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Tuesday, 3 February 2026

North Yorkshire Council

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 February 2026

Implementation of the Home to School Travel Policy

Report of the Corporate Director Children and Young People's Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the implementation of the Home to School Travel Policy, which was adopted by Council on 24 July 2024, specifically the questions that have been formally raised for scrutiny as detailed at paragraph 3.0.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Home to School Travel Policy was adopted by the Council at the meeting of Full Council on 24 July 2024 and implemented as of 1 September 2024. At the Extraordinary meeting of Council on 21 May 2025, the majority of councillors reiterated their support for the 2024 Policy and voted against a proposal to change eligibility (so that free home-to-school transport applied to a child's catchment school, as well as their nearest suitable school).
- 2.2 Updates on the implementation of the policy have been provided to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a number of occasions.
- 2.3 There is an appeals process in place should parents/carers believe that the policy has not been correctly implemented in their case and/or there are exceptional circumstances that would merit a departure from the policy and so the funding of home to school transport.
- 2.4 A Post Implementation Review (PIR) will look at the implementation of the Home to School Travel Policy 2024 and will include a summary of the enquiries, complaints and appeals relating to the policy and the Council's responses to these. Further information on the review is available in the report that went to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 17 September 2025 - [Agenda for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 17 September 2025, 10.00 am | North Yorkshire Council](#)

3.0 AREAS FOR SCRUTINY IDENTIFIED

- 3.1 The Opposition Group Leaders requested of the Chair of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee that an extraordinary meeting of the committee be convened, prior to the meeting of Council on 13 February 2026, to address the following concerns regarding the implementation of the Council's Home to School Travel Policy:

1. School end-point coordinates

Why do the end coordinates used for distance measurements at the 31 schools tested, as shown on route maps issued by North Yorkshire Council to parents and

carers, not appear to terminate at a school gate or entrance, as required by the Home to School Transport Policy?

2. Checks and due diligence on start and end points

What checks were undertaken to ensure that distance measurements were based on correct and up-to-date data, both before the policy came into force in September 2024 and as part of due diligence during the appeals process (including checks that the policy had been correctly applied in individual cases)?

This includes:

- a) the coordinates used for schools and home start points
- b) accurate and up-to-date school entrance/gate data
- c) accurate home start points that both relate to the correct address and are consistent with Government statutory guidance.

3. Use of non-public or unavailable routes

Why have routes that are not public rights of way, or are otherwise unavailable or unsafe, been included in distance calculations? How does this align with the legal requirement that mapping systems used across the county reflect the Definitive Map and Statement managed and maintained by the Council's Highways team?

4. Appeals: legal oversight

What legal oversight and safeguards are in place to ensure that school transport appeals are run fairly, lawfully and consistently, and that identified errors in distance measurement or policy application are corrected?

3.2 The questions above are addressed in the following section of the report.

4.0 RESPONSE

4.1 Q1-Q3 School end-point coordinates, checks and due diligence on start and end points and use of non-public or unavailable routes

- 4.1.1 The council has for many years used the same mapping system to calculate distances between homes and schools, this is for both admissions and for transport – for determining school places when there is oversubscription and for eligibility for transport.
- 4.1.2 The Council offers a tool to help families identify the distances to their nearest schools. This distance calculator has been designed to assist parents in making informed choices about which is their nearest school (based upon distance measurements). The find my nearest school calculator identifies the 7 nearest schools, using the Council's routing and mapping software, but in this process maps are not automatically produced.
- 4.1.3 The tool uses the Council's own geographical information system which utilises data provided by Ordnance Survey. This is consistent with the DfE's statutory guidance for home to school travel. The Ordnance Survey is a nationally recognised mapping system that is used widely by local authorities. Whilst the Ordnance Survey information is updated regularly to provide information about new roads and paths, this is uploaded annually into the system that supports mapping for school admissions and transport. This ensures that, within any individual year, admissions decisions and eligibility for home to school travel is assessed on a consistent and fair basis.

Below are screen shots showing the information available to parents that use the 'Find my nearest school' tool.

Image 1: screenshot from the council's webpage: [Finding a school | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Finding your nearest school

Please note that mapping data which informs the nearest school finder is updated on a yearly basis to reflect new housing developments and other identified and approved changes.

The mapping data was updated on Thursday 11 September 2025.

All applications made from Friday 12 September 2025 will be later assessed using the find your nearest school 2025 to 2026 data.

