

Children and Young People's Services
Progress House
Westwood Park Drive
Wigan
WN3 4HH

Dear Parent or Guardian

This booklet tells you about the arrangements for transferring children to secondary school for the school year beginning in September 2010. This is an important time for parents and children and we want to help as much as we can.

This booklet contains a lot of information which I hope will help you make your application and, whenever possible, avoid disappointment. It is important you take the time to read **all** the information carefully before you apply, even if you have already decided which schools you prefer.

We will try to give you your preferred school, but schools have a limited number of places. If we receive more applications than places, we use our admission criteria to decide who will get a place. The admission numbers and admission criteria for Wigan schools are given in this booklet.

Our website at www.wigan.gov.uk has a link to school admissions and other useful sites. You can use this site to apply for a secondary school place on-line. There are more details about this in the booklet.

Each school also produces its own prospectus which contains a lot of information about that school. It is useful to visit schools before you apply, and most schools will be holding open days or evenings in September or October 2009. If you cannot go to these or want any information about individual schools, please contact the headteacher at that school, who will be pleased to help.

Our School Places Team can help you with any questions you have about school admissions. You can contact the team on 01942 486037, 01942 486038 or 01942 486039.

Finally, please make sure you make your on-line application or fill in and return the application form by the closing date on 23 October 2009. If you do not apply on time, you are less likely to get a place at the school you want.

Yours faithfully



Nick Hudson
Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services

Wigan Admission Forum

Dear Parents

Wigan Admission Forum

The current Wigan Admission Forum has existed since 2003. The current membership includes Wigan Council representatives, head teachers, Diocesan Board representatives, parent governor representatives, and representatives of the local community and local employers.

For the 2010 admissions, the Wigan Admission Forum reviewed the admission arrangements for all schools in the Wigan area. We are satisfied that these arrangements meet the compulsory requirements of the Admissions Code 2009.

In 2008, the equal-preferences system of considering and allocating secondary-school places was introduced across the country. This system makes sure that, if you miss out at your first-preference school, you still have a fair chance of being offered a place at your second- or third-preference schools. There is more information about the equal-preference system on page 7 of this booklet.

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to give three preferences of school on your application form. This will give you the best chance of gaining a place at one of your preferred schools. Of those parents who applied for places at Wigan schools in 2009, 93% were offered a place at one of their preferred schools.

Yours sincerely



Mr Tom Frost
Chair of Wigan Admission Forum



The information in this booklet was correct at the time it was printed. If there are any changes, we will put a notice on our website at www.wigan.gov.uk and take appropriate steps to let you know.

Contents

	Page
Where to get help	1
On-line application service	2
Applying for a place at a secondary school	3
How to apply	
Important information about how we decide which school to offer your child	
Important questions answered	
Admission appeals	13
General information	17
School meals	
School uniform	
School transport	
Travelling expenses	
Transfer between schools	
Community and voluntary-controlled schools	22
Foundation high schools	42
Church of England high schools	47
Catholic high schools	58

Where to get help

In Wigan, the School Places Team at Children and Young People's Services deal with admissions to schools. We will be pleased to help if you have any questions or need extra information.

You can contact us as follows.

Address: School Places Team
Children and Young People's Services
Progress House
Westwood Park Drive
Wigan
WN3 4HH

Phone: 01942 486037, 01942 486038 or 01942 486039

E-mail: schoolplaces@wigan.gov.uk

There is also information on our website at www.wigan.gov.uk.

Other useful phone numbers

School transport	01942 486139 or 01942 486140
Special educational needs	01942 486132
Free school meals	01942 828609
SureStart team (early years)	01942 486050
General education enquiries	01942 486123

Other local authorities

Bolton	Children's Services	01204 332137
Lancashire	Children's Services	01772 531813
Salford	Children's Services	0161 778 0413
St Helens	Children and Young People's Services	01744 671030
Trafford	Education Department	0161 912 5007
Warrington	Children's Service Directorate	01925 442951

On-line application service

Apply on-line for your child's secondary-school place because:

- √ it is quick, safe and secure;
- √ we will confirm we have received your application;
- √ you can change your application at any time up until the closing date for applications (23 October 2009);
- √ there are clear, simple instructions to guide you through making your application; and
- √ the service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the application period – no later than September 2009 to 23 October 2009.

What will I need to apply on-line?

- A computer with internet access
- An e-mail account

Where can I access the website to apply on-line?

- At home
- At an internet café
- At a library – we recommend that you book this service beforehand.

You will receive a letter giving you details on how to access the on-line service. Or, you can go to our website at www.wigan.gov.uk and follow the links.

If you need any help or guidance using the on-line service, please do not hesitate to contact us:

- by phone on 01942 486039, 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday; or
- by e-mail at schoolplaces@wigan.gov.uk.

Applying for a place at secondary school

We call secondary schools in Wigan high schools.

September 2009

You will receive an application pack. We will send parents of children in Year 6 who live in Wigan:

- a copy of this booklet;
- the Wigan Council secondary school application form; and
- an envelope to return your application.

If your child lives in another local authority, that local authority will send you details of how to apply for a secondary-school.

September 2009 to 23 October 2009

Decide which three schools you want to apply for in order of priority.

Please read this booklet very carefully because it:

- explains how we decide which school to offer your child; and
- gives information to help you decide if you are likely to get a place at a particular school.

See page 16 for details of how to get more information about high schools.

How to apply for a secondary-school place

To be considered for your preferred secondary schools, you must apply by filling in the **Wigan Council secondary school application form** or **by applying on-line**. The Wigan Council secondary school application form and the service to apply on-line allow you to give three preferences of school in order of priority. You will only be considered for schools you name as a preference.

Preferences for voluntary-aided (church) schools and supplementary information forms

If any of your preferred schools is a voluntary-aided (church) school, we strongly advise you to fill in the school's own supplementary information form as well as the Wigan Council secondary school application form. If you do not fill in the school's own supplementary information form, the school will not have all the information they need to consider your application against their faith criteria and your child may be refused a place.

You can get a copy of the supplementary information form:

- from the school;
- by calling the School Places Team on 01942 486037, 486038, 486039; or
- by downloading one from our website.

Returning your Wigan Council secondary school application form and supplementary information forms

If your child goes to a Wigan primary school, please return your Wigan Council secondary school application form, together with any supplementary information forms for voluntary-aided (church) schools, to your child's primary school in the envelope provided. If you have applied on-line, you only need to return any supplementary information forms for voluntary-aided (church) schools to your child's primary school in the envelope provided.

If your child does not go to a Wigan primary school, please return your secondary school application form, together with any supplementary information forms, to The School Places Team, CYPS, Progress House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan, WN3 4HH. We have included an envelope for you to use. If you have applied on-line, you only need to return any supplementary information forms.

You will receive a receipt for your application. Please keep this until you know the outcome of your application.

23 October 2009

This is the closing date for applications. We will consider only applications we receive by the closing date as on-time applications.

October 2009 to February 2010

We will process applications.

1 March 2010

We will write to tell you the school we are offering your child.

Late applications

It is important that you return your application form or apply on-line before the closing date on 23 October 2009.

We will deal with all on-time applications first and at the same time.

If your application is late, we will only look at it after we have dealt with the applications we receive on time. **This means that you are less likely to get a place at the school you want.**

If you apply late, we cannot guarantee we will write to you by 1 March 2010. However, we will write to you as soon as we can after this date.

If you have not been able to apply for a school place by the closing date or even after school places have been allocated, please contact the School Places Team, who will be happy to help.

If you do not apply for a place

If you do not apply for a place, we will offer your child a place at the nearest school to your home with a place available. We will only do this if your child lives in Wigan.

This may not be a school that is near to you because we will offer places first to children whose applications we received on time. All places at your local high schools may already have been filled.

Your child's home address

Many schools use children's addresses when deciding who to offer places to.

You must give the correct permanent address. This is where the child and parent, or the person who has care of the child or has parental responsibility, normally live.

If you are separated and your child spends time at each parent's address, the address we use for admission to school is that of the main carer. We use the address of the parent who gets the Child Benefit for this.

We may carry out checks to confirm that addresses are genuine. We may ask to see two forms of evidence of your permanent address at the closing date for applications. This may include:

- proof of where you are registered for council tax;
- your current driving licence; or
- a recent utility bill (gas, electricity or water).

Any evidence you provide must show that the parent or main carer lives at this address at the closing date for applications.

