

Schedule of proposed policy amendments

This schedule summarises the proposed amendments to the Council's draft home-to-school travel policy. Table 1 identifies proposals that may change eligibility or current practice; Table 2 explains clarifications and updates reflecting national guidance; and Table 3 summarises the proposed amendments to Annex B concerning Available Walking Routes.

Table 1 – Proposed substantive policy changes

Area of policy	Current position	Proposed policy change
Discretionary travel for children below compulsory school age	The current policy provides free travel assistance for children attending a reception class from the term after their fourth birthday ("rising fives"), even though compulsory school age does not begin until the start of the term following a child's fifth birthday.	The proposed policy would change the current position so that home-to-school travel assistance would not normally be provided for children below compulsory school age, including children attending reception classes before reaching compulsory school age. Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the Council may consider whether travel assistance is necessary because of the child's special educational needs, disability, mobility difficulties or associated health and safety factors. Requests would be considered individually, and travel assistance would be provided only where exceptional circumstances are evidenced.
Distance measurement and start point	Distance is currently measured from the home gate or drive to the nearest school entrance.	The proposed policy would measure distance using a digital mapping system from where the home property meets the adopted highway to the nearest available school gate or entrance. This is identified as substantive because it may affect measured eligibility in some cases.

Table 2 – Clarifications and updates reflecting national guidance

Area of policy	Current position	Updated position
Overall structure and statutory guidance	The existing policy is based on local eligibility criteria and earlier national guidance.	The draft is restructured around the January 2024 Department for Education guidance, as amended in May 2026. Key areas are brought into the main policy to make it clearer and easier for parents and carers to use. This is not intended to change eligibility.
Home address where parents live separately	Home is defined as the child's normal residence, with limited detail on shared care.	The draft clarifies that, where parents live separately, the relevant address is where the child lives for the majority of the week. This

		reflects current practice and is not intended to change eligibility.
Nearest suitable school	The existing policy generally refers to the catchment or nearest qualifying school.	The draft clarifies that a suitable school is not necessarily the preferred or most suitable school and links eligibility more clearly to the nearest suitable school. This reflects current practice and is not intended to change eligibility.
SEND, disability and mobility	SEND eligibility is set out separately from the main policy and decisions are based on case-specific evidence.	The criteria are moved into the main policy and clarify that a child may qualify without an Education, Health and Care Plan, a special-school place or living beyond statutory walking distance. This reflects legislation and current practice and is not intended to restrict eligibility.
Evidence requirements	The existing annex refers in some cases to evidence from a consultant or paediatrician.	The draft clarifies that decisions may draw on information from parents or carers, schools, professionals, Education, Health and Care Plans and healthcare plans, rather than relying mainly on consultant evidence. This is not intended to change eligibility.
Education, Health and Care Plans and parental preference	The existing policy treats travel to a more distant parental-preference school as parental responsibility.	The draft explains how travel costs are considered when a school is named in an Education, Health and Care Plan, including conditional naming where a parental preference would incur a higher overall cost. This reflects statutory guidance and current practice and is not intended to change eligibility.
Extended rights and low-income eligibility	The existing policy refers to free school meals and maximum Working Tax Credit.	The terminology is updated to refer to Targeted Free School Meals, Expanded Free School Meals and the nationally prescribed free-school-meals transitional protection where applicable. This is not a local transitional arrangement for implementing the revised travel policy and is not intended to change eligibility beyond national requirements.
Withdrawal of travel assistance and implementation	The existing policy contains provisions for withdrawing travel assistance following notice, with limited circumstances in which support may be withdrawn immediately.	The existing withdrawal provisions are retained. Any substantive policy changes would be subject to consultation, a final decision and clear communication to affected families, including the date from which any changes would apply.

Discretionary travel and spare seats	The existing policy allows applications for spare seats on contracted provision.	The draft brings spare seats under discretionary travel, confirming that a charge may apply and that assistance is not limited to statutory entitlement. This reflects current practice and is not intended to change eligibility to statutory travel assistance.
Travel payments	The existing policy allows direct payments where cost-effective.	The draft adopts Department for Education wording on travel expenses and clarifies that payments may need to cover return journeys so that eligible travel remains free of charge. This is not intended to change eligibility.
Motability and Disability Living Allowance	The existing policy refers to the use of a Motability vehicle in some circumstances. This has not been used as a determining factor in eligibility assessments for a number of years.	The draft clarifies that Disability Living Allowance or access to a Motability vehicle is not a determining factor in eligibility, although it may form part of supporting evidence about disability. This reflects current practice and Department for Education guidance and is not intended to change eligibility.
Cared-for Children remaining at the same school	The existing policy includes a Virtual School exception for Cared-for Children.	The draft clarifies that an exception may apply where the Headteacher of the Virtual School agrees that remaining at the same school is in the child's best interests. This reflects current practice and is not intended to change eligibility.
Responsibility where another local authority is the corporate parent	The existing policy includes responsibility rules for Cared-for Children.	The draft clarifies that, where another local authority is the corporate parent and Cheshire East Council maintains the child's Education, Health and Care Plan, the corporate-parent authority is responsible for travel costs. This reflects current practice and is not intended to change eligibility.
Independent Fostering Agency carers	The North West Framework Agreement was not specified in the policy; however, its principles relating to independent foster carers were applied where appropriate.	The draft refers to the expectation that some carers employed by Independent Fostering Agencies will transport children for journeys of up to 20 miles in line with the North West Framework Agreement. This reflects established practice and is not intended to change a child's eligibility.
Pick-up points and passenger assistants	The existing policy prioritises pick-up points and sets criteria for passenger assistants.	The draft places these matters within the suitability section, linking them more directly to the child's individual needs and journey safety. This is not intended to change eligibility.
Journey times	The existing policy uses 45-minute and 75-minute journey-time guides.	The draft presents these as general guides, recognising that individual circumstances may vary. This is not intended to change eligibility.

Safeguarding, risk and training	The existing policy contains limited detail on safeguarding and training.	The draft adds clearer sections on risk assessment, safeguarding, DBS checks, training and emergency procedures. This is not intended to change eligibility.
Behaviour on transport	The existing policy allows withdrawal of travel assistance for poor behaviour.	The draft clarifies that withdrawal for behaviour is a last resort and that alternative suitable arrangements remain necessary where the child continues to be eligible. This is not intended to change eligibility.
Appeals and publication	The existing policy refers to appeals and related documents, but its structure is less parent-focused.	The draft signposts the separate appeals policy and updated guidance links. This is not intended to change eligibility.

Table 3 – Annex B: Available Walking Route clarifications and guidance updates

The proposed Annex B amendments primarily update terminology, clarify the assessment process and align the document with current national and road-safety guidance. They are not intended to reduce the requirement to assess the route as a whole or to consider relevant interaction between pedestrians and traffic. The distance-measurement start point is identified separately as a substantive proposal because it may affect measured eligibility in some cases.

Area of policy	Current position	Updated position
National guidance referenced	Earlier versions of Department for Education and Road Safety GB guidance are referenced.	References are updated to the Department for Education guidance of January 2024 and Road Safety GB's <i>Assessment of Walked Routes to School</i> of November 2025.
Definition of route availability	Terms such as “safe”, “unsafe”, “dangerous” and “exceptionally hazardous” are used.	The draft uses “available” and “unavailable” consistently.
Specific road-safety hazards	The annex refers to “exceptional” road-safety hazards.	The draft uses the term “specific road-safety hazards”.
Accompaniment by an adult	Parents are expected to accompany children where necessary.	The draft refers to a responsible adult, parent or carer accompanying the child where necessary.
Personal safety and security	The annex states that routes are not unavailable solely because they are isolated or lack lighting, or because they include canals, rivers or railway crossings.	The draft clarifies that these factors are not part of the road-safety assessment unless they relate to interaction between pedestrians and traffic.
Types of route that may be assessed	The annex is less explicit about the different types of	The draft clarifies that routes may include roads, roadside strips, public footpaths, public rights of way, public byways,

	route that may form part of an Available Walking Route.	bridleways and canal towpaths where there is a suitable walking surface.
Assessment process	The assessment process is set out with limited detail.	The draft gives greater clarity on requests from parents, carers or schools, desktop review, possible site visits, traffic and collision data, written reports and review by qualified officers.
Factors considered in assessments	Assessment factors are included but described in less detail.	The draft gives clearer detail on visibility, vegetation encroachment, step-offs and crossing points.
Street lighting	Street lighting is considered in more detail and may appear to carry greater weight.	The draft clarifies that the absence of street lighting alone does not make a route unavailable.
Seasonal or temporary conditions	Seasonal issues such as mud, vegetation or poor surfaces are considered but less clearly explained.	The draft clarifies that seasonal or temporary issues do not automatically make a route unavailable, particularly where they are limited, temporary or capable of maintenance.
Highway defects and vegetation	Overgrown vegetation, damaged footways and trip hazards are referenced as issues.	The draft clarifies that such issues will be reported to the Highway Service or landowner but do not automatically make a route unavailable where they can be rectified.
Crossing assessments	The annex refers to crossing points and traffic conditions.	The draft clarifies that, where there are no crossing facilities, the route assessment should consider each road crossing, including traffic speed and flow, sight lines and other relevant factors.
Step-offs and refuges	A step-off is described as a place where a pedestrian may step off the road onto a grass verge or similar area.	The draft clarifies that a step-off need not be a walkable verge; it may be a refuge where a pedestrian can step off the road while traffic passes.
Appeals process	Parents and carers may use the appeals process where they disagree with a decision informed by a road-safety assessment.	The draft clarifies the appeals process and states that assessments are undertaken by the assessing officer and reviewed by a qualified road-safety officer and senior highways officer.
Terminology and tone	Some wording is technical, inconsistent or less precise.	The draft uses clearer and more consistent terms, including “available” and “unavailable”, “specific road-safety hazards”, “parent or carer” and “travel assistance”.