15 mile upper limits are not walking routes. The 6 mile and 15 mile limits are measured along routes that are passable using a road route suitable for motorised vehicles.

11. Home

- 11.1 In this policy document a child's home is defined as the child's main place of residence during the normal school week. Free travel can only be provided to and from that one address.
- 11.2 There is no use of notional addresses based on the midpoint between a mother's address and a father's address or addresses of convenience such as the address of a grandparent, cousin, family friend or legal representative.
- 11.3 Where children spend time with parents at more than one address then the address considered as the main address will be the one that they live at (i.e., sleep at) for most of term-time school nights (Sunday night to Thursday night). If children spend time at more than one address the address used for admissions purposes will be the one registered and confirmed as the main address by the nursery/school. If it is not possible to establish the main address from the nursery/school records and the parents state that the child spends 50% of time with each parent, the parents will be asked to agree which address will be used as the main address for admissions and transport purposes or they will be required to have this determined legally via a Court Order.
- 11.4 Free travel is not provided to and from the address of other family members with whom the child is not normally/mainly resident, for example the address of a grandparent or childminder.

12. Travel to a friend's home, Induction/Taster Day, Breakfast/After School Clubs, Work Experience and Foreign Exchange Programmes

- 12.1 No free travel can be provided on an ad hoc basis to children wishing to travel to the homes of children who are entitled to free transport. In addition, no free transport will be provided to:
- attend work experience; or,
 - attend an induction or taster day at another school/college; or,
 - attend a school as part of a foreign exchange programme; or,
 - attend appointments and activities for medical or sports reasons; or,
 - attend breakfast or after-school clubs; or,
 - attend extracurricular activities/clubs; or,
 - attend school trips.
- 12.2 Paragraph 12.1 applies both to children who do not have an EHCP and those who do have such a plan.

13. Escorts

- 13.1 Escorts are normally only provided when it has been established through the “Mode of Travel Assessment” or appeals process that a child with an EHCP has a specific need to be accompanied. Escorts are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and undertake Safeguarding training. Escorts will not normally be provided in any other circumstances.
- 13.2 Examples of factors that may be considered when determining whether to provide an escort are shown below:
- medical issues; and/or,
 - health and safety related issues, including risk to self or others; and/or
 - the child’s mobility; and/or
 - severe learning or physical difficulties that necessitate continual care and supervision.
- 13.3 If a passenger escort is provided, they will:
- travel with the child from an agreed pick-up point to an agreed drop-off point; and,
 - assist with entry to, and exit from, the vehicle; and,
 - ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, a safe journey for the child and other passengers; and,
 - provide a caring environment whilst on the vehicle.
- 13.4 Once transport with an escort has been arranged, parents must provide full details of any changes in the child’s needs and circumstances, including any information specific to the journey or which should be passed on to others at the destination.
- 13.5 A passenger escort may supervise more than one child on a journey, consistent with providing the appropriate level of service for each individual child while they are on the vehicle.
- 13.6 It is a parental responsibility to get a child to the pick-up and from the drop-off point for education transport. Therefore, parents must be ready at the arranged pick up and drop off times to ensure the child’s safe handover.
- 13.7 Escorts are not assigned for the specific purpose of managing behaviour. An acceptable standard of behaviour is expected of all children using transport contracted by the council.
- 13.8 The need for an escort is reviewed on an annual basis.

14. Drivers

- 14.1 Drivers used on contracted transport for home to school travel are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and they undertake Safeguarding training.

15. Parents accompanying children in OCC transport

- 15.1 Parents will not normally be able to travel in OCC provided transport.

16. Change of address

- 16.1 If a child is in receipt of free travel and the family changes address the child's parent needs inform the School Admissions Team. The child's eligibility for free travel will then be reassessed against the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. The parent will then be notified in writing if the child is still eligible for free travel.

17. "No Pass, No Travel"

- 17.1 All passengers are required to carry a pass if one has been issued to them. This establishes whether they may be carried on the vehicle, either under a statutory entitlement, a discretionary entitlement or under the Spare Seat Scheme.
- 17.2 Oxfordshire County Council operates a "No Pass, No Travel" Policy for the safety of its passengers and to restrict access to vehicles to passengers who are not eligible. By limiting access to vehicles, the council seeks to avoid situations where eligible passengers cannot board because their seats are occupied by non-eligible passengers. A full vehicle cannot safely carry additional passengers.
- 17.3 Children may not board a public service vehicle without a pass or the means to pay for the journey. "No Pass, No Travel" takes the same approach with contracted vehicles.
- 17.4 A child who is unable to present a pass when requested to do so by the vehicle driver or council officer will not normally be carried on the vehicle.
- 17.5 It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their children have a pass each morning to get on the vehicle to school or college. If not, the parent may have to return home with the child or make other arrangements to get them to school.