If your address changes temporarily (for example, if you go to live with a relative), you cannot use this address.

When considering your child's application, we use the permanent home address we have for you at the closing date for applications.

If you move house after the closing date for applications but before we send allocation letters to parents, you must tell the School Places Team in writing. We cannot use your new address to consider your application form but we will make sure we write to you at the correct address.

False information

If you give any false information to get a school place (for example, if you give the incorrect permanent address at the closing date for applications), we have the right to withdraw the offer and your child may lose their place.

Important information about how we decide which school to offer your child

We will consider the following things when deciding which school to offer your child a place.

- The three school preferences you name on the application form
- The admission number for the schools
- The admission criteria for the schools
- The order of priority you have given schools on your application

When we consider on-time applications, we will use only the information that is correct on your application form at the closing date for applications.

Giving preferences for school places

By law, we must use the equal-preference system when considering and allocating school places. The equal-preference system makes sure that, if you miss out at your first-preference school, you still have a fair chance of being offered a place at your second- or third-preference schools. This is why we advise you to give three preferences. When you give preferences, it is important to make a realistic assessment of your child's chances of gaining a place. The information in this booklet will help you to do this. If you need more advice, please contact the School Places Team on 01942 486037.

Admission number

Every school has an admission number. This is the number of places in a school year group. The admission numbers for all Wigan high schools, and information on each school, are given on pages 22 to 76 of this booklet.

Admission criteria

When there are more applications than places for a school, we say the school is 'oversubscribed'.

If we receive more applications than the admission number, we use a fixed set of rules to decide which children we offer a place. These rules are called the 'admission criteria'.

The admission criteria for all Wigan high schools are given on pages 22 to 76 in this booklet.

You will see that the criteria are numbered. Children in category one will have first priority for places, children in category two will be considered next and so on through the criteria until there are no places left.

Tie-breaker

When we use the admission criteria, more children might fall into a particular category than the number of places left. If this happens, we use the 'tie-breaker' to decide who to give a place.

At community and voluntary-controlled schools, we will give places to the children who live nearest to the school. We measure this distance:

- in a straight line; and
- using a geographical information system (GIS) which is based on Ordnance Survey maps. We will measure from your child's home address to a central point on the school site. If you want more information about the point we measure to at community or voluntary-controlled schools, please contact the School Places Team on 01942 486037.

If we offer the last place available at a school to one of twins (or triplets, and so on), our policy is to admit the other twin or triplets too.

Occasionally, the distance from home to school is the same for more than one child (for example, if more than one child lives in the same block of flats). In these cases, we will use a system to randomly pick who we will offer a place. If you want more information on this policy, please contact the School Places Team on 01942 486037.

The tie-breakers for voluntary-aided and foundation schools, and the admission criteria for each school, are given on pages 42 to 76 of this booklet.

The equal-preference system and the priority order of schools on your application

By law, we must use the equal-preference system when considering your application for a school place.

We offer places by doing the following.

- First, we rank all first-, second- and third-preference applications by using the school's admission criteria only. This process means that some second- and third-preference applications will be ranked higher than some first-preference applications.
- We use schools' admission numbers to find out how many children can be offered a place at each school.
- We then offer places to all children whose first preference we can meet, and remove their second and third preferences from the list.
- We repeat this process for second preferences and then third preferences.

This process means that, if you miss out on your first-preference school, you still have a fair chance of being offered a place at your second- or third-preference schools.

Children in public care (looked-after children)

If you are responsible for a child in public care, please let us know on your application.

Brothers and sisters

The admission criteria for community and voluntary-controlled schools have children who will have brothers or sisters at the school when they start as category two.

We will include:

- half-brothers and half-sisters;
- stepbrothers and stepsisters; and
- foster brothers and foster sisters;

who live at the same address as part of the same family unit.

Foundation schools

The governing body of a foundation school decides who will be offered places if there are more applications than the number of places available.

The admissions criteria for foundation schools are given on page 42 of this booklet.

Voluntary-aided (church) schools

The governing bodies of voluntary-aided schools decide who will be offered a place if there are more applications than places.

The admission criteria for voluntary-aided high schools usually take account of whether the child is a member of a church or goes to church (or both). They ask for information about this on their own supplementary information form.

If you want a place at a voluntary-aided school, you are strongly advised to:

- get the school's own supplementary information form from the school; and
- return this to the School Places Team by the closing date of 23 October 2009.

We strongly advise you to fill in a supplementary information form as well as the Wigan Council secondary school application form for each voluntary-aided school you name, whether it is your first, second or third preference.

If your child goes to a voluntary-aided primary school, they are not guaranteed a place at a voluntary-aided high school. You should read the admission criteria carefully.

Children with a statement of special educational needs

Children with a statement of special educational needs which names the school will be offered a place without using the admission criteria. This is a legal requirement. This applies to all types of school, whether they are community, voluntary-controlled, voluntary-aided or foundation.

Waiting lists

Places may become available at a school after the offer date of 1 March 2010. All admission authorities must have a waiting list until the end of the autumn term in 2010.

Community and voluntary-controlled schools

We will:

- put all children who we refuse a place at one of their preferences on the waiting list for the school;
- keep the list in priority order, **decided by the admission criteria for the school only**;
- offer any places that become available to the next child on the waiting list; and
- maintain the waiting list until the end of the autumn term in 2010.

Important information about the waiting list

We cannot take into account the length of time a child's name has been on the waiting list, only the admission criteria for the school. This means that your child's position on the list may change if another parent asks to be put on the list and their child has higher priority in the admissions criteria.

If you tell us, after the closing date for applications, that your address has changed, and you provide documents to prove this, we will take this into account for the purposes of the waiting list.

Foundation schools

We will maintain the waiting list on behalf of the governing body.

Voluntary-aided schools

Each voluntary-aided school includes details of their waiting-list policy in their admission arrangements. The governing body of the school will maintain the waiting list. If you are refused a place at a voluntary-aided school, please contact the school to confirm that your child's name is on the waiting list.

Important questions answered

When will my child transfer to secondary school?

If your child will turn 11 between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010, he or she will transfer to secondary school at the start of the new school year in September 2010.

Who will deal with my application?

Wigan Council co-ordinates admissions to all high schools. In Wigan, the School Places Team do this.

We decide which children will be offered places at community and voluntary-controlled high schools. These schools are listed on pages 22 to 41 of this booklet.

The governing body of the school decides which children will be offered places at foundation and voluntary-aided (church) high schools. These schools are listed on pages 42 to 76 of this booklet.

Do I have to give three school preferences?

You should give three preferences. If you do not:

- it does not increase your chance of gaining a place at your first-preference school; and
- we do not know which other schools you are interested in. If we cannot offer your first-preference school, we can only offer the nearest school to your child's home with a spare place. You may miss out on a place at another school you prefer.

In the same way, repeating the name of one school three times on your application does not improve your chances of a place.

Can I change my mind after I have sent my application?

Changing your mind up to the closing date

- If you change your mind about the names or order of schools you have put on the application form, you must write to the School Places Team before the closing date on 23 October 2009 to give them the details.
- If you apply on-line, you can change your preference at any time up to the closing date by amending your application. You must follow the instructions given on the on-line service to make sure your preferences have been changed.

Changing your mind after the closing date (23 October 2009)

If you change your mind about the preferences or the order of preferences after the closing date, you must send details to the School Places Team. However, we will treat this as a late application (see page 4), and it may reduce your chances of getting a place at the school you want.

What happens if you cannot offer a place at any of the schools I have asked for?

If your child lives in Wigan, we will offer a place at the nearest Wigan school to your home address with a spare place. This will be the nearest community, voluntary-controlled, foundation or voluntary-aided school.

If your child does not live in Wigan, the local authority in their area will offer them a place.

My child has a statement of special educational needs. How do I apply for a place at secondary school?

Your child's primary school will arrange a review to discuss their move into secondary education in either:

- the summer term when they are in Year 5; or
- the autumn term when they are in Year 6.

If your child goes to a mainstream primary school

We will send you an application pack at the same time as everyone else. You should apply in the usual way. It is important that you apply by the closing date of **23 October 2009**.

You should still apply even if a place at a special school is being considered for your child. This is so you have a better chance of getting a place at the mainstream school you prefer if your child does not transfer to a special school.

If your child goes to a special school

If you are considering transferring your child to a mainstream secondary school, you can get advice from their current primary school or by calling our Access and Inclusion Team on 01942 486132.

