**Lancashire County Council**

**School Transport Policy and Guidance**

**As of 16th August 2021**

**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, contracted by the county council.
* Wider public transport services - services which are used by students as well as by the general public. These generally operate on a commercial basis by privately owned companies.

The advice for these two types of transport may vary. This guidance is primarily aimed at dedicated school transport usage.

Please note, parents/carers must be advised that students must not board any home to school transport if they have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). A symptomatic person should self-isolate and book a PCR test as soon as possible. If a student develops symptoms whilst at school or their place of education, they will be sent home. They should avoid using public transport (dedicated and wider) and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household. In exceptional circumstances, if parents or carers cannot arrange to have their child collected, and it is age-appropriate and safe to do so, the child should walk, cycle or scoot home. If this is not possible, alternative arrangements may need to be organised by the school.

**Bubbles, social distancing and face coverings**

Since last academic year Government has made numerous changes to guidance. Points made below refer to guidance and actions required for this academic year (21/22).

* + Schools and colleges no longer need to keep children and young people in consistent groups or bubbles.
	+ Government is no longer recommending maximising distancing and minimising mixing, but unnecessary risks such as overcrowding should be minimised.
	+ Schools or colleges will no longer be responsible for tracing close contacts of those who test positive for COVID-19 - close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace. Please note that from 16th August 2021, individuals are exempt from the legal duty to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 by NHS Test and Trace and they meet one of four exemption criteria:
1. Fully vaccinated adults: those who received their final dose of an MHRA approved vaccine in the UK vaccination programme, at least 14 days prior to contact with a positive case
2. Children and young people: those under the age of 18 years and 6 months
3. Clinical trial participants: those who have taken part in – or are currently taking part in – an MHRA approved Covid-19 vaccine clinical trial
4. Medical exemptions: those who can evidence that they cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons
	* Even though wearing face coverings is no longer a *legal requirement* on public transport the government expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces including on dedicated school transport for those 11 years and over. The county council would like to reiterate this and strongly advise that children and ***young people aged 11 and over should continue to wear a face covering when travelling to secondary school or college if they are able to do so****.* Drivers on dedicated school transport are not expected to enforce the wearing of face coverings but will relay any concerns to the school bus managers who will then advise the school.
	* Please note that on wider public transport, which is privately owned and commercially operated, operators may make it a condition of carriage for passengers to wear face coverings if they are able to do so on their services and may refuse those who do not comply.
	* 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. The county council is actively encouraging school transport operators to engage in asymptomatic testing.

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 social distancing is 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 recommends the wearing of face coverings for students 11 years and over on dedicated school transport to secondary school and colleges if they are able to do so. 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 advice on arrival. Guidance on how to wear and make face coverings can be found via the following link [Face coverings: when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](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)

* Duplicate/additional dedicated school transport services that were put in place during the 2020/21 academic year are not expected to be in use for this new academic year. However, this position will be kept under review. If a local outbreak occurs, a school may need to action their contingency plans including temporarily reinstating a bubble system. At this stage, discussions should be held with the school bus managers so that additional services may be used to reduce mixing on transport wherever possible.
* 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.

**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. If someone who uses dedicated transport tests positive, even though the school is no longer responsible for tracing it would be advisable for the school to contact the school bus managers who can then inform the operator for risk assessment purposes.
* 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 it 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 hand- rub 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**

* Last academic year schools were asked to keep a daily register of fare payers on the school bus services for tracing purposes - this is no longer required.
* Last academic year there were periods when schools were only open to children of Key workers and at these times, no fares where taken on dedicated school services. From the start of this academic year, all students should be reminded that they will be required to show a valid pass/season ticket or pay their fare.
* It has always been imperative that students only use the service that is printed on their pass/season ticket and abide by the terms and conditions printed on the back of the pass.
* Students are encouraged to have the correct fare to minimise cash handling and also to help the driver. Please see below for fare prices.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Single | Return |
| Journeys up to 3miles  | £1.60    | £3.10    |
| Journeys between 3-8 miles | £2.40 | £4.20 |
| Journeys over 8 miles  | £2.90 | £5.30 |

* Revenue protection procedures apply - if no pass/season ticket or fare is provided this will be taken very seriously. Persistent breaches may result in a refusal to carry after notifying the parent/carer.

**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 [Coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers)

**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.
* Schools may wish to; communicate directly with the pupils whose journeys are most appropriate to switch to active travel; build on existing schemes (such as the Walk to School programme and Bikeability training); implement ‘safe streets’ policies outside schools. For more information please visit [Active Travel in Lancashire - Lancashire County Council](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 are required to report this to their manager who will 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 important that these guidelines are followed to keep everyone safe. 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.