- 17.6 If a child loses the pass during the school day, he or she can approach the school to arrange for a temporary pass to get home. No child eligible for free travel will be refused access for the return journey. A child who has been issued with a pass and persistently travels without it may be banned from travelling on the vehicle.

18. Offer of free transport made in error

- 18.1 If free transport is offered in error, because of a mistake made by the council, the free travel will be withdrawn after a notice period of not less than 6 weeks.
- 18.2 If free transport is offered in error because of false or inaccurate information provided by the parent, the transport may be withdrawn immediately.

19. Assessment of eligibility for free transport on admission to mainstream school, special school and alternative education providers

- 19.1 An assessment of eligibility for free travel is made by the School Admissions Team as part of the normal admissions process for entry to mainstream schools. Parents are normally notified of the decision in the letter offering a school place.
- 19.2 If a child ceases to be eligible during the school term, for example due to moving address, the provision will be discontinued at the end of that term.
- 19.3 In the case of children who do not have an EHCP, and whose parents make in-year applications to mainstream schools that are not part of the Oxfordshire In-Year Scheme, eligibility will be assessed when the parent concerned contacts the School Admissions Team to request an assessment. Appendix 1 lists the mainstream schools in Oxfordshire that are currently not part of the In-Year Scheme. This list may change in the future since currently admission authorities do not have to be part of the In-Year Scheme. An up-to-date list will be available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/apply-school-place/transferring-or-moving-school/before-you-start
- 19.4 The School Admissions Team also determines eligibility for free travel to alternative education providers and eligibility for free travel for those students with an EHCP.

20. Free transport for those of school age (Reception to Year 11)

- 20.1 Children within the following categories are eligible for free travel:

- a. Children attending the nearest available school or educational placement to their address, if the distance from home to school is over the “statutory walking distance” of 3 miles if aged 8 or over or 2 miles if less than aged 8 and of school age. This applies whether the school was listed on the Common Admissions Form (CAF) or not and whether the child concerned does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- b. Children attending the nearest school in Oxfordshire, if the distance from home to school is over the “statutory walking distance” of 3 miles if aged 8 or over or 2 miles if less than aged 8 and of school age. This applies whether or not the school was listed on the Common Admissions Form (CAF) and whether the child concerned does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- c. Children attending the nearest available school to their address even if it is less than the statutory walking distance, if it would not be safe for a child accompanied by an adult to walk from the home to the school. This applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan. If the route is subsequently determined to be safe to walk the parent will be given up to 6 weeks’ notice of the withdrawal of free transport. At the end of that period, free transport will be discontinued.
- d. Where at least 20% of addresses are nearest to the catchment area school and the rest are nearest to another school, free transport will be provided to the catchment school for all addresses if the distance is beyond the “statutory walking distance” or there is no safe walking route. This is referred to as the ‘split village’ entitlement. This additional entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan. The villages affected are listed in Appendix 2.
- e. Children who are aged 8 or over and are under 11 years old who are eligible for free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit and attend the nearest school if it is over 2 miles from their home. This entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- f. Children aged 11 to 16 who are eligible for free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit and who attend one of their three nearest suitable schools (or places other than school at which they might receive education under section 19(1) of the Education Act 1996), where they live more than 2 but not more than 6 miles from that school. The 2 mile distance is measured by “walking route” and the 6 mile distance is measured by road route. This entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- g. Children aged 11 to 16 who are eligible for free school meals, or whose

parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, and want their child to be educated in accordance with their religion or belief and they attend the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief that is over 2 miles but no more than 15 miles from their home. The 2 mile distance is measured by “walking route” and the 15 mile distance is measured by road route. This entitlement applies to all children of the relevant age for the schools concerned and applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

- h. Children entitled to free transport, who move house during Year 11 and continue to attend their original school, subject to the following limits:
- transport can be provided other than by taxi; and
 - the distance travelled is no more than 15 miles.

This applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

- i. Children who cannot walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEND) or disability if the school they attend is the nearest suitable and available school that they could attend. In the case of a child with an Education Health and Care Plan, the Plan may provide all the information required.
- j. Children who attend their nearest suitable and available school and are temporarily unable to walk to school because of a short-term illness or medical condition. Evidence of the medical condition and its effects is required from a GP or consultant. This applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- k. Children who live at RAF Benson and attend Icknield Community College (annually reviewable). This applies whether a child does or does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

21. Free Travel to Alternative Education Providers

21.1 The School Admissions Team will determine whether free travel will be provided to children and young people who have been placed at an alternative education provider by the council. A short-term, full-time placement at an alternative education provider would normally follow a permanent exclusion from a mainstream school and some children may receive a long-term, full-time placement at an alternative provider. In addition, some children attend council- funded days at an alternative education provider and others attend a mix of council- and school-funded days at an alternative education provider.

21.2 Currently the main provider of alternative education for Oxfordshire County Council is Meadowbrook College which is an academy and

independent of local authority control. This determination will be made on the same basis as attendance at a mainstream school and the relevant criteria are shown in 20.1 of this policy (above). No free travel will be provided to school funded days at an alternative education provider.

- 21.3 Therefore, after a permanent exclusion from school, a young person allocated a council-funded, short-term place at Meadowbrook College (or a similar establishment) will receive free travel if that young person:
- lives over the statutory walking distance from the institution attended; or,
 - lives under the statutory walking distance from the institution but the route is unsafe to walk, even if accompanied by an adult; or,
 - meets the eligibility criteria related to family income.
- 21.4 Free travel to both short and long-term places will be provided by the most cost-effective means.
- 21.5 If a young person is allocated a mix of council-funded days and school-funded days at Meadowbrook College (or similar establishment), the criteria for provision of free transport will be applied and, if there is a right to free travel on the council-funded days, the transport costs for those days will be met by the council. Any transport costs on school-funded days will be the responsibility of the school/family. Therefore, if a young person has two council-funded days (and meets the criteria for free transport) and two school-funded days at Meadowbrook College (or similar establishment), 50% of the travel cost will be met by the Local Authority and 50% will be met by the school or family. Travel funded by the council will be provided by the most cost-effective means.
- 21.6 If a young person allocated a short-term or long-term council-funded place at Meadowbrook College (or a similar establishment) does not meet any of the criteria for provision of free transport, their parent will have the right of appeal. The transport appeal process is set out in this policy document.
- 21.7 Students attending an alternative education provider should have the same start and finish times and, if free home to school travel is agreed, it will only be provided at the beginning and end of the school day.
- 21.8 No free transport will be provided at council expense to address poor attendance or non-attendance at the alternative education provider.
- 21.9 If free travel is agreed, the “default” position will be that students will be expected to use public transport (service bus or rail). Taxis will not normally be provided within urban and rural areas served by service bus or rail routes.
- 21.10 Taxis will only be used:
- if there is no public or contracted bus or minibus transport; or,

- it would be too onerous to use public transport because of multiple changes of bus; or,
- the journey would take longer than 1 hour 15 minutes for secondary age pupils, or 45 minutes if of primary school age, and it would be a significantly shorter journey time by taxi.

21.11 Most students within Oxford will not be eligible for free travel to Meadowbrook College given the relatively short distances that are likely to be travelled.

21.12 Students living in Bicester and Bloxham who attend a council-funded place at Meadowbrook College at West Bar in Banbury will normally be expected to use public transport.

21.13 Most students who live in Banbury will not be eligible for free travel to Meadowbrook College at West Bar in Banbury since no student of secondary school age will live far enough away to meet the distance criterion.

21.14 As with students who attend mainstream or special schools, any necessary assessments regarding the mode of travel/travel arrangements for young people attending an alternative education provider will be made by the Supported Transport Team. The same appeal arrangements will apply as for all other children of statutory school age.

22. Naming a school in an Education, Health and Care Plan when there is a nearer suitable and available school

22.1 If the parent of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan requests a particular school and that school is named in the Plan, no free or subsidised transport will be provided to that school if there is a nearer suitable school that has been identified by the SEND Team that can meet that child's assessed needs.

23. Free Travel to Out County Residential Schools for those with an Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Need aged 11 to 16

23.1 Out County Weekly Boarding

A child is eligible for free travel at the beginning and end of each term and at the beginning and end of each school week up to a total of 76 single journeys per year.

23.2 Termly Boarding (3 terms per year)

Children of 11 or over are entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term up to a maximum of 16 single journeys per year.

Children aged up to 11 are entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term, plus 4 discretionary journeys home per year, up to a maximum of 24 single journeys per year.

23.3 Termly Boarding (4 terms per year)

Children of 11 or over are entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term up to a maximum of 16 single journeys per year.