[Find your nearest school 2025 to 2026](#)

Image 2: information provided prior to using the tool

Find your nearest school

Before you start

You can use this form to submit a request to find your nearest school. You will then need to review our [home to school travel policy](#) to find out if you are eligible for free school travel to your nearest school.

You will receive a response to your query by email, usually within one working day, but this can take up to two working days.

We update our data on a yearly basis. Our data was last updated on Thursday 11 September 2025. You may have received a different result if you have requested your nearest schools before this date.

[View our school transport page for detailed information about free school travel.](#)

By using this form [you agree to our legal terms](#). For more details on how we use your information you can [view our privacy notices](#).

[Next](#)

Image 3: Email confirmation

Your form has been submitted

Dear customer,

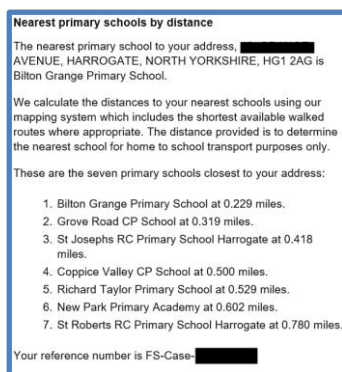
Thank you for submitting your request to find your nearest school.

Your reference number is [REDACTED]

What happens next

We will calculate the distance from your home to the nearest schools using the shortest available walked routes. Responses are sent by email usually within one working day, but can take up to two working days.

Image 4: Nearest school information as detailed on email



4.1.4 If a request for a map of a 'route' between a home and a school relates to home to school travel eligibility, it must be noted that eligibility for free transport is only assessed after admissions allocations have been confirmed (on National Offer Days in March and April each year) and eligibility assessments carried out. At this point, if a child is not eligible for travel assistance, parents can choose to submit an appeal, requesting a map if applicable. Maps may be generated and provided as part of that process, including:

- A map showing the route used to determine the distance to the nearest qualifying school
- A map showing the route to the school for which free transport is being requested.

4.1.5 The appeals process is in place to ensure that concerns over eligibility can be addressed. This year, at the time of writing the report, around 200 Stage 1 and around 90 Stage 2 appeals were submitted from around 11,000 eligibility assessments.

4.1.6 As part of the home to school travel appeals process this year, some parents in a small number of cases, have identified issues where schools were using entrances/gates onto their sites which were not designated as such on the routing and mapping system used by the council for admissions and transport purposes. It is acknowledged that, for various reasons, some schools may be using entrance points which have not been designated and that some schools may have stopped using identified entrance points that are recorded within the system.

4.1.7 The Council is therefore reviewing school site information with schools across this academic year to ensure the information included on the system is up to date with current information. Any agreed changes to entrance points would be updated prior to the admissions round which opens in September 2026 as well as in-year applications from September 2026. The Council have taken this approach in order to ensure equity amongst families.

4.1.8 Changing any information mid-year within the mapping system is a significant step. For every parent who may benefit from a change of this kind, there could be parents who would be disadvantaged from either an admissions or home to school travel policy perspective. To ensure fairness, the Council believe it would not be appropriate to make individual changes to the system without fully considering changes across all school sites as part of the annual update to the mapping system.

4.1.9 However, after any home to school travel eligibility check has been undertaken, parents are able to use the council's appeal processes to seek a review of the

decision, including if they have exceptional individual circumstances that are significant enough to depart from the home to school travel policy.

4.1.10 When measuring distances from home to school, the distance is calculated from each home address to the nearest entrance identified within our mapping system following the nearest available walked route (this can include footpaths, bridleways and public rights of way).

4.1.11 More detailed information about this will be included as part of section 5 of the Post Implementation Review.

4.2 Q4. Appeals: legal oversight

4.2.1 As stated above, parents/carers are able to appeal against a decision made by the Local Authority regarding home to school transport in relation to the following:

- the child's eligibility to free travel
- the measurement of the statutory walking distance to the nearest school
- safety of the walked route to the nearest school
- suitability of the transport travel arrangements for an eligible child.

4.2.2 This is a two-stage process. A request for a Stage 1 appeal must be made in writing within 20 working days of the initial decision correspondence. The submitted appeal should clearly state the reasons for the challenge and include any new documentary evidence. This is then reviewed by two senior officers of the Council. The original decision may be upheld, overturned or alternative solutions suggested.

