

SWITCH

Special Educational Needs Transport



CODE OF CONDUCT



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



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Welsh Government



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Our Commitment

The council provides transport to travel to and from a school or college where it has a statutory responsibility to do so for pupils/students as determined by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure.

Transport will be provided in the most cost efficient way taking into account the needs of the child. Transport should not cause undue stress, strain or difficulty that would prevent a pupil/student from benefitting from the education on offer. Pupils/students should be able to travel in safety and reasonable comfort.

Our commitment is that:

- Parents, contractors and schools/colleges will have access to school transport staff during normal office hours.
- Travel will normally be arranged within a maximum of 15 working days of receipt of an approved request. If there are very specific needs for specially trained staff, adapted vehicles or equipment it may take longer to arrange transport to ensure the safety of the child. In the meantime alternative arrangements will be made.
- The council will ensure that any equipment necessary for safe transport e.g. car seat, is provided either by the council, parents or the operator, as appropriate.
- Routes will be planned to minimise journeys times wherever possible, subject to the provision of an efficient and cost effective service. Where changes to routes are necessary we will write to parents and schools notifying them of changes so that children can be prepared, and will require drivers/passenger assistant to introduce themselves to parents/children prior to new transport starting.

- The council will ensure that all drivers and passenger assistants will have undergone an appropriate CRB check/registration and application process. Approved staff will be issued with an ID pass that will include the person's name, photograph, local authority logo and date of issue.
- School transport routes and services will be monitored on a regular basis. Some vehicles may be fitted with CCTV, which may be used as evidence in cases of mis-conduct or misbehaviour.
- We will work with contractors, parents, pupils/students and schools/colleges to resolve any problems that may arise on school/college transport services as quickly as possible.
- The council will keep a log of all incidents reported, investigate each and take further sanctions where appropriate.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Pembrokeshire County Council – 01437 775222

Carmarthenshire County Council – 01267 228326

City and County of Swansea – 01792 636328/636593

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council – 01639 686657

Please complete your contractor details in case of an emergency:

Contractor Name _____

Route number _____

Emergency contact number for driver/passenger assistant _____

Parents'/carers' Code of Conduct

Parents and carers can help make their child's journey as safe as possible:

- Please make sure that the Council's transport staff have all relevant information about your child including any specific needs and emergency contact information. It is important that you notify the council's transport staff immediately of any changes to your, or your child's, circumstances such as a change of address or changes in equipment.
- You will receive a letter telling you who the contractor providing your child's transport before the start of the term is. All contractors are expected to ensure that the driver and/or passenger assistant contact you to introduce themselves and provide their contact details. You will also be informed of the approximate pick up time and drop off time. Parents should not make requests to individual drivers/passenger assistants to change routes, times or transport arrangements as this may adversely affect other children's journeys/safety. If you need to request any changes to your child's transport please contact the council's transport unit.
- It is your responsibility to ensure your child is ready for school transport in good time in the morning and to meet him/her from transport in the afternoon. Parents must ensure that there is an appropriate adult to be there when their child gets home from school. If your child is picked up at a location other than from home, it is a parent's/carer's responsibility to ensure the child's safety to get to and from the bus.
- You should ensure that your child is appropriately dressed for the journey to/from school. If your child has medication/information for school please ensure that it is passed in a sealed container to the driver/passenger assistant marked with your child's name.

- If your child is unwell or unable to attend school please telephone the transport contractor as soon as possible to avoid delays to other pupils or a journey being made that is not required.
- Parents and carers are responsible for encouraging good behaviour on school transport. If your child is deliberately misbehaving then disciplinary action may be taken, including refusing to transport. No child will be punished for behaviour that is due to their specific condition e.g. Tourette's.
- If you have concerns about your child's transport or need to report an incident please do so as soon as possible providing as much information: including the date and route number to the council's transport unit.

Transport Operators' Code of Conduct

Transport operators are responsible for the safe provision of transport in accordance with the Conditions of Contract and any relevant traffic management policy of the school/college. Failure to comply with these may result in deductions in payment and /or termination of the contract.

Employees:

- All authorities offer training from time to time for school transport staff. Please make sure your staff are aware of and take up any available training.
- You must use only the agreed /approved staff on school transport routes. If an approved member of staff is not available e.g. due to illness then you should notify the council immediately to agree alternative arrangements.
- All employees must be appropriately dressed and display their photo ID at all times whilst on school transport.
- Drivers and passenger assistants must maintain a professional and courteous attitude to school staff, parents and pupils/students at all times. This includes use of appropriate language and respect for pupils' confidentiality.
- Drivers and passenger assistants must be familiar with the route, pick up locations, the school site and have introduced themselves to parents /pupils/students prior to the start of the contract.
- Routes should be operated as set out in the contract. Amendments such as changes to pick up times, pick up locations etc or transporting other children must not be made unless agreed with the council's transport staff.

