

Home to School Transport Provision

Guidance Covid 19 Emergency

Version 1 June 2020



Covid-19 Emergency – Information & Advice for Home to School Transport Provision from 1st June 2020

Dear All

Thank you for the understanding and patience you have shown during this difficult time. Most of us are learning new skills to deal with this terrible virus and applying them every day in both our work and in our home lives.

We greatly appreciate all the support and effort from school transport operators, school staff and our other partners in these difficult times and we are always here to support you.

I would like to express my admiration for those operators and staff who have continued to provide transport for vulnerable pupils over the past few months.

The good news is that the measures seem to be working but we must keep going until this virus is beaten.

This document sets out principles and ambitions for reset and recovery for schools in Staffordshire and is subject to constant review.

We are working in partnership with schools and colleagues within our education strategy team to develop a consistent approach to enable schools to interpret and implement the latest government guidance in preparation for early years, schools and further education settings changes from 1 June at the earliest, ahead of confirmation that the government's 5 key tests have been met.

The approach we have taken is based on the following principles:

- The highest priority and consideration are the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, school staff, transport staff and other key stakeholders.
- A collaborative approach between schools and trusts, parents, Staffordshire County Council and its Home to School Transport Operators.
- A spirit of supporting each other during these unprecedented times to find solutions to the challenges we face in delivering transport to our students.

Background

In response to the global Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic emergency, the UK Government restricted access to UK schools from 20th March 2020 with provision made to cater for the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils.

In preparation for a phased re-opening of schools, and subject to further guidance from the UK Government, Staffordshire County Council's Home to School Transport Team will begin re-activation based on the guidance below.

Specifically, the UK Government announced on 10th May 2020 that Primary School Reception Class and Year Group 1 and 6 pupils will return to school on 1st June 2020, with other year groups returning later.

Government guidance for specialist schools and special post-16 establishments is to work towards a phased return of more children and young people without a focus on specific year groups and informed by risk assessments.

From September 2020 it is possible that most primary and secondary pupils will return. The Government have emphasised that these plans are conditional on progress in containing the coronavirus and may be changed.

The plans outlined below set out how provided school transport in Staffordshire is to resume and these plans will be updated and re-circulated as the return to school programme progresses.

This guidance should be read and adopted by all Council passenger transport contractors/operators, schools and parents.

It's important to know that Government guidelines are constantly changing in order to meet the challenges so it's important for all parties to follow the links provided in this document (Headed General Guidance) to ensure they have the most up to date information.

So, for any queries please contact the teams using the following contact details

For Mainstream schools please email student.transport@staffordshire.gov.uk

For SEN schools please email Covid19TransportGuidance@staffordshire.gov.uk

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General Guidance re: Covid-19

1. Operators should be aware of general UK Government advice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

2. Drivers, Passenger Assistants and pupils should not travel on transport if they are feeling unwell, particularly if they have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) which include a new, continuous cough, high temperature, or loss of taste or smell, or if they live in a household with someone showing any of these symptoms – they should self-isolate and stay at home.
3. For staff who live in the same household as someone who is at '*High risk (clinically extremely vulnerable)*', Public Health England say that the rest of the household do not need to start shielding themselves, but they should stay at home as much as possible - operators and drivers need to consider this advice and their own circumstances before deciding how, when and if they are deployed.
4. The Government's specific Covid-19 advice for staff in the transport sector should be followed as far as reasonably practicable and can be viewed at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector/covid-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector>

5. The Government guidance to educational settings can be viewed at the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

6. Special Education Needs Disability Transport (whether by taxi or accessible bus) should take account of the ambulance trusts' procedures for transporting someone without covid-19 symptoms where social distancing is not possible shown at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-ambulance-trusts/covid-19-guidance-for-ambulance-trusts>

