

Lancashire County Council

School Transport Policy and Guidance As of 30 November 2020

Covid -19 Guidance to Schools

Please note: Government guidance changes as the pandemic progresses and the information below is based on the current guidance and may be updated.

You can help control coronavirus and travel safely by walking and cycling, if you can. Where this is not possible, use public transport or drive.

Please note the distinction between dedicated school transport and wider public transport:

- Dedicated school transport- services that are used only to carry students to school.
- Wider public transport services- services which are used by students as well as by the general public.

Pupils on dedicated school transport services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent. This means that the advice for these two types of transport are different. This guidance is primarily aimed at dedicated school transport usage.

Please note, parents/carers must be advised that students must not board home to school transport if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). If a student develops symptoms whilst at school or their place of education, they will be sent home. They must not travel on home to school transport. The school or place of education should contact the parent or carer who should make arrangements for the student's journey home.

Social distancing, face coverings and bubbles

- On dedicated school transport social distancing will not apply from the autumn term.
- On wider public transport it is the law that children and young people aged 11 years and over must wear a face covering and abide by social distancing.
- At the beginning of this academic year face coverings were not mandatory for those students 11 years and over on dedicated school transport. However, on the 27th of November, the Department for Education released updated guidance to state that from the 2nd of December, in accordance with advice from PHE, children and young people aged 11 and over **MUST** wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated school transport to secondary school or college, unless they are exempt. The county council is reiterating this message to schools and parents- students must wear one if they are able to do so. Drivers are not expected to enforce the wearing of face coverings but will relay concerns relating to non-compliance to the school bus managers who will then advise the school.

- A face covering is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth. Reusable or single-use face coverings are available for parents and carers to buy. A scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering may also be used but these must securely fit round the side of the face. Face coverings may be particularly useful where measures such as distancing and sitting in bubbles or year groups are not possible. They also may help students to feel more confident about using home to school transport, and parents to feel more confident about their child using home to school transport. However face coverings should not be worn by those who may not be able to handle them as directed, particularly very young children, as this may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. Evidence shows that mitigations (face coverings, screens, cleaning and ventilation) can reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. It is for this reason, even though research shows that overall risk to children and young people from coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low, that the government is making it mandatory to wear face coverings for students 11 years and over on dedicated school transport to secondary school and colleges, understanding exemptions. A clean face covering should be worn on each journey. Used face coverings should be stored appropriately in plastic bags until they can be washed. Alternatively non reusable face coverings should be disposed of appropriately as directed by the school. This removal, storage/disposal should be complimented by the school's handwashing process on arrival. Guidance on how to wear and make face coverings can be found via <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>
- It is not possible to transport pupils only within their school bubbles. However, government guidance states that having school bubbles will still bring benefits even if implemented partially, and that schools may need to allow mixing into wider groups in certain circumstances, including on transport. Students should try to sit in their bubbles as much as possible. If a school would like to discuss the possibility of introducing an assigned seating plan then we would be happy to discuss this.
- When queuing for the bus, social distancing should be maintained where possible (2m or 1m plus with mitigations). If queues become too long in unsafe areas then school staff/parents/operators should liaise with school bus services to see how this could be managed. Where there is a safe walking route, schools may want to consider having buses drop children off a short way from the school, to ease congestion around school sites.
- Students should hail their bus as usual.
- Any face- to-face seating will have been removed/marked out of use by operators.
- Standing is not permitted whilst the vehicle is in motion. Students should remain seated until they leave the vehicle.
- Ideally let passengers leave the bus from the front first to reduce passenger contact.
- Students who use dedicated school transport and board at bus stations will need to abide by national government social distancing and face covering guidelines if they are 11years or over, understanding exemptions. This is mandatory in bus stations. For more information please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>
- Please note it is not mandatory that bus drivers wear face coverings whilst working although the county council will make recommendations and the operators will take this into consideration when completing their risk assessment.

