



Introduction

This protocol sets out expectations and key guidance for parents/carers and their children who are entitled to free home to school transport and for those accessing public transport services. The protocol also includes the expectations for transport contractors and their staff.

The protocol reflects Welsh Government guidance. It can be applied across schools and settings in the county and in colleges, and be used by contractors who provide learner transport.

Please note that this protocol will be updated following any changes to national guidance.

The Welsh Government guidance states that;

As far as it is safe to do so, the use of active travel routes by parents/carers, staff and learners should be encouraged. Walking and cycling, scooting, wheeling, etc., should be strongly encouraged. In view of the potential for capacity constraints on public transport to impact learners' ability to attend school, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered.



Parents and Learners

It is the responsibility of parents/ carers:

- To ensure that no-one boards a dedicated school transport vehicle if they or a member of their extended household have any of the four identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell). Anyone with symptoms must follow Welsh Government self-isolation guidance and should arrange to have a test to see if they have COVID-19.
- To ensure that if they have any concerns that their child is unwell, they should not attend school.
- To ensure that anyone in an extended household that is required to self-isolate as contacts of a case under Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) or in quarantine if returned from a country specified by the Foreign Commonwealth Office should not board dedicated school transport.
- To acknowledge a zero-tolerance for poor behaviour on transport (to include circumstances where a learner fails to follow instructions given).
- To ensure learners wash their hands (or for younger learners that parents/carers help / do that for them) or use appropriate-strength sanitiser to the appropriate British Standards thoroughly before leaving their home or school to board their vehicle. A member of school staff should assist young learners and those with complex needs to help clean their hands properly in readiness for their return journey home.
- To remind learners to board and alight transport single file, for those over 11 years of age maintaining a 2m distance at all times, while waiting and queuing.
- To remind learners they must ensure they follow any instructions given by their driver or school/college staff.
- To remind learners that they will be allocated a specific seat on their vehicle and that learners must remain in that seat for their entire journey.
- Learners who qualify for free transport who travel on local bus services will need to follow the respective operator's instruction.
- To remember that the School Travel Code and behaviour framework will continue in operation and any

learner that misbehaves, risks or causes damage or injury to the vehicle, driver or passengers or in any way threatens the health & safety of other passengers or vehicle will be subject to an immediate ban from Flintshire School Transport for the learners involved.





Available Seating on Dedicated Learner Transport - Coaches & Buses

All seats are available to learners to use other than those facing the rear of the vehicle.

Although, there is no mandatory requirement to wear a face covering, it is strongly recommended that face coverings are worn on all dedicated secondary school transport.

Seating wherever possible will be based on year groups, learners will be allocated a specific seat on their vehicle and must remain in that seat for their entire journey.



Available Seating on Dedicated Learner Transport - Taxis

For vehicles with 16 passenger seats or fewer, all seats may be used other than those facing the rear of the vehicle.

Learners of secondary school age and above shall wear a three-level face covering while on the vehicle.



Available Seating on Local Bus Services

A local bus service is one where fares can be charged. They are not dedicated learner transport services and are available to adults as well as children. Learners who qualify for free transport who travel on local bus services will need to follow the respective operator's instruction.

Three-layer face coverings are required at all times while on a local bus service.



Use of Face Coverings

As stated above face coverings must be worn by all secondary aged learners whilst travelling on public transport, including dedicated school taxis.

It is strongly recommended that all secondary aged pupils travelling on dedicated school coaches & buses also wear a face covering.

- It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide face coverings
- It is the responsibility of students to wear face coverings appropriately and store them safely during the school day
- Three layer face coverings are recommended

Some learners need not wear a face covering. This includes those for whom doing so would create a medical risk, cause distress, and in some situations where a learner has additional learning needs.

Drivers may wear face coverings if they or their employer feel this is of benefit and where this is individually assessed. Drivers may wish to apply sanitiser frequently.

Where drivers have to assist in the buckling of seat belts for small children or in loading wheelchairs then face coverings alongside the frequent application of hand sanitiser and or use of appropriate gloves may be considered appropriate if instructed by their employing contractor through a risk assessment.



Staying as Safe as Possible

Parents / Carers should:

- Ensure that if a child is symptomatic that they do not use transport or attend school
- Ensure their child follows all instructions from drivers and staff, sits and remains in an allocated seat for the duration of the journey
- Have a contingency in place should the transport not arrive (e.g. if a driver is unwell at short notice)

Parents / Carers should ensure that learners take and understand the following precautions:

- When aged 11 or over, keep a 2m distance from people outside of their own extended household while waiting for transport.
- Board calmly and one at a time, without pushing.
- Face away from other people when waiting for and using transport
- Try to minimise the number of surfaces touched
- Wash or clean hands with appropriate sanitiser for the prescribed time before boarding transport
- Immediately upon finishing a journey, wash or sanitise hands again as soon as possible

If your child develops symptoms at school, you will need to make arrangements for your child to be collected. Symptomatic children shall not be permitted to use learner transport or local bus services. Under no circumstances should learners travel home on dedicated school transport. The school or setting will contact the parent/carer who should make arrangements for the learner's journey home.



Expectations for Learners

Parents in allowing their children to use learner transport accept and agree to the terms set out in this protocol. Parents will need to share this document with their children and discuss it with them.

On public health grounds, there shall be a zero-tolerance policy regarding behaviour and seating on learner transport, including at stops, at education locations and the boarding and alighting of passengers. Learners who do not comply with these requirements will have their transport withdrawn with immediate effect.