Making Transport Arrangements

7. It is particularly important that the transport unit is informed by school's which entitled pupils are returning and require transport with confirmation of their transport arrival/departure times at the school site. It is expected that schools will first confirm family's willingness to allow the child to return and for transport to be provided.
8. We understand that some schools may stagger these times to reduce site congestion.
9. It should be noted that given the social distancing restrictions on transport discussed elsewhere in this guidance, delivering the required transport maybe difficult or not possible. If this is the case the transport team will discuss this situation directly with the school to stipulate the limitations and advise on the availability of the transport offer. This may require a degree of flexibility in an attempt to try and achieve any potential solutions
10. Consideration will be given where there are vehicle capacity problems to larger, additional or extra vehicles, but their supply is limited and priority will be given based on risk assessments e.g. If a passenger has severe health conditions.
11. 'Double tripping' could be offered for shorter routes but is unlikely to be viable on longer distance routes, vehicle cleaning protocols must take precedent.

Where increased costs are identified this will need to be signed off and logged by the transport unit. As a result there may be a delay in confirming provision.

Schools will be unable to instruct operators directly.

12. The transport unit will then contact transport operators about providing the required transport. It's appreciated that not all pupils from designated year groups may require transport. Schools are not to contact operators directly.
13. It is not expected that transport will be provided, or vehicles carry any known or possible Covid-19 positive passengers.
14. Schools should identify pupils that are known to spit or cough frequently or may require medical intervention. The additional Health & Safety implications will need to be considered when formulating transport offers therefore the school's own risk assessment would be taken into account.
15. Where pupils/passengers do not behave in accordance with transport guidance and/or generate an unacceptable safety risk to staff, contractors must report concerns to the transport team immediately using the contact information provided within this document.
16. Given the restriction on carrying capacities, Temporary Vacant Seats will only be accommodated this academic year if capacity allows. It is uncertain if this scheme will be able to operate in September 2020 under present guidance arrangements, however this will be reviewed as the situation progresses.

17. Parents are encouraged to assist with home to school transport provision where they can in these exceptional times in order to assist with capacity. If parents are able to transport their children please advise the school.

General Hygiene

18. Frequent hand washing and distancing is the most effective way to keep yourself and everyone else safe. Washing hands for 20 seconds with warm soapy water or anti-bacterial lotion is best, if this is not available use anti-bacterial hand sanitiser.

19. Avoid direct hand contact with eyes, nose and mouth, and use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes (or at least to cough/sneeze into the crook of their elbow) disposing of tissues in a bin as soon as possible.

20. Operators should ensure that all touch points on school transport vehicles have been cleaned with anti-bacterial spray/wipes to protect against Coronavirus/Covid-19 prior to and after every new journey – this includes door handles, keys, handrails, armrests, seat backs, seatbelts, driver controls, etc.

21. On-board disposable cleaning fluids/cloths/disposal gloves and a suitable secure on-board bin for disposal of any cleaning items, tissues or PPE, for in-journey use, should be provided by the contractor for their staff's use.

22. Operators should provide good vehicle ventilation when carrying passengers this could be as simple as keeping windows open.

23. The same driver should be used for the operation of the contract unless exceptional operational circumstances make that impossible on a given occasion.

Social Distancing on transport

24. Wherever possible drivers and passengers will maintain at least a 2m separation between themselves. In order to achieve this, it may be necessary to;

- Prevent seats alongside or immediately to rear of driver to be out of use.
- Eliminating the use of face-to-face passenger seating
- Reduce the availability of seats with one passenger in each row of seats, staggered nearside/offside.
- Passengers from same household will be an exception and will be allowed to sit together.

Capacity will depend on the exact layout of the seats on the vehicle, but typical examples include (see appendix 2 for a visual representation).

Normal seating capacity of vehicle	Available seating capacity of vehicle	Recommended number of passengers & placement on vehicle
4 seat saloons	Driver + 1	1 passenger, seated rear nearside
6 seat people carrier	Driver + 2	2 passengers from separate households, 1 seated in middle row nearside and 1 in rear offside.
8 seat minibus	Driver + 2	2 passengers from separate households, 1 seated in middle row nearside and 1 in rear offside.
10 seat minibus	Driver + 2	2 passