



Aberdeenshire  
COUNCIL



# Primary/Secondary Home - to - School Transport

Information for Parents/Carers and Pupils

# Information for Parents and Pupils

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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.

Further details of various aspects of school transport provision are available on the Council's website.

**[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk)**

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# Information for Parents and Pupils

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Each school day approximately 12,000 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 transport services; joint school transport/local bus services; and, through the purchase of season tickets on public bus services. Of these pupils 11,000 travel free, with the remainder paying for a place on a privilege basis.

All school transport 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. One of these is the current requirement that all driving staff must be approved by the Council, this includes being subject to a Disclosure Scotland check at an enhanced level. All new school transport drivers are required to submit Protection of Vulnerable Groups application, this will also apply to current drivers as of February 2012). All approved drivers are issued with and should display at all times an Approved Transport Driver I.D. badge.

Operators are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure the security, safety, dignity and comfort of pupils in their care. In the case of buses, vehicles used for the provision of school transport services are subject to stringent inspections by the Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA). Licensed Taxis and Private Hire vehicles are checked twice yearly by Council vehicle examiners.



Operational and financial penalties are levied against any contracts that are not operated in adherence with the Council's school transport contract terms and conditions.

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.

# Entitlement to free transport

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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 available walking route. Application forms for free transport can be obtained from your school.

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

# Privilege seats and fare paying buses

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

In the case of pupils who are attending their zoned school, travel is provided on dedicated school transport services subject to spare seating capacity, at a fixed annual charge. Application forms for privilege places are available on the Council's website. Alternatively, a copy can be requested via the school or by e-mailing :- [school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:school.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

In the case of pupils who are not attending their zoned school, travel may be provided on dedicated school transport services subject to spare seating capacity. However, there is no guarantee that transport will be available for the duration of the school year. The Council reserves the right to withdraw transport, for example if the place is required for a child travelling to his/her zoned school. When seats are allocated at the beginning of each school year, out-of-zone places are allocated after the transport needs of in-zone pupils are met, and therefore out-of-zone passes are not issued until after the beginning of the new academic year. Until such time, parents/carers are responsible for organising transport for the pupils concerned.

A small number of school transport services also operate as local bus services, which are open to the general public. On these services pupils not entitled to free transport may purchase single, return or 10-journey tickets on the bus.

Where fare paying privilege transport is provided, pupils in receipt of free school meals receive a 50% discount.

Family discounts are also available.



# Getting to/from the PUDO

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Parents/carers are solely responsible for conveying their child to/from the designated PUDO.

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

Any parent/carer who has concerns over the safety of the walk route to their child's PUDO or alternatively the safety of the PUDO itself, may bring the matter to the attention of the Public Transport Unit who will instigate an appropriate safety assessment. Parents should however be aware that in determining the safety of the route and/or PUDO, it is presumed that the child is accompanied by a responsible adult.



# Safety of pupils on school transport services

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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.

Only staff employed within the Council's Public Transport Unit are authorised to allocate pupils to vehicles. Drivers are issued with pupil manifests detailing the pupils who are allocated to their vehicles along with the respective PUDOs.

All vehicles operating school transport contracts are provided with seat belts or other appropriate passenger restraints.

We provide a seat for every child who has been authorised to travel. It is very important that pupils travel on the vehicle to which they have been allocated. 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 with their seat belt fastened at all times 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 carry a mobile phone or equivalent communication device for emergency use.

# Quality of service

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

The Council monitors 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 staff 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.

## Feeder Transport Services

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In some areas pupils are required to take connecting transport to/from a main school transport service, in which case the Council ensures that the point of pupil transfer is safe and appropriate, and that both vehicles are situated on the same side of the road to avoid pupils unnecessarily crossing the road.

Operators are advised that in no circumstances should pupils be permitted to leave a vehicle until the connecting vehicle has arrived. Should a connecting vehicle fail to turn up, operators are advised that the pupils concerned be transported directly to home/school or alternative arrangements made in liaison with the operating company.

# Winter Weather Operation

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During adverse weather in winter months, decisions on whether to close the school or cancel transport in the interests of safety are taken by the school head teacher and the transport operator.

Information is provided to parents/carers by means of the Council's website (search for School Status and Transport Notification), local radio stations and a dedicated Schools Information telephone line. For updates during periods of adverse weather, parents/carers are recommended to subscribe for email alerts or to regularly check the information line; tel. 0870 054 4999 and enter the school pin number.

Further information is available on the Council's website (search for School Transport Adverse Weather).



# Guidelines for pupils

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1. Always arrive at the pick-up point on time.  
Make sure you have your bus pass with you, and always show it to the driver (unless you pay your fare on the vehicle)
2. If the vehicle is late you should wait up to 20 minutes before either returning home or making your own way to school. Your parents should advise you of the appropriate course of action under such circumstances.
3. Don't play about near the road while waiting for the vehicle. Wait on the pavement or if one is not available well back from the road.
4. Don't try to get on or off the vehicle until it has stopped.
5. Don't push or rush to the door when the vehicle has stopped.
6. Don't attempt to open or close the doors of the vehicle by yourself. Wait for the driver to do so.
7. Keep your school transport 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 £3).
8. Find a seat quickly and quietly, without pushing.
9. Seat belts must be worn at all times during the journey to/from school. This is a legal requirement.
10. Listen to the driver and do as he or she says.
11. You should remain in your seat at all times during the journey.
12. Don't smoke on the bus.

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13. Don't leave litter on the bus.
  14. Have consideration for other passengers and treat the vehicle with respect.
  15. 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 vehicle
  16. On buses, don't ring the bell unless you want to get off the vehicle.
  17. When you are alighting the vehicle make sure that younger pupils are clear of the vehicle.
  18. Don't cross the road until the vehicle has moved away. You must ensure that you can see clearly in both directions before you cross.
  19. You should behave appropriately at all times. It is an offence for anyone to misbehave on a school transport vehicle 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 vehicle, you may be precluded from using the school transport service.
  20. 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.
  21. Please note that CCTV systems are routinely used on school transport vehicles. Video 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 or 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.

# Guidelines for parents/carers

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1. Ensure that your child arrives safely at the PUDO, in good time, and where appropriate that they are looked after until the vehicle comes.
2. If the vehicle 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 vehicle is late, or does not arrive.
3. Ensure your child carries their school transport pass and that it is in good condition (unless they pay on the vehicle in which case you should ensure they have the correct money to travel to and from the school).
4. A charge of £3 is made for the replacement of a damaged or lost pass. Passes are durable so if looked after properly this should not be an issue. Passes are not routinely renewed annually and therefore should be retained over the summer vacation.
5. Where necessary ensure that your child is met when the vehicle returns from school. In the case of younger children, they often forget road safety as they alight the vehicle.
6. Should your child be unaccompanied between home and the PUDO, make sure that he/she knows and follows the safest route and uses the safest crossing places.
7. Remember that you, as parent/carer are responsible for the child's safety and wellbeing prior to boarding and after alighting the school transport vehicle.

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8. Make sure that your child understands that he/she must behave properly both in and out of school. It is an offence to misbehave on the vehicle 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 vehicle, if caused by your child.
  9. Teach your child all the safety rules. Remind them that playing about at pick-up points and on vehicles 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 vehicle. 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 routinely used on school transport vehicles. Video 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 or 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 school transport 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

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For our part, Aberdeenshire Council are committed to providing a school transport 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 vehicles 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 large numbers 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 dealt with effectively and resolved as speedily as possible.



# Contact information

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Any enquiries regarding school transport services should be directed to:

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



(01224) 665195



(01224) 662005



school.transport@  
aberdeenshire.gov.uk