Children aged up to 11 are entitled to free travel at the beginning and end of each term and half-term, plus 4 discretionary journeys home per year, up to a maximum of 24 single journeys per year.

23.4 Out County 52 Week Boarding (joint placement with another agency)

All boarders (or parents) are entitled to 12 single trips home per year (broadly relating to term times). Any additional trips will be the responsibility of the other agency.

23.5 Payment of parental journeys for those with children at Out County residential special schools

Payment will be made if one of the following applies:

- attendance at their child's annual review; or,
- attendance at any meeting called by the council at the child's school; or,
- journeys necessitated by a child's sickness or emergency medical appointments; or,
- an agreed journey to visit a new school placement; or,
- to attend up to three additional meetings per year at the school (called by the school or requested by the parents) if sanctioned by the council in advance; or,
- to travel with the child on train or service bus journeys if the child needs an adult escort.

23.6 Overnight accommodation

The council will not normally reimburse the cost of overnight accommodation for parents/carers.

24. **Application for Transport Assistance on grounds of Religion or Belief**

24.1 In making decisions on assistance with transport the council will respect parents' religious and philosophical convictions as to the education to be provided for their children as far as this is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

24.2 However, a parent will need to satisfy the council of the genuine nature of the religious and/or philosophical belief and that the application is made in good faith. The burden of proof lies with the child's parent/parents.

24.3 Examples of acceptable evidence are:

- the provision of a Baptismal Certificate; and/or,
- a statement of atheism; and/or,
- a statement of adherence to a particular faith; and/or
- a letter of support from a priest, rabbi or imam stating that the child belongs to a particular congregation.

Normally, two pieces of evidence will be required.

24.4 It is important to note that the council will consider the financial consequences of any applications for assistance and that setting up new coach services or taxi routes, or specifically continuing them when they could be discontinued, in order to accommodate new travellers would normally fall within the definition of "unreasonable public expenditure." However, where there are spare seats on already existing home to school transport routes, or scheduled public transport services, the council will be able to consider applications for places under the Spare Seat Scheme arrangements.

24.5 The council will not consider academic grounds expressed for preferring a particular school when de whether to provide assisted transport on grounds of faith or belief.

24.6 Decisions on applications for transport assistance on grounds of faith or belief will normally be taken by a panel of three.

25. **The "Spare Seat" Scheme**

25.1 The "Spare Seat" Scheme operates on contracted routes that are operated for the benefit of those who are entitled to free transport to and from school. The key points regarding this scheme are set out below:

- The council cannot guarantee that a child will keep the seat for longer than one full term (based on a three-term academic year); and,
- Fare prices are reviewed annually; and,
- The parent, or in the case of Years 12 and 13, the student, must complete an application form; and,
- Parents are required to pay in advance for one full term’s travel; and,
- The price charged covers a return journey for every school day of the relevant period; and,
- There will be no rebates for those deciding to travel for less than the maximum number of possible journeys per term. For example, there is no rebate if a child or young person decides to use his/her bus pass for morning travel and returns by some other private means in the afternoon; and,
- If a seat is available, a bus pass will only be issued on receipt of a completed application form, and correct payment; and,
- There is no guarantee that the bus will continue to run throughout a child’s or young person’s time at a school, or that the place on the bus will not be withdrawn at some future date if the place is required for a child or young person who is entitled to free travel; and,
- The “Spare Seat” charge will be waived for those of statutory school age who are eligible for free school meals, or, in the case of those aged 5, 6 or 7, would be eligible for free school meals on income grounds, or whose parent is in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit; and,
- If there are more applicants than places, a parent will be able to add a child’s name to a waiting list. Any waiting list for a specific route will operate for no longer than one academic year; and,
- If there is an available home to school transport route operated on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, children who are not of statutory school age and who are aged 16 to 18, may use the “Spare Seat” Scheme to purchase a seat on that route to enable access to their school or college; and,
- When there are more requests to pay for seats on a specific route than there are seats available, they will be allocated in the descending order of priority shown in the table “Priority for Spare Seats.”

Table 1. Priority for “Spare Seat” Scheme

Priority	Category
1	Those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan naming the school
2	Looked After Children
3	Years 12 and 13 (if there is no available service bus route)

4	Children in receipt of Free School Meals or whose parent/parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
5	Those who travelled on the route the previous term
6	By year group, in ascending order of priority from Reception to Year 11 (or to Year 13 if there is an available service bus route)

Where there are more applicants than places in any of the above categories, priority will be given to those living closest to the destination school (measured using the shortest designated route on Oxfordshire County Council's Geographic Information System)

- 25.2 The fares for the "Spare Seat" Scheme for 2024/25 are shown in Table 2. The fares normally include an annual 2% inflation increase and rounding to the nearest whole number. The use of the 2% figure reflects the target inflation figure set for the Bank of England. If this target changes or transport inflation rises beyond 2%, the council reserves the right to consult on the use of a different inflation figure and the amendment of "Spare Seat" Fares. No decision has yet been made on fares for 2025/26 and the charges shown below for guidance are those that apply for the academic year 2024/25.

Table 2. Current Charges for 2024/25

Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£546.00 per annum (£182.00 per term)
3 miles and over from home to school/college	£1,015.92 per annum (£338.64 per term)

26. Code of Conduct

- 26.1 The School Transport Code of Conduct for those travelling on Home to School Transport is shown at Appendix 3.
- 26.2 Free travel or "Spare Seat" travel may be suspended if a child who is aware of the School Transport Code of Conduct breaches it in a significant way. The child's school may also potentially impose a disciplinary sanction. The School Transport Code of Conduct applies to all travellers although the special needs of a child with an EHCP will be taken into account when considering a response to breaching the Code.
- 26.3 If free travel is suspended, the child's parent has a right of appeal against the decision. The appeal process is the two-stage process set out below.

Stage 1 reviews are conducted by the Admissions and Transport Services Manager and Stage 2 reviews are carried out by an independent panel.

27. Home to School Transport Appeals

27.1 The appeals process set out below applies to:

- children and young people who live in Oxfordshire, are of statutory school age and attend a mainstream school; or,
- children and young people who live in Oxfordshire, have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and attend either a mainstream school or a special school; or
- children and young people who live in Oxfordshire, are of statutory school age and are not on the roll of a mainstream or special school but attend alternative education provided at Oxfordshire County Council expense, for example at Meadowbrook College.

27.2 Two stage process

The council annually publishes the appeals process on its website (with paper copies available on request). This sets out the two-stage process for parents who wish to challenge a decision about:

- the transport arrangements offered;
- their young person's eligibility;
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances; and
- the safety of the route.

27.3 Stage 1: Review by the Admissions and Transport Services Manager

- 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.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent's written request the Admissions and Transport Services Manager will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review, setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached; and
 - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed, for example route safety assessments that have followed Road Safety GB guidance); and

- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process; and
 - what factors were considered; and
 - the rationale for the decision reached; and
 - information about how the parent can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).
- Complex Stage 1 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

27.4 Stage 2: Review by an independent appeal panel

- A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the written stage one response from the Admissions & Transport Services Manager to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent's request an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent and officers involved in the case and give a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days), setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached; and
 - how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g., Road Safety GB); and
 - information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process; and
 - what factors were considered; and
 - the rationale for the decision reached; and
 - information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).
- Stage 2 appeals will be heard by a panel of three comprising of one officer, one county councillor and one independent person. All panel members receive specific training prior to undertaking their role. The training includes information to ensure an understanding of the specific needs of children with SEND and EHCPs. The Audit & Governance Committee have governance oversight of the process. The county councillor will not be the councillor for the division within which the child resides. No officer will have been involved in the previous decision making. The independent person will be drawn from the volunteers for hearing admission appeals.
- The Clerk to the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee will be from the Law & Governance Department and will not work for the Admissions Team or the Supported Transport Service.
- A representative of the Admissions Team will present the council's reasons for not providing transport and appellants can present a case in

writing and/or in person (if the parent wishes, accompanied by a friend).
The format of the appeal is set out below:

1. presentation of the council's case by the council's representative;
 2. committee members, and the parent, are then able to ask the council's representative questions;
 3. presentation of the parent's case;
 4. committee members, and the council's representative, are then able to ask of the appellant questions (if present);
 5. summing up by the council's representative;
 6. summing up of the appellant's case;
 7. both the council's representative and the appellant(s) leave the hearing together;
 8. consideration of the case by the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee in private when the independent panel members will decide whether to uphold or refuse the appeal.
- The decision of the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee will be considered binding on the Council and appellant and there is no further right of appeal.
 - The council will not consider requests for a further transport appeal within the same school academic year unless there has been a significant change of circumstance.
 - Complex Stage 2 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

APPENDIX 1

School that have opted out of the In-Year Admissions Scheme for Oxfordshire

This information was correct at the time this policy was published. An up-to-date list is available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransfer

28. The following secondary age academy has opted out of the Scheme:

Wykham Park Academy	https://wykhampark-aspirations.org/ 01295 251451
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The main point of entry for this academy is Year 7.

29. The following all age academy has opted out of the Scheme:

Heyford Park School	http://heyfordparkschool.org/ 01869 232203
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Apply online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

The main points of entry for this academy are Reception and Year 7.

30. The following studio school and UTC have opted out of the Scheme:

Futures Institute Banbury	https://www.futuresbanbury.org 01295 257942
UTC Oxfordshire	https://www.utcoxfordshire.org.uk 01235 391587

The main point of entry for these establishments is Year 10.

31. The following primary age school and academies have opted out of the Scheme:

Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp Church of England Primary School	https://www.ashburyprimary.org.uk/ 01793 710259
Bampton Church of England Primary School	http://www.bamptonprimaryschool.org.uk/ 01993 850371
The Blake Church of England Primary School, Witney	http://www.blake.oxon.sch.uk/website 01993 702840
Brize Norton Primary School	http://www.brizeprimary.org/ 01993 842488
Dr South's Primary School	http://dr-souths.co.uk/ 01865 372323
Goring Church of England Primary School	http://www.goring.oxon.sch.uk/ 01491 872289
John Henry Newman Academy, Oxford	http://www.jhnacademy.co.uk/website 01865 772495

Apply online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

North Leigh Church of England Primary School	https://www.northleighprimaryschool.org.uk/ 01993 881525
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Oxford	https://www.our-ladys.oxon.sch.uk/ 01865 779176
St Christopher's Church of England Primary School, Langford	http://www.st-christophers.oxon.sch.uk/ 01367 860318
St Christopher's Church of England Primary School, Oxford	http://www.st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk/ 01865 779772
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame	http://www.st-josephs.oxon.sch.uk/ 01844 214278
St Mary & St John Church of England Primary School, Oxford	http://www.ssmj.oxon.sch.uk 01865 245768
St Peter's Church of England Primary School, Alvescot	http://www.stpeters.oxon.sch.uk/ 01993 842535
Tyndale Community School	https://www.tyndalecommunityschool.co.uk 01865 454000

The main point of entry for these schools and academies is Reception.

APPENDIX 2

“Split Village” Entitlement

- Transport will be provided to the catchment area school from all addresses in the contiguous built-up area of the village if more than 20% of the addresses are closest to the catchment area school and the distance is over the statutory walking limit. Transport will also be provided from individual addresses to the relevant nearest school (if different) if the distance is over the statutory walking limit.

Village *	Nearest Schools	Catchment Area School
Adderbury/Twyford	Blessed George Napier Catholic School The Warriner School	The Warriner School
Ascott-under-Wychwood	Burford School Chipping Norton School	Burford School
Dry Sandford	Fitzharrys School	Fitzharrys School

	Larkmead School	
Duns Tew	Dr Radcliffe's Primary School Middle Barton School	Dr Radcliffe's CE Primary School
Freeland	Bartholomew School Wood Green School	Bartholomew School
Great Haseley	Lord Williams's School Wheatley Park School	Wheatley Park School
Kirtlington	Gosford Hill School Heyford Park Free School The Marlborough Church of England School	The Marlborough Church of England School
Long Hanborough	Bartholomew School The Marlborough Church of England School Wood Green School	Bartholomew School
Old Boars Hill	Fitzharrys School Matthew Arnold School	Fitzharrys School
South Hinksey	Matthew Arnold School St Gregory the Great Catholic School	Matthew Arnold School
Tadmarton	Bloxham CE Primary School Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School	Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School
Twyford/Adderbury	Blessed George Napier Catholic School The Warriner School	The Warriner School
Yatscombe Copse	Fitzharrys School St Gregory the Great Catholic School	Fitzharrys School

2. The Council considers the 'village' to be the contiguous built-up area. Therefore, an address within the Civil Parish but outside the contiguous built-up area of the village does not qualify for free travel under the 'split-village' rule.
3. Similarly, where the village name forms part of the postal address, but the property is outside the contiguous built-up area of the village, free transport will not be provided under the 'split-village' rule.
4. The School Admissions Team will annually review the "split village" entitlement in the light of new housing developments, new routes and new schools to ensure that only villages in which more than 20% of the addresses are closest to the catchment area school, and the distance is over the statutory walking limit or there is no safe walking route, are included in the list of "split villages".
5. Any changes to the list of "split villages" will be made once per year.

6. Once the list of “split villages” has been published in the admissions literature it will remain unchanged for that academic year.