Hygiene

- Bus operators have risk assessments in place to ensure safe services for their passengers as well as their staff. These risk assessments are regularly monitored and reviewed. Operators will be conducting enhanced cleaning regimes to ensure COVID-19 hygiene standards are met and windows/air vents left open for ventilation.
- Students should be reminded that personal hygiene is very important. One of the key messages from Public Health England is that we should all be washing or sanitising our hands regularly. If you are using hand sanitising gel should have an alcohol base of a minimum 60%. Hands should be washed before and after journeys. Please refer to the attached- Public Health England "Best Practice: How to hand wash step by step images" and "Best Practice: How to handrub step by step images" for more information.
- It is recommended that students travel with their own sanitising hand gel as this is unlikely to be available on board.
- Students should be encouraged to carry tissues on home to school transport. The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach is very important. Tissues will need to be disposed of in a covered bin. Schools should have a suitable disposal process on arrival, in line with their process for disposing of face coverings.
- Passenger assistants will not necessarily require personal protective equipment on dedicated school transport, but face coverings will be recommended.
- It is advised that there is no eating or drinking on board.
- Students should try to talk at low levels and refrain from shouting.

School bus fares/passes and test and trace

- All students will be required to show their valid pass/season ticket or pay their exact fare from the autumn term.
- It has always been imperative that students only use the service that is shown on their pass/season ticket. It is more so important that they continue to follow this rule for test and trace purposes.
- Schools have been asked to keep daily records of students who have paid a fare on board the bus and which service number they used. Consistency is very important for test and trace purposes in case there is a COVID-19 related incident and the school needs information. Students should refrain from changing services during the same day- i.e try to use the same service to and from school.
- It is also important that the correct fare is used in order to minimise cash handling. Please see below for fare prices.

	Single	Return
Journeys up to 3miles	£1.60	£3.00
Journeys between 3-8 miles	£2.30	£4.10
Journeys over 8 miles	£2.80	£5.20

- Revenue protection procedures will apply- if no pass/season ticket or fare is provided this will be taken very seriously and may result in refusal for boarding upon notifying the parent/carer.
- If a school is not requiring students to wear their uniform please inform the School Bus Managers so that bus drivers are aware.
- If there are any positive cases within the school, as well as informing the Local Health Prevention Team and following any specific school COVID-19 guidance please also inform School Bus Managers immediately so that appropriate action can be taken with regards to dedicated school transport i.e service amendments.

Shared services

- Where dedicated school transport is shared with students attending different schools students should try to sit together based on the school that they are attending and abide by the other principles within this document. If possible children should also sit within their school bubble.

Wider public transport services

- If a student uses a wider public transport service which is used by students as well as by the general public they must follow the guidance for passengers set by government which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>
- The county council has been working with schools to survey parents and students to understand the demand for public transport amongst students. The survey results have been provided to public transport operators so that they can attempt to understand what safety measures could be put in place and deal with the capacity. Students that use these services should abide by national guidance and check with their operator for more specific information. In some cases forecast demand on public transport may mean that the county council supplements these services with extra dedicated school transport services to increase capacity. Schools will be provided information about these services if this is the case.

Active travel

- Schools and colleges should encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school where it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- At a national level, at least 50% of journeys to school of 2 miles or less, and which are currently undertaken by public bus, need to switch to cycling and walking in order to make capacity available for those with longer journeys. This could include; building on existing schemes (such as the Walk to School programme and Bikeability training); encouraging schools and colleges to communicate directly with the pupils whose journeys are most appropriate to switch to active travel to encourage them to do so; implementing 'safe streets' policies outside schools. For more information please visit <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-travel/active-travel/>

Antisocial behaviour

- We do not expect drivers to police pupil behaviour. The driver should be able to focus on driving the vehicle safely.
- If a student fails to comply at any point during the journey, or the driver has concerns about the conduct of a student, they must report this to their manager who must then report this to the county council and the school so that appropriate action can be taken.
- This guidance has been issued to help keep students and drivers safe during the journey.
- Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring children understand how to use transport safely, and children themselves are responsible for acting upon this, where they are able to.
- It is extremely important that guidelines are followed to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Operators have been asked to advise the county council of breaches of guidelines. Persistent breaches by a student may result in a refusal to carry them.

Thank you for your support in ensuring the safety of school transport services in Lancashire.