Learners shall comply with the requirements and instruction of school/college staff when on site.

Parents will need to discuss with their children a contingency should a learner at a bus stop not be picked up by the driver (e.g. if the driver has become ill and as a consequence the transport is aborted last minute) or if the child's name is not on the list.

If you have not received a bus pass or confirmatory phone call/letter specifically about your child's transport, your child will not be allocated a seat and will be unable to travel. The driver is under instruction to take only those learners allocated to transport. This is for public health reasons. Please do not allow your child to go out for the vehicle. If you do and if your child is left on the roadside, you will need to ensure your child knows what to do and you should discuss this with your child.

Only those named on the driver's list shall be able to travel. We need to maintain an accurate list of learners to be able to cooperate with the Test Trace Protect procedures and if necessary we shall share your details with the appropriate agencies who help to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Where any member of a household or extended household displays covid-19 symptoms, parents shall ensure that their children do not use learner transport and follow Welsh Government self-isolation; stay at home guidance. If a learner is contacted by Test Trace Protect and asked to self-isolate then parents shall also ensure that they do not use learner transport. Where the driver picks up at the home location (i.e. in a minibus or taxi), the driver will specifically need to ask a parent/carer to confirm that there are no symptomatic residents in the household.

Children who display symptoms of what parents feel is a common cold should also NOT use the transport provided and the household or extended household should self-isolate for the prescribed period.

All learners will need to wash their hands thoroughly in accordance with national guidance before leaving their home for the learner transport journey and again in the afternoon at school.

If a learner at a bus stop in the morning/inward journey is symptomatic with recognised signs of covid-19 or is presented for travel with indications of covid-19, the driver will need to contact his/her employer before allowing the learner to travel.

If a child becomes symptomatic at school, including during the period immediately after the final bell (i.e. before boarding a learner transport vehicle), learners shall not board the vehicle. Instead, schools will invoke their own policies for virus containment and isolate the learner without them boarding a vehicle. Parents will need to collect their child.



Expectations for Contractors

Contractors will have a revised and enhanced risk assessment and safe systems of work pertaining to the use of vehicles and employment of drivers during coronavirus. The Council has provided a model risk assessment to assist contractors. The contractors' assessment will include good practice at contractors' premises. Contractors shall share their completed assessments with the Council.

In order to reduce the possibility of infection, contractors will normally dedicate the same driver and same vehicle to each contract.

All drivers will have undertaken a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) enhanced check as required as appropriate by the licensing Authority or Council.

Drivers will consider their own fitness before undertaking each learner transport journey. Drivers are to be aware of their contractors' risk assessments, safe systems of work and national guidance.

The contractors will provide a seating plan for each vehicle and for each day of operation. Where possible, learners should be seated in accordance with their year group.

For non-service buses or for vehicles without an appropriately approved screen, should operators deem it appropriate, having secured their vehicle, drivers may leave their cab to wait 2m outside the vehicle while learners board and alight. This is recommended. Learners will need to allow the driver to leave by keeping a minimum distance of 2m from the entrance.

To assist with the compliance and enforcement of the above, all vehicles with a capacity of over 16 seats will be fitted with operational CCTV. Contractors shall notify the Council if this not the case. Failure to provide a vehicle with such working equipment shall result in the application of financial deductions as specified under the Conditions of Contract.

Parking at establishments and settings will be at the direction of schools and colleges.

School operational plans will include measures to ensure there are appropriate procedures for when pupils arrival at school and, for the afternoon return. Wherever possible, boarding at schools should, be in year group order, with year 13 first (at the rear of the vehicle) and year 7 last (at the front).

While on education premises as elsewhere, drivers shall remain a minimum of 2m from all other drivers and staff.

Vehicles should be naturally ventilated by use of opened windows or where available roof lights rather than climate control, air conditioning or forced air systems that recirculate air. Drivers of coaches that do not allow openable windows should ensure air conditioning is not set to recirculate air.

Schools may require staggered start and finish times, with arrivals expected to observe strict time slots. Local authorities and schools will inform contractors accordingly. Drivers should be instructed not to prejudice these times by waiting at stops (for late learners), and the contractor should notify the transport staff immediately if specified arrival times cannot be adhered to.



Cleaning

Contractors will ensure all vehicles are thoroughly cleaned once a day to a standard above that usually undertaken. Surfaces requiring special attention include steering wheel; handbrake, switchgear and fascia; door handles (inside and out); window handles/buttons; seats and hard surfaces around seats that have been occupied.

Normal cleaning products are sufficient for the purpose, including easily disposed of disinfectant wipes, though "fogging" remains a preferred and additional method of cleaning.

Additionally, contractors will ensure that all internal and external touch points are wiped down between trips.

Drivers should wash hands frequently or use a suitable sanitiser gel can that should be a minimum of 70 per cent alcohol. Drivers must not leave cleaning products/sanitiser where passengers can reach them.



Seatbelts

Wherever possible, learners should be responsible for buckling their own seat belts. This may not always be possible for young children or those with specific additional needs. In such circumstances, where a pick up is at a home address, parents should ensure their children are safely buckled. A member of the school staff should do so at school.

The contractual responsibility nevertheless continues to rest with drivers and, where a driver would be expected to assist contractors, contractors should assess how drivers do this and what additional steps are required as a result.