- Staff who are providing school transport for special needs must be competent in the use of all relevant equipment including ramps, lifts, seat belts, harnesses, wheelchair and occupant securement systems. It is the contractors' responsibility to ensure that all relevant staff have received sufficient training. If you are in any doubt about what equipment is required or how it is used then you should contact the council who will be happy to provide support/assistance. The safety of children is paramount and if any member of staff is in doubt please contact the council's transport unit.
- Drivers/passenger assistants must have emergency contact details for the contractor, local authority, school and pupils' on the vehicle. They must also be aware of procedures to follow in the event of an emergency including illness, accident or breakdown.

Vehicles:

- The contract should be operated in accordance with the specification i.e. an appropriate size/type of vehicle. If a suitable vehicle is unavailable due to breakdown etc you should notify the authority immediately.
- Vehicles and equipment should be kept clean, and equipment regularly checked to ensure it is undamaged.
- Vehicles operating school transport contracts must display the route number and be equipped with either a mobile phone or radio contact with their base.

Liaison with schools/colleges:

- Contractors should maintain regular contact with the school/college during the school year.
- Many special schools/units have arrangements for the handover of pupils, parking, and for transfer of pupils/students belongings/medication/information. Contractors should ensure that wherever possible schools' policies are adhered to.

Drivers' and Passenger Assistants' Code of Conduct

Passenger assistants and drivers are key people in ensuring safe and comfortable transport for young people, especially those with special needs. The school journey is particularly important for many young people with special needs (and their parents) and an integral part of the school day.

The council expects a high degree of professionalism from drivers and passenger assistants. Drivers and passenger assistants must respect the confidentiality of information about pupils and their families.

General advice on working with children

You are the individual(s) responsible for child's safety and comfort/welfare at all times on the vehicle.

- Avoid physical contact with children unless it is needed to ensure a child's safety
- Use appropriate language – this should be age appropriate and not include swear words. Many pupils will have difficulty with communication and you may need to speak slowly and clearly and ensure you are facing the child.
- Do not discuss matters of an inappropriate nature with children such as alcohol, drugs, sex, or personal matters.
- Treat all pupils equally and consistently. Wherever possible follow the school's advice (and parental advice) on managing pupil's behaviour.

- Avoid confrontation but make sure any incidents of bullying, or violence/inappropriate behaviour are reported to school/parent and transport staff so that they can be dealt with.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in or near the vehicle or on school premises.
- Make sure you maintain clear boundaries. Whilst it is essential that you develop a good rapport with your passengers/colleagues (and parents) there may be need to make changes to routes and or staff. Overly friendly relationships can make such changes difficult for all, and inappropriate relationships can place staff at risk of allegations.

Before the journey

- Before the start of the school term/year you should have introduced yourself to the parents and young people on your route. This provides an opportunity for them to get to know you, and also for you to find out about any specific needs or concerns about the child. Make sure you have up to date contact details and emergency contact details for each child and that these are kept with you each day on the vehicle.
- Make sure you are aware of the company's procedures for dealing with accidents, breakdowns, inclement weather, sickness etc.
- Be suitably dressed and wearing your ID badge.
- Ensure that you have a mobile phone, or a two way radio and that you have the emergency numbers you need (e.g. pre-programmed into the phone). A note book/pen, tissues and wet wipes are also likely to be useful.

- Make sure the vehicle has the right safety equipment on it before it leaves e.g. correct booster seats, car seats etc and that these are clean, undamaged and correctly fitted.

During the journey

- Arrive at the stop/pick up at the designated time. If a child is not ready you should wait no more than 5 minutes. Use hazard warning lights whilst pupils are boarding or alighting.
- The safety of the passenger is your responsibility – ensure that vehicle doors are closed unless the vehicle is at a complete standstill. Children should not operate doors and if a drop off that requires a road crossing is unavoidable, they should be supervised across the road.
- Make sure that passengers (and any bags or luggage/equipment) are secured appropriately before the vehicle moves off, and that passengers are comfortable e.g. not too hot or cold. Passenger assistants and drivers should also be wearing their seat belts.
- Vehicles must be driven carefully and in accordance with the Highway Code. Mobile phones must not be used by drivers unless they are hands free.
- Passenger assistants must sit where they can best supervise and engage with children during the journey. Many children have long journeys and need the reassurance of being able to communicate with the passenger assistants.

At the end of the journey

- Whenever possible arrive at school or the drop off location at the agreed time. If it is not possible to keep to your schedule, for example due to long term road works, then notify the council's transport unit. Do not change pick up times or drop off times without agreement of the council's transport staff.
- Please follow the school/college's directions regarding arrangements for drop off and pick up at schools. Many schools have limited car parking areas and there is considerable congestion so they appreciate drivers helping to minimise this.
- Make sure that children are handed over to either a member of school staff or a parent/carer. Ensure that medication/information is handed over appropriately.
- Check that pupils have not left belongings/equipment/bags etc on the vehicle, and that they don't run back to get them. Any lost property should be handed to the school or, if it is known whose it is, to them on the next journey.

Procedures for Emergencies / Incidents

Absent parents

If a parent or an agreed adult is not available to meet the child at the drop off location then you should:

1. Telephone the council's transport unit who will then endeavour to contact the parent
2. Continue to operate the service to ensure other children are not late and await further instructions
3. Return to your depot and the council will arrange for the parent to collect the child from there
4. If the parents cannot be contacted contractors will be provided with the Duty Officer contact for social services to make arrangements for the child.

Other concerns about child welfare

If a child is persistently not ready to be picked up, or you have any other concerns about the welfare of a child please report concerns immediately to the council's transport staff.

As someone working with children and young people you are in a valuable role to ensure their safety and to watch out for signs of neglect, abuse or harm. Please look out for:

- Any physical signs of abuse or neglect, which could include bruises, burns or poor hygiene
- Behavioural signs such as changes to their demeanour – e.g. a usually chatty child becoming very withdrawn, or age inappropriate sexualised behaviour
- A child telling you something of concern

Inclement weather

Contractors and drivers as all motorists are expected to have vehicles as prepared for winter conditions ensuring vehicles are adequately maintained, fuelled etc.

During bad weather it is the driver's decision, in conjunction with the council, as to whether or not you operate a school transport service. If it is agreed that a route will not operate, please contact parents and the school as soon as possible.

If you are already operating a route and the weather deteriorates, again please contact the transport unit who can reprioritise gritting or supply of 4x4 vehicles if necessary. Wherever possible please keep the school/parents informed.

Pupils should not be allowed to leave the vehicle or be left on a vehicle unaccompanied.

Parent /colleague abuse

The vast majority of parents/carers are supportive and will be keen to work with drivers and passenger assistants to ensure a good school transport service. However, there may be occasions where either parents or other adults are abusive or their behaviour is unacceptable. If a parent is abusive or makes allegations do not confront them, explain they should contact the council's transport unit and make their complaint in writing.

Please report any unacceptable behaviour towards you. All school transport staff should expect to be able to do their job without fear or intimidation and the council will support you.

Misbehaviour

Where possible children's misbehaviour should be managed for example ensuring that parents/pupils are aware of what is expected, by rewarding good behaviour, seating pupils where they can be supervised appropriately etc can all help.

However, if there are any incidents of misbehaviour please report them to the school immediately on arrival if this occurs on a morning journey. Under no circumstances should a child be refused transport or removed from a vehicle. If a situation is so serious that there is concern about pupils' safety or a member of staff's safety then the police should be contacted.

Sickness/illness

Many children with special needs will have complex needs, and may from time to time be ill on a journey to or from school. Passenger assistants and drivers should ensure that they are aware of their passengers' likely needs and things that may trigger reactions such as nut allergies etc. If a child is seriously ill on a journey to or from school the driver may:

- Call 999 for paramedic assistance. Drivers will need to ensure that they have their exact location, contact details, and information about the child readily to hand; or
- Return to either the child's home/or to school if that is more appropriate.
- Ensure other passengers are reassured and safe.

In all circumstances as soon as practicable the council's transport staff should be contacted so that other parents can be advised their child will be late, the school notified and alternative transport arrangements made for other passengers.

Schools' / Colleges' Responsibilities

- Schools have a key role to play, especially in special needs transport. It is helpful to have a named member of staff who can be the main contact for operators and for the local authority regarding all transport arrangements.
- Please ensure that the council's transport staff have any relevant information about pupils' needs and transport abilities – especially when these change.
- Notify the council's transport unit of proposed INSET, school closure days prior to the start of an academic year, or as soon as possible so that transport expenditure is not incurred.
- Schools are asked to support and make all parents, pupils and staff aware of the Welsh Assembly Government's Travel Behaviour Code, and ensure there is consistent support in enforcing good behaviour on school transport. It is helpful for passenger assistants and drivers to be aware of how misbehaviour should be handled with those pupils where behaviour may be the result of specific needs.
- Schools are asked to ensure that contractors are aware of any arrangements regarding boarding/alighting or handover of pupils, and that this is also provided to the council's transport unit. They are also asked to assist in making sure that school entrances are not blocked by inappropriate parent/staff parking at school start/finish times.
- Schools should ensure that staff are available to receive pupils in the morning and supervise them departing in the afternoon.

- From time to time the council's transport unit staff will undertake checks on school transport vehicles/drivers and escorts. However, they are unable to observe arrangements on a daily basis. Schools can assist by providing information to the council's transport unit about, for example:
 - Persistent late running
 - Unacceptable vehicles/equipment
 - Escorts/driver behaviour
 - Exemplary service /good practice