4.2.3 Where a Stage 1 appeal is not upheld, then parents/carers can request a Stage 2 appeal. The Stage 2 appeals are heard by the Appeals (Home to School Transport) Committee. The Appeals (Home to School Transport) Committee is a committee of the Council. Appointments to the committee are made by Council and the committee is subject to political proportionality. All of the members of the committee, including substitute members, must have received training on the Home to School Travel Policy, relevant DfE guidance, the Appeals (Home to School Transport) Committee, and special educational needs prior to sitting on the committee and considering any Stage 2 appeals.

4.2.4 The role and remit of the committee is to hear Stage 2 home to school transport appeals and to assess: 1) whether the Home to School Travel Policy has been applied correctly; and 2) whether the appellant has evidenced exceptional individual circumstances that would merit a departure from the Policy and so the funding of home to school transport. Any evidence provided regarding alleged errors in distance measurement can be considered at a stage 1 and a stage 2 appeal. If there is a query as to whether the policy has been applied correctly and this cannot be clarified to the committee's satisfaction during the appeal, an appeal can be deferred and a report is brought back to a future meeting of the committee.

4.2.5 Where a Stage 1 and a Stage 2 appeal by a parent or carer has not been upheld, then they can refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The ombudsman may investigate to decide whether there has been any maladministration or a procedural flaw. Dissatisfaction with the outcome of an appeal is not grounds for intervention by the ombudsman. Where it has been determined that there has been maladministration or a procedural flaw, then the ombudsman can direct the Council to re-run the Stage 2 appeal, taking into account the key points from their investigation into how the original appeal was run. The ombudsman cannot overturn the verdict of the original appeals process.

- 4.2.6 The Stage 2 appeals process is administered by the Appeals Team in Legal and Democratic Services, which is managed by the Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny. It is independent of the teams that undertake eligibility assessments, which are carried out by teams within Children and Young Peoples' Services.
- 4.2.7 Details of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 appeals processes are available on the Council website here - [School transport for reception to year 11 children | North Yorkshire Council](#)
- 4.2.8 The Appeals (Home to School Transport) Committee has been constituted and is administered in line with DfE guidance, [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#) (2024).
- 4.2.9 The Terms of Reference of the committee are in the Council Constitution at page 109 - [Constitution | North Yorkshire Council](#)

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Post Implementation Review is underway. Members will receive a progress update in the spring. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be asked to review the PIR overview on 16 September 2026.
- 5.2 In considering the information provided above in response to the questions raised in section 3 of the report, the committee has a range of options available to it:
1. The committee engages in the PIR process and takes no further action on the issues raised at this time
 2. As a result of the discussions undertaken at the meeting of the committee today, a report, with clear recommendations on any proposed changes to the way in which the Home to School Travel Policy has been implemented, is produced and referred to:
 - the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Service; or
 - the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills; or
 - the Executive; or
 - the Full Council.
- 5.3 The above options are where there are recommendations regarding the implementation of the Policy. Where there are recommendations regarding changes to the Policy that was adopted in July 2024, then further consideration will need to be given to the timing. As the Home to School Travel Policy is on the Policy Framework for the Council, it is only Full Council that can make a decision on any changes to it.
- 5.4 In summary, the Constitution states (Council Procedure Rules para 14.0, page 243 - [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Constitution, 12/11/2025 00:00](#)) that no matter can be reviewed or re-debated within 12 months unless: a Notice of Motion is submitted and accepted that bears the names of the proposer and 15 other members; and when within 6 months of the date of original consideration of the matter, there has been a substantial material change in circumstances as determined by the Chair in consultation with the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services. The Home to School Travel Policy was last considered by Council at the Extraordinary meeting of Council on 21 May 2025.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The financial implications are addressed in the report concerning the adoption of the Home to School Travel Policy that was considered by Council on 24 July 2024.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The legal implications are addressed in the report concerning the adoption of the Home to School Travel Policy that was considered by Council on 24 July 2024.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The equalities implications are addressed in the report concerning the adoption of the Home to School Travel Policy that was considered by Council on 24 July 2024.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The climate change implications are addressed in the report concerning the adoption of the Home to School Travel Policy that was considered by Council on 24 July 2024.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that the committee:

- a. considers the report and the information that has been provided
- b. considers the possible next steps as outlined in section 5.0.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

DfE guidance (2024) - [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#)

North Yorkshire Council Constitution - [Constitution | North Yorkshire Council](#)

North Yorkshire Council Home to School Travel Policy (2024) - [School transport for reception to year 11 children | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Report proposing the adoption of the Home to School Travel Policy that was considered by Council on 24 July 2024 (see item 10, page 37) - [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Full Council, 24/07/2024 10:30](#)

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3 February 2026

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