

Home-to-School Transport

Information for Parents and Pupils

This booklet is intended to provide pupils and parents with useful background information relating to the provision of home-to-school transport services provided by Aberdeenshire Council.

It also sets out how we expect pupils to behave when travelling to and from school and reminds parents of ways in which they can help to make their children's journeys safer and more pleasant.

Introduction

Each school day approximately 13,000 pupils are transported to and from school. In total we use over 100 transport operators utilising vehicles of all sizes to provide the service on a mix of dedicated School Contracts; joint School Transport/Local Bus Services and through the purchase of season tickets on public bus services. Of these pupils 11,500 travel free, with the remainder paying an appropriate fare.

All bus and taxi operators are subject to detailed Conditions of Contract, which cover a wide range of requirements relating to the safe and legal operation of home-to-school transport services. Of these, a mandatory enhanced Disclosure Scotland check and a qualification in basic First Aid for all driving staff, are but two.

In addition, all operators and drivers are issued with 'Guidance Notes for School Transport Drivers' which explains how they should perform their duties including the procedures that should be followed in emergency situations. These matters will also be more fully addressed as part of a mandatory training course which all school transport drivers will from August 2006 be required to undertake within 18 months of commencement of employment.

Operators are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure the security, safety, dignity and comfort of pupils in their care. Vehicles used for the provision of home-to-school transport services are subject to stringent inspections by the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and Council vehicle examiners.

Entitlement to free transport

In order to qualify for free home-to-school transport, primary pupils must reside more than 2 miles from and attend their zoned school and secondary pupils must reside more than 3 miles from and attend their zoned school. These distances are measured via the shortest recognised walking route. Application forms for free transport can be obtained from your school.

Pupils are allocated an appropriate pick-up/drop-off point that the Council is required to ensure is safe in so far as road safety is concerned.

Privilege seats and fare paying buses

Transport provision is also made available for pupils who are not entitled to free transport.

On dedicated school transport services privilege seats are, subject to spare seating capacity, made available to non-entitled pupils on an annual basis at a fixed charge. To ease payment 'School Privilege Passes' may be purchased by cheque or through incremental direct debit payment. Application forms for privilege seats are available from your school.

10-journey privilege tickets are also available for travel on dedicated school transport vehicles for pupils who don't use the service on a regular basis. These tickets can be purchased at your school on production of a '10-Journey Privilege Pass' that is available from the Public Transport Unit. Application forms are available from your school. Again these tickets are only available if there are spare seats on the vehicle.

A small number of school transport services also operate as local bus services, open to the general public. On these services non-entitled pupils may purchase single, return or 10-journey tickets, at ten for the price of seven, on the bus. Discounted 'School Bus Passes' are also sold with application forms available from your school.

In the case of both privilege seats and fare paying buses further discounts are available for pupils in receipt of free school meals, full details of which are provided by the school. Family discounts are also available.

Getting to/from the pick-up/drop-off point

Parents are solely responsible for conveying their child to/from the designated pick-up/drop-off point.

Parents should note that drivers are not required to help children cross roads and parents should advise their children accordingly.

Safety of pupils on school transport services

The Council is responsible for the general safety and welfare of pupils who are entitled to free school transport provision during the time they are being conveyed and when boarding/alighting the school transport vehicle.

We provide a seat for every child who has been authorised to travel. It is thus very important that pupils travel on the vehicle to which they have been allocated.

Only staff employed within the Council's Public Transport Unit are authorised to allocate pupils to vehicles. Drivers are issued with pupil lists detailing the pupils who are allocated to their vehicles. Where more than one vehicle is operating from your area to your child's school, ensure that your child is fully aware of which vehicle to board.

It is important that pupils follow the instructions of drivers. **In particular, pupils should remain seated during the journey and at no time should they touch or attempt to open or close the doors of the vehicle.**

All school transport vehicles must carry a mobile phone or equivalent communication device for emergency use.

Quality of service

All contractors and staff must adhere to all legislative requirements regarding the maintenance and operation of school transport vehicles.

The Council monitor various aspects of school transport provision, in particular, service reliability and adherence to the contract specification, including the size and type of the vehicle(s) allocated to the service. In addition, Council surveyors monitor service performance in terms of: the cleanliness of the vehicle; whether the vehicle is heated and/or suffering from excessive condensation; the condition of the interior and seats; and, the appearance/attire of the driver.

Guidelines for pupils

1. Always arrive at the pick-up point on time
2. Make sure you have your bus pass with you, and always show it to the bus driver (unless you pay your fare on the bus).
3. If the bus is late you should wait up to 20 minutes before either returning home or making your own way to school. Your parent should advise you of the appropriate course of action under such circumstances.
4. Don't play about near the road while waiting for the bus. Wait on the pavement or if one is not available well back from the road.
5. Don't try to get on or off the bus until it has stopped.
6. Don't push or rush to the door when the bus has stopped.
7. Do not attempt to open or close the doors of the vehicle by yourself. Wait for the driver to do so.
8. Keep your bus pass in a good condition. If it is lost or damaged in any way, you will have to pay for a new one (a replacement pass currently costs £2).
9. Find a seat quickly and quietly, without pushing.
10. Where a seat belt is provided, you must by law wear it at all times during the journey.
11. Listen to the driver and do as he or she says.
12. You should remain in your seat at all times during the journey.
13. Don't smoke on the bus.
14. Don't leave litter on the bus.
15. Have consideration for other passengers and treat the vehicle with respect.
16. Take care of your personal belongings. Do not block the passageway or emergency exits and ensure that personal belongings do not become caught on the door when alighting the bus
17. Don't ring the bell unless you want to get off the bus.
18. When you are alighting the bus make sure that younger pupils are clear of the vehicle.

19. Don't cross the road until the bus has moved away. You must ensure that you can see clearly in both directions before you cross.
20. You should behave properly at all times. It is an offence for anyone to misbehave on a bus, or to do anything that would put at risk the safety of the driver or other passengers. If you make yourself a nuisance or cause any damage on the bus, you may be precluded from using the school transport service.
21. Normal disciplinary sanctions that would be incurred if misbehaving on school premises will be taken against any pupil caught misbehaving or acting in an unacceptable manner on school transport services
22. Please note that CCTV systems are used on school transport vehicles. Footage of pupils behaving in a manner that it is deemed to put at risk their own safety, the safety of other passengers, the driver and other road users or indeed in any other inappropriate manner will be forwarded to the school. In more serious cases footage may be forwarded to the Grampian Police to take action.

Guidelines for parents

1. Ensure that your child arrives safely at the pick up point, in good time, and where appropriate that they are looked after until the bus comes.
2. If the bus fails to arrive on time, pupils should wait 20 minutes before returning home or making their own way to school, accompanied if necessary. Make sure your child knows what to do if the bus is late, or does not arrive.
3. Ensure your child carries their bus pass and that it is in good order (unless they pay on the bus in which case you should ensure they have the correct money to travel to and from the school).
4. A charge of £2 is made for the replacement of a damaged or lost pass. Robust passes are issued so if the pass is looked after properly this should not be an issue.
5. Where necessary ensure that your child is met when the bus returns from school. In the case of younger children, they often forget road safety as they alight the bus.
6. Should your child be unaccompanied between home and the bus pick-up/drop-off point, make sure that he/she knows and follows the safest route and uses the safest crossing places.
7. **Remember that you, as parent/guardian, are responsible for your child's safety and well being between your home and the pick-up/drop-off point.**
8. Make sure that your child understands that they must behave properly both in and out of school. It is an offence to misbehave on the bus or to do anything that would put at risk the safety of the driver or other passengers. You and your child may also be held liable for any vandalism, soiling or damage to the bus, if caused by your child.
9. Teach your child all the safety rules. Remind them that playing about at bus pick-up points and on buses can cause serious accidents and injuries. Make sure your child does not wear clothing that could be dangerous, e.g. hanging belts or bags with loose straps, and that rucksacks are carried and not worn on the bus. Make sure they understand the pupil guidelines set out in this booklet.
10. Normal disciplinary sanctions that would be incurred whilst misbehaving on school premises will be taken against any pupil caught misbehaving on school transport services.
11. CCTV systems are used on school transport vehicles. Footage of pupils behaving in a manner that it is deemed to put at risk their own safety, the safety of other passengers, the driver and other road users

or indeed in any other inappropriate manner will be forwarded to the school. In more serious cases footage may be forwarded to Grampian Police to take action.

12. Notify the Council's Public Transport Unit or your school of any changes to your circumstances. In particular, if your child no longer requires his/her bus pass please return it to the school.
13. If you have any concerns about school transport, please let us know. Contact details are given at the end of this booklet.

Our commitment

For our part, Aberdeenshire Council are committed to providing a service that meets the requirements of pupils, parents and schools.

We will work in partnership with all parties concerned to ensure that school transport services are operated in a safe and efficient manner. We will assist contractors in identifying pupils who damage or deface buses and support any reasonable action taken against a pupil who is found to be behaving in this way. Equally we will support pupils, parents and schools if they have a justifiable complaint against the contractor or driving staff.

We have a small team in the Public Transport Unit that is responsible for ensuring that the transport provided is operated as efficiently as possible whilst at the same time meeting the needs of pupils, parents and schools. They work closely with contractors and schools to provide a safe environment for children to travel. Obviously in transporting such a large amount of pupils, almost 4,250,000 journeys per school year, things may go wrong from time to time. It is our aim, however, to ensure that any problems are effectively dealt with and resolved as speedily as possible.

Contact information

Any enquiries regarding school transport services should be directed to:

The Public Transport Unit
Transportation and Infrastructure
Aberdeenshire Council
Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen
AB16 5GB

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E-mail : school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk