Hackney Education
Pupil Benefits Policies

1 September 2026 to 31 August 2027

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1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this document is to set out the support available to pupils through the Pupil Benefits service, the eligibility criteria, the application process and the appeals process.

1.2. The guide has been developed to ensure due regard is given to the Education Act 1996. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance for more information.

2. School Uniform Grants

2.1. Support available

2.1.1. At transfer to secondary school from Year 6 to Year 7 support will be available to eligible families via direct bank payment.

2.1.2. Support will be £100 per pupil unless agreed otherwise with individual schools/academies.

2.2. Eligibility criteria

2.2.1. The pupil must reside in London Borough of Hackney

2.2.2. The pupil must attend a community or voluntary aided school or an academy that has purchased Hackney Education's traded service in respect of School Uniform Grants.

2.2.3. Parent/carer must receive either:

- 2.2.3.1. Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £15,400
- 2.2.3.2. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- 2.2.3.3. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

2.3. Application and appeals process

2.3.1 Parents apply by completing an online application form following receipt of Hackney Education's offer of a secondary school place. Further information and the application form is available at education.hackney.gov.uk/content/school-uniform-grant-age-11

2.3.2. An appeals process is not applicable for School Uniform Grants.

2.4. Legislation

2.4.1. Section 510 & 511 Education Act 1996

3. Free School Meals

3.1. Support available

3.1.1 The Mayor of London has extended universal free school meals for the 2026/2027 academic year for all primary school children regardless of income. This applies to children in Reception through to Year 6.

3.1.2 Pupils in nursery or secondary school may still qualify to receive free meals provided by their school if eligible.

3.2. Eligibility criteria

3.2.1. The pupil must be on roll at a Hackney community or voluntary aided school or academy.

3.2.2. Parent must complete a free school meal application in Hackney

3.2.3. Parent must receive either:

3.2.3.1. Universal Credit
3.2.3.2. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
3.2.3.3. Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
3.2.3.4. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
3.2.3.5. Children who receive a qualifying benefit in their own right are also allowed to receive free school meals

3.3. Application and appeal process

3.3.1. Parents may apply at any time by completing an online application form at education.hackney.gov.uk/fsm

3.3.2. Eligibility is checked using the “Eligibility Checking Engine” (ECE) and reviewed annually by Hackney Education. The parent and the school are notified if the pupil is no longer eligible.

3.3.3. An appeals process is not applicable for the Free School Meal application.

3.4. Legislation

3.4.1 Section 512, 512Za and 512Zb & 513 Education Act 1996.

4. Transport Assistance

4.1. Introduction

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure that children attend school under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, and this includes making the necessary travel arrangements to and from school.

However, under section 508 of the Education Act, local authorities have duties to make travel arrangements for some children. These are provided free of charge and cover . journeys to and from home and the child's school for attendance within normal school hours.Hackney Education will decide what arrangements to make, considering cost and suitability.

4.2. Travel up to Year 11

There are three routes to being eligible for free home to school transport. Some examples are shown in the appendix at the end of this policy.

4.2.1. All Parents/Carers (Non-income assessed)

4.2.1.1. Pupils with SEN, or a disability or mobility problem, who

4.2.1.1.1. reside in the London Borough of Hackney and;
4.2.1.1.2. are of compulsory school age, and;
4.2.1.1.3. attend the nearest suitable school to their home or the only school named in their Education and Health Care plan;
4.2.1.1.4. who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to and from their school due to their SEN, disability or mobility needs. These cases are assessed on an individual basis. Further information is available at https://www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/kb5/hackney/localoffer/advice.page?id=XATR8-VsbNE

4.2.1.2. Unreasonable to expect the pupil to walk the particular route.

Pupils are entitled to free transport if they attend the nearest suitable school to their home and cannot reasonably be expected to walk there because of the nature of the route.

4.2.1.3. Pupils attending a qualifying school outside the distances shown below.

Pupils who attend a qualifying school or other place at which they receive statutory education, outside the statutory walking distances (2 miles if aged 5 to 7 and 3 miles if aged 8 and over) when there are no suitable arrangements for boarding at or near school, and who do not have a suitable alternative nearer educational placement on offer.

4.2.1.4. Pupils on roll attending a qualifying school outside the distances shown below on grounds of religion or belief.

Pupils who live more than 2 miles (if aged 5-7) or 3 miles (if aged 8 and over) from the school or other place where they receive statutory education, and who do not have a suitable alternative nearer educational placement on offer. In these circumstances the parents must demonstrate that they have applied for, and been refused, a place at other equivalent nearer schools or educational establishments.

4.2.2. All Parents/Carers (Income assessed)

4.2.2.1. Parent must receive either:

4.2.2.1.1. Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400
4.2.2.1.2. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
4.2.2.1.3. Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
4.2.2.1.4. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

4.2.2.2. Pupils aged 8 to 11 (primary) who attend a qualifying school or setting where statutory education is provided, which is more than 2 miles from their home and do not have a suitable alternative educational placement.

4.2.2.3. Pupils aged 11 or over (secondary) who are attending one of the three nearest qualifying schools or other places where they may receive statutory education if the school or other place is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from home.

4.2.2.4. Pupils aged 11 or over, whose parents have expressed a preference for the school or other place where statutory education is delivered based on their religion or belief, and the preferred school or place is more than 2 miles and less than 15 miles from home, and there is no suitable alternative school or place nearer to the home. Reasons for the parental preference could include the particular ethos in a school or the fact that the school is a single sex school of a religion different to that of the parents where their belief in single sex education is sufficiently serious.

4.2.3. Disabled Parent (Non-income assessed and income assessed)

When there are pupils whose parent's disability may prevent them from accompanying the pupils to the qualifying school or other place, even though it is within normal walking distance from the home, the LA may provide free travel support for those pupils. Parents would be expected to meet the eligibility criteria above. Any free travel/support provided will be reviewed regularly.

4.2.4. Measuring Distance

Hackney Education will consider the safety of the route when measuring statutory walking distance, which will be measured by the shortest route by which a child accompanied, as necessary, may walk safely. However, the 6 miles upper limit in (4.2.2.3) above and the 15 mile upper limit in (4.2.2.4) above, will be measured using road routes.

4.3. Other eligibility criteria

4.3.1. The pupil must reside in the London Borough of Hackney.

4.3.2. The pupil must attend a maintained school, academy, free school or an independent school if the school or academy is named in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan.

4.3.3. In relation to income assessed eligibility only, parents must meet the income eligibility criteria 4.2.2.1.

4.3.4. Parents may find the examples in the Appendix at the end of this document helpful in understanding whether their child meets the eligibility criteria for home to school transport.

4.4. Application and appeals process

4.4.1. Parents may apply at any time by completing an online application form at https://education.hackney.gov.uk/content/help-home-school-travel

4.4.2. Income assessed parents will need to re-apply every academic year to determine eligibility by income. If the pupil no longer qualifies under the income eligibility criteria, they can be reassessed on the nearest school/distance eligibility criteria.

4.4.3. There are two stages to the appeal process;

Stage 1 – In writing within 20 school days to the Head of Admissions and Pupil Benefits.

Stage 2 – if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 decision, they have 40 school days to make a written request for the appeal to be heard by an independent appeal panel comprising suitably experienced officers of the Authority who are not members of the admissions and pupil benefits team.

4.5. Legislation

4.5.1. Education Act 1996

5. Travel Policy Statement: Travel aged 16 to 25

5.1. Support available

Students who are aged 16 to 25 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), should visit the 0-25 SEND Local Offer website for travel support information.

Students who are aged 16 to 18 without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can apply for 16-19 bursary funding via their school or college for help with travel. Applicants should contact their school or college for further information.

Hackney Education pays for the cheapest form of suitable transport when applicants meet the eligibility criteria.

Hackney Education will pay for travel expenses between home and school or other educational institutions up to a maximum of £390.00 per year for those using public transport. Hackney Education may seek expenses from the school or other educational institution, where appropriate.

This policy is also intended to cover the arrangements for students/trainees with learning difficulties/disabilities, including, but not restricted to students with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

5.2. Eligibility criteria

The student/trainee must live in the London Borough of Hackney.

The student must attend one of the following, which is more than 3 miles from their home:

5.2.1. A maintained school or academy with a 6th Form in Hackney;

5.2.2. A maintained or assisted 6th form or FE College in Hackney;

5.2.3. An establishment funded directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. For example, independent specialist providers for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

5.2.4. A learning provider funded by Hackney Education to deliver foundation, or other accredited programmes of learning in Hackney

5.2.5. Be undertaking an employed or non-employed programme-led apprenticeship or traineeship in Hackney

Eligibility may also extend to students who attend a full-time course (12 hours of lessons or more a week) at one of the above institutions outside Hackney because the chosen course of study is not available within Hackney or if there are other exceptional educational, curricular or social reasons why study must be outside Hackney.

Parents also must meet income eligibility criteria;

5.2.5.1. Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £15,400
5.2.5.2. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
5.2.5.3. Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
5.2.5.4. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

The income and distance thresholds may be waived for students/trainees with learning difficulties/disabilities, including but not restricted to students with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

5.3. Application and appeal process

5.3.1. Apply before the start of the course. Further information and the online application form is available at education.hackney.gov.uk/content/apply-travel-assistance

5.3.2. There are two stages to the appeal process;

Stage 1 – In writing within 20 school days to the Head of Admissions and Pupil Benefits.

Stage 2 – if the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 decision, they have 40 school days to make a written request for the appeal to be heard by an independent appeal panel comprising suitably experienced officers of the Authority who are not members of the admissions and pupil benefits team.

5.4. Legislation

5.4.1. Section 509AA/S509AB of the Education Act 1996

Appendix

Parents may find the examples below helpful in understanding whether their child meets the eligibility criteria for home to school travel

- Child A is six years old and attends her nearest suitable school. It is 2.3 miles from her home. Child A is eligible for free home to school transport.

- Child B is seven years old and attends a primary school that is 2.6 miles from her home. However, there is another suitable primary school just 1.2 miles from her home which has places available. Child B is not eligible for free home to school transport, as she is not attending her nearest suitable school.

- Child C is eleven years old and attends his nearest suitable school. It is 2.6 miles from his home. Child C is not eligible for free home to school transport because his school is not beyond the statutory walking distance for a child of his age.

- Child D is fourteen years old and has cerebral palsy. She attends her nearest suitable school. It is 1 mile from her home. The nature of her condition requires her to use crutches to walk, and she needs to take her time to ensure she is balanced. The local authority decides that she could not reasonably be expected to walk to school. Child D is eligible for free home to school transport.

- Child E is twelve years old. He attends his nearest suitable secondary school. It is 2 miles from his home. The only walking route to his school is along a busy country lane. The local authority carries out an assessment of the route and decides it would not be safe for him to walk along this road. Child E is eligible for free home to school transport.

- Child F is eleven years old and meets the income eligibility criteria 4.2.2.1. His nearest suitable school is 2.5 miles from his home. His second nearest suitable school is 3 miles away. His third nearest is 5 miles away. Child F would be eligible for free home to school travel to any of these schools.

- Child G is eleven years old and meets the income eligibility criteria 4.2.2.1. Her three nearest schools are School X, School Y and School Z. School X is 1.5 miles from her home, School Y is 2.2 miles from her home, and School Z is 5.5 miles from her home. Child G would be eligible for free home to school travel to School Y or School Z, but not to School X.

- Child H is thirteen years old, and meets the income eligibility criteria 4.2.2.1. He and his parents are members of the Church of England. Because of this, he attends a Church of England school that is 8 miles from their home. There are other schools which are nearer to their home, but none of these is a Church of England school. Child H is eligible for free home to school travel.