APPENDIX 3

Code of Conduct for those travelling on Home to School Transport

1. If you have been given a bus pass to travel on a school bus it is only for your use and must always be carried if you want to use the school transport.
2. If you lose your bus pass you need to tell your school's office and ask your parent to contact the Supported Transport Team.
3. In the morning, you and your parent are responsible for you being at the pick-up point five minutes before the schooled pick up time.
4. If you are late you need to remember that the school bus will not wait for late-comers.
5. If the transport is late only wait at the pick-up point for 20 minutes.
6. You and your parent need an agreed plan about what you should do if transport doesn't arrive as scheduled.
7. Before setting out, if there is a storm, major flooding or snow, you and your parent should listen to the travel news on the radio and/or telephone the school and/or look at the school's website. If the weather is poor and your parent takes you into school in the morning because the transport has not arrived, remember that you may need to rely on your parent to get you home in the evening, particularly if the weather remains bad.
8. You should always
 - Treat the driver and your fellow passengers with respect;
 - Do as the driver requests;
 - Stay in your seat and keep your seat belt on – for your safety and that of everyone else;
 - Look after your possessions and the bus or other vehicle that you travel on;
 - Take any litter off the bus with you;
 - Keep noise to a reasonable level;
 - Report to the driver or your school anyone you see behaving badly or who is bullying others - always report this kind of behaviour;
 - Do not distract the driver except in an emergency;
 - Do not throw things within the bus or off the bus;
 - Do not carry real or replica weapons;
 - Do not eat, drink or smoke (smoking is against the law for everyone on buses, taxis and trains);
 - Do not use bad language to other students or to adults;
 - Do not damage the vehicle – if you do your parents or carers may have to pay for the damage.

Section 5 – Miscellaneous

Definition of a Parent

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines a 'parent' as:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law. People other than a child's natural parents can acquire parental responsibility through:

- being granted a residence order;
- being appointed a guardian;
- being named in an emergency protection order (although parental responsibility in such a case is limited to taking reasonable steps to safeguard or promote the child's welfare);
- adopting a child (in the case of step-parents) in agreement with the child's mother (and other parent if that person also has parental responsibility for the child) or as the result of a court order.

Where a child's parents are not married to each other, the child's father can gain parental responsibility by:

- registering the child's birth jointly with the mother;
- through a 'parental responsibility agreement' between him and the child's mother;
- as the result of a court order.

In addition, a local authority can acquire parental responsibility if it is named in the care order for a child

Guidance on educational provision for children from overseas

Admission authorities must treat applications for children from overseas in accordance with Home Office rules for non-UK nationals. In most cases, children arriving from overseas have the right to attend state-funded schools in England.

Children aged under 18 can enter the UK, as a dependant of a foreign national who has settled status in the UK, as a dependant of their parent(s) who are in the UK on a [work visa](#) or [Student visa](#), or who are part of a family entering or residing in the UK under the [immigration route for British National \(Overseas\) citizens and their dependants](#).

Foreign nationals cannot use the 6-month Standard Visitor visa, or 11-month Short-term Study (English language) visa, to enter the UK to enroll as a pupil at a state-funded school, although some exchange programmes may be possible on the Visit route.

If a school or Local Authority is concerned that a child may not have a right to enter the country to access a state-funded school, they will not deny them a place. However, the Home Office's school referrals team will be alerted so that they can investigate further.

It is up to the school or Local Authority whether or not the child's parents or carers are informed of the referral to the Home Office.

If the Home Office finds that a child is not entitled to state-funded education, it is up to the Home Office to take any further action they consider appropriate. A child should not be denied a place on the basis of the Home Office's findings.

The email address for the Home Office school referrals team is:
schoolreferrals@homeoffice.gov.uk

Children with Education, Health and Care Plans

Discussions about whether a young person with an Education, Health and Care Plans should move from a secondary school to a Studio School or UTC should have started at the child's annual review in Year 8. Parent/Carers of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan should discuss any queries, concerns or requests to move their child from secondary school to a Studio School or UTC with their child's relevant SEN Officer at Oxfordshire County Council and/or the SENCO at their child's current school.

Parents/Carers cannot apply for a place at a special school or resource unit through the admissions process outlined in this booklet.

Parents/Carers should be aware that free transport may not be automatically provided to a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan to attend a mainstream school that is not the nearest or nearest available school.

Apply online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

Private Fostering

There is a legal requirement to notify the Local Authority of private fostering arrangements.

A privately fostered child is a child under 16 years of age (or 18 years of age if disabled) who lives away from their birth parents for longer than 28 days with a person who is not:

- a parent of the child;
- someone who has parental responsibility for the child;
- a close relative of the child.