Why do you give information about admissions to each school last year?

We give details of how we offered places last year to help explain how the available places were allocated. You may want to use this information as a guide to whether you are likely to gain a place at one of your preferred schools. The information is only a guide because the number of applications for a school is different each year.

Can I apply for a place at a school in a different local authority?

You can apply for schools in any local authority. Other local authorities produce their own admission booklets with details of their schools, and will be pleased to send you a copy. There is a list of our neighbouring local authorities, with contact phone numbers, on page 1 of this booklet.

If your child lives in Wigan and you want to apply for a place at a school in another local authority, you can apply using our on-line application service or:

- fill in the Wigan Council secondary school application form we sent with this booklet;
- put the name of the other local-authority school on the application form; and
- return the application form to us, either through your child's primary school or by post **by the closing date of 23 October 2009**.

Whichever way you apply, we will deal with the other local authority for you.

Please make sure you fill in and return to the school any supplementary information form for a voluntary-aided school, as well as returning the filled-in Wigan Council secondary school application form.

I do not live in Wigan. Can I apply for a place at a Wigan school for my child?

Anyone can apply for a place in a Wigan school. However, you should look at the admission criteria to see if you have a reasonable chance of gaining a place.

Your own local authority will have sent you their application pack. If you want a place at a Wigan school:

- put the name of the school on your own local authority's secondary school application form; and
- return the form to your own local authority by the closing date.

Your local authority will deal with us on your behalf.

If any of your preferences is for a Wigan voluntary-aided (church) school, please get a copy of the supplementary information form and return it to the school.

Admission appeals

You can appeal to an independent appeal panel if the local authority or the school governing body refuse a place at any school you have applied for.

If we refuse your child a place at a school, we will write to tell you:

- why we refused your application;
- how to appeal;
- the time limit for sending your appeal (you will have at least 14 days from the date of the letter);
- where to send the appeal; and
- who to contact if you need any help.

Sometimes, places become available at a school before the admission appeals have been heard. If this happens, we will offer places to the next child on the waiting list. If you appeal, it does not affect your child's place on the waiting list.

Before you decide if you want to appeal, you will probably want to think about:

- the school's published admissions criteria for admitting pupils;
- your reasons for wanting your child to go to the school;
- your child's view on which school he or she should go to; and
- how strong a case you have.

You may also want to visit the school which your child has been offered.

The appeal hearing

Before the hearing

We will tell you the date, time and place of the hearing 10 school days before.

Seven days before the hearing, we or the school will send you a document called the 'Statement of Case'. This sets out the reasons why your child was not offered a place. The appeal panel will also get a copy of this.

The panel also receives all the documents you have sent in to support your child's appeal. If you have any more information or supporting documents that you want the panel to consider, it would be useful if you could tell the clerk beforehand. This will allow the process to run smoothly and help avoid delays on the day. We would appreciate it if you could provide eight copies of any extra paperwork you put forward to the panel.

The appeal panel

The panel will have three or five people on it. They are completely independent of us and the school you are appealing for.

At the appeal hearing

We strongly advise you to go to the appeal hearing if you can. You will not usually need legal representation (such as a solicitor) but you do have the right to bring a legal adviser or a friend along for support.

There will be a Wigan Council or school representative at the hearing to give their reasons for refusing your child a place and you can ask them questions about this. You will be able to put your case for your child to the panel. You will probably want to refer back to your original reasons for applying for that school.

If you cannot go to the appeal hearing, the panel will consider all the information you have sent in writing, in your absence.

At the end of the hearing, the clerk should be able to tell you when you can expect to receive the panel's decision.

You will receive the panel's decision by letter.

Admission authorities must keep to the decisions of admissions appeals panels. The decisions can only be overturned by the courts.

After the hearing

The parents or guardians of children who have been unsuccessful in their admission appeal may want to consider the following options.

1 Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman can investigate written complaints about bad administration by an admissions appeal panel. This is not a right to appeal and has to relate to issues such as failing to follow correct procedures or failing to act independently and fairly. You cannot complain just on the basis that you think an admissions decision is wrong.

You can contact the Ombudsman at:

Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
York
YO30 5FZ.

2 Complaints to the Secretary of State

The Secretary of State cannot review or overturn decisions of individual appeals panels but can consider:

- whether we set up the appeal panel correctly, with the correct number and properly appointed types of panel members; and
- whether the admission authority or governing body has acted reasonably in running the appeal meeting and handling the decision-making process.

You can contact the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families at:

Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 2BT.

3 Judicial review

You can ask for a judicial review if you consider that the decision wasn't properly made or was 'unreasonable'. An 'unreasonable' decision is one that no sensible authority acting properly would make. You will usually have to contact a solicitor.

Further appeals

We will normally only allow parents to have one appeal to a particular school in any school year.

We will only consider an application for the same school in the same school year in very exceptional situations, such as a significant, material change in your circumstances or those of your child. A material change is something substantial, such as a change of address from a different area. The fact that a pupil is distressed at not being offered a place at the school they wanted is not a significant and material change in circumstances.

Information about schools

Open evenings

Wigan schools will hold open evenings. Dates are advertised in the local press. You can also contact each school for details.

School prospectus

The governors of each school publish a prospectus which provides information about the school, such as its policies, results and curriculum and the subjects it specialises in. You can get a school's prospectus free of charge from the school or download it from the school's website. The website address is shown on the page for each high school.

Ofsted reports

Schools are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Copies of Ofsted reports are available from schools or on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

School achievement and attainment tables

Yearly school achievement and attainment tables are available online at www.dcf.gov.uk/performance-tables. Information about examination results may also be included in a school's prospectus.

Independent advice

The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)
Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk Phone: Freephone 0800 800 5793

Choice Advice Service

The Government has provided funding for local authorities to develop an independent Choice Advice Service in their area. In Wigan, this service covers primary-school and secondary-school applications, as well as any questions from parents wanting to transfer schools outside the normal admissions process.

Most parents are able to find the information they need to choose their school preferences and make an application before the closing date. For advice and information, contact the School Places Team on 01942 486037.

Some parents may need extra support to make an application. The Choice Advice Service is there to help parents who may struggle to apply on time, or have difficulty understanding the information that is available to them.

If you would like to speak to the Choice Advice Service, please ring 01942 486016.

General information

School meals

School meals are available in all high schools at the moment.

There is a cafeteria service for pupils who want to buy a school meal. At all schools there are places where pupils can eat food they have brought from home.

Children whose parents receive the following support payments are entitled to receive free school meals.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, as long as they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have a yearly income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs), as of April 2009, of no more than £16,040
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit

For more details, or to get an application form, contact:

Benefits Section
Council Tax Offices
Moore Street East
Wigan
WN1 3XN.

Phone: 01942 828609

E-mail: benefits@wigan.gov.uk

Website:

www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/AdviceBenefitsEmergencies/Benefits/FreeSchoolMeals.htm

We do not provide milk for any pupils in Wigan schools.

School uniform

Pupils must wear school uniform at all high schools in Wigan. Details are available from the individual schools.

Bus services

School bus services are managed by Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE). GMPTE has a concessionary fee for children of 80p a journey. You can get details of school routes and other bus services in any of the following ways.

- By visiting our website, which has links to other sites, including transport (www.wigan.gov.uk).
- You can get leaflets from Wigan and Leigh bus stations.
- By phoning GMPTE on 0161 228 7811.
- By visiting GMPTE's website at www.gmppte.gov.uk.

Travelling expenses

We will provide a free bus pass for a child aged 11 to 16 who has to travel more than three miles to their nearest suitable school. We will measure this by the shortest walking route. We will not refund travelling expenses if your child goes to a school more than three miles away and there is a school nearer with a place available, unless you have applied to the school because of your religion or belief.

We will provide a free bus pass for a child aged 11 to 16 who is eligible for free school meals or whose parents or guardians receive the maximum level of Working Tax Credit, and if the child attends:

- any one of the three nearest suitable schools, where the distance travelled is between two and six miles; or
- the nearest school they have chosen because of their religion or belief, where this is between two and 15 miles away.

How we will measure the distances

We will measure:

- the two-mile limit along the nearest and shortest suitable walking route; and
- the six-mile limit and 15-mile limit along road routes.

You can get claim forms from the school or the School Transport Team.

If you have any questions, please contact the School Transport Team on 01942 486116 or 01942 486140.

If you want to check if we would pay travelling expenses before you apply for a particular school, please contact the School Transport Team.

Sustainable school travel

The school run adds an estimated 20% of traffic to early-morning congestion. For many parents, children and young people, the journey to school or college is ideally suited for walking, cycling and using public transport.

Our 'Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy' is aimed at encouraging children and young people in the borough to change their behaviour and attitudes towards school travel. Section 508A of the Education Act gives all local authorities a general duty to promote the use of sustainable (environmentally friendly) travel and transport for children and young people of sixth-form age and below. This covers not only those children and young people who live in Wigan borough, but also those who live outside the area and travel into Wigan to receive education and training.

The Local Transport Plan recognises the benefits for the environment, as well as to children's health and well-being in encouraging walking and cycling. It also aims to tackle the issue of local congestion around schools and make education easier for children and young people to get access to.

School travel map

The first step to providing sustainable school travel was setting up our school travel interactive service (see www.wigan.gov.uk/schooltravel), which provides information for every school and college in the borough on choosing different methods of transport. www.wigan.gov.uk/schooltravel

Every school in the borough has already received a map with details of options for travelling to school, so that children and parents can make real choices about how they travel. The map includes locations for the following.

- All schools
- School crossing patrols
- Pedestrian crossing facilities
- Bus stops
- School bus routes
- Cycle routes (information is also provided on where cycle lockers and other cycling facilities are located at schools)

We are continuously developing and improving the information we provide and, in time, we hope to include whether the school has:

- a travel plan;
- a 20 mph (miles per hour) zone;
- routes off the main road which are easy to access;
- safer alternatives to the congested highway;
- a 'Safer Routes to School' scheme; and
- a 'walking bus' scheme (where children walk to school in a group, with supervision).

There are a number of ways you can help, most importantly by considering how your child gets to school, but also by asking your school whether they have developed,

and more importantly are putting into practice, their school travel plan. If your school already has a travel plan, you could help set up a junior road-safety team or a school travel council. This would be made up of a mixture of children from the school, who can take responsibility for the plan and come up with their own initiatives to further encourage and promote sustainable travel and work towards achieving the travel plan's targets.

You could also get involved in a walking-to-school or cycling-to-school scheme, allowing and supervising groups of children to walk or cycle together.

We want to make sure that a new culture of school travel can develop so that, together, we can make the school journey safer, healthier and more sustainable for everyone.

For more information on your sustainable travel options, please contact Emma Barton on 01942 404396.

Transferring between high schools

If you want to change your child's school, you should consider this decision very carefully. It is generally in a child's best interest to stay at the same school, as changing schools can cause an unnecessary break in the child's education. If your child is having problems, a change of school is not always the answer. You should discuss any concerns with your child's head teacher before you apply for a different school.

Changing schools in Year 10 or Year 11 is likely to be difficult. A different school may not be able to offer the same subject options or exams for which your child has studied and completed coursework.

If you are thinking of moving house and your child would have to change school, there may not be places available at the school you want. The School Places Team will be able to tell you which schools are full or have places. Some schools are full in all or most year groups and we cannot guarantee there will be a place available in the area you plan to move to.

To apply for a place at a Wigan community, foundation or voluntary-controlled school, contact the School Places Team for an application form or download one from our website at www.wigan.gov.uk. If you want a place at a voluntary-aided school, fill in the school's own application form. You can get this from the school.

You will receive a written response to your application. All schools have an admission limit for each year group. If we cannot offer a place at the school you want and you live in Wigan, we will offer a place at another school. You may want to keep your child at their current school. You have the right to appeal if we refuse you a place at a school. For more information on appeals, see page 13. There are no waiting lists for transfers during a school year.

From 1 September 2010

On 1 September 2010, the local authority in the area your child lives becomes responsible for co-ordinating all applications for transfer during a school year. To apply for a place at any school in the UK, please contact the School Places Team on 01942 486040.

Fair Access Protocol

We sometimes receive requests for places and are not able to offer a place at a school within a reasonable distance of where the child lives. In these situations, the Director of Children and Young People's Services will use our Fair Access Protocol to allocate a place at a community, voluntary-controlled, foundation or voluntary-aided (church) school, even if the year group is full.

Children who qualify for a place using our Fair Access Protocol must be given priority over children on a waiting list who attend a school.