The Children Act 1989(Section 105) defines a relative as a grandparent, brother, sister uncle or aunt (whether of the full blood or half blood or by affinity) or step parent (Section 10(5) a) refers to a step parent being someone who is, or has been, a party to a marriage).

Those who need to notify Oxfordshire County Council of a private fostering arrangement should contact:

Pratishtha Srivastava Team Manager Family Placement Team City County Hall New Road Oxford OX1 1ND
Email: pratishtha.srivastava@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Charging for school activities

No charge may be made for school activities by the local authority or the Directors / School Governors unless it is already provided for in a statement of policy on charging and the remission of charges. Such statements will also usually cover arrangements for the financing of school activities by means of voluntary contributions.

Charging for public examinations

No charge will generally be made for public examinations for which pupils are prepared by the school. However, the fee may be recovered if the pupil fails, without good reason, to complete the examination requirements, or if the pupil is required to re-sit an examination or a request is made for an examination paper to be remarked.

Free School Meals

All state-funded schools in Oxfordshire deal with the administration of Free School Meals for pupils who attend. In order for a pupil to qualify for Free School Meals parents must be in receipt one of the following entitled benefits:

Apply online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

- **Income Support** - letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/Jobcentre Plus dated within one month of application showing breakdown of income support payment.
- **Income Based Employment & Support Allowance** - letter from DWP/Jobcentre Plus dated within one month of application.
- **Child Tax Credit** (without Working Tax Credit and 'annual income as assessed by the Inland Revenue' of below the threshold figure for the year) - All pages of the TC602 Inland Revenue tax credit award notice for the current tax year.
- **State pension credit** - Pension Credit M1000 Award Notice.

Asylum seekers will need to provide a National Asylum and Support Service (NASS) support notice or IS96 document including details of authority providing support under part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. You will be required to supply:

- NASS reference number
- Port reference number
- Name of authority

Note: Children of those in receipt of Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after employment ceases, or after starting to work less than 16 hours per week, are entitled to Free School Meals. Children who receive IS or IBJSA in their own right are also entitled to receive Free School Meals. Qualification is determined by the school not Oxfordshire County Council and parents/carers should contact their child's current or future school (once a place has been offered) for further information and/or an application form.

Independent (Fee-Paying) Schools

Parents/carers seeking places for their child at an independent (fee-paying) school must apply direct to the relevant school(s). The transfer process outlined in this booklet cannot be used to obtain a place at an independent (fee-paying) school. If a child is offered a place at an independent (fee-paying) school it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform Oxfordshire County Council and the relevant Studio School or UTC that a place is no longer needed at a state-funded Studio School or UTC so that the available place can be offered to another child. Oxfordshire County Council will not normally accept responsibility for funding a place at an independent (fee-paying) school or funding travel to an independent (fee-paying) school.

School Uniforms

Oxfordshire County Council does not offer financial support for parents/carers to buy school uniform. Individual Studio Schools or UTCs may provide financial support or have information about local organisations that offer financial assistance. The establishment may also have second-hand uniform available for loan or purchase. Parents/Carers should contact their child's future establishment (after a place has been offered) for information about school uniforms.

School Leaving Age and Education Participation Age

Apply online at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/upperadmissions

The law states that a young person is of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the year in which their 16th birthday falls between 1 September of the previous year and 31 August of that year. A young person cannot leave school until after that date.

However, the [Education and Skills Act 2008](#) raised the education participation age to 18 effective from 1 September 2015. This does not mean that a young person must remain at school after the last Friday in June of the year of his/her 16th birthday (see above), but a choice must be made how to participate in education. The options are:

- stay on in full time education in a school or college; or
- take an apprenticeship; or
- undertake part-time training if he/she is working or volunteering for more than 20 hours per week.

Term dates

There are 190 pupil days in each academic year. In addition, 4 days are set aside locally for INSET days for teachers. The term dates for 2025/26 are:

Term	Dates
Autumn	2 September 2025 to 19 December 2025 Half Term: 27 October 2025 to 31 October 2025 Christmas Holiday: 20 December 2025 to 2 January 2026
Spring	5 January 2026 to 27 March 2026 Half Term: 16 February 2026 to 20 February 2026 Easter Holiday: 30 March 2026 to 10 April 2026
Summer	13 April 2026 to 20 July 2026 Half Term: 25 May 2026 to 29 May 2026 Summer Holiday: 21 July 2026 to 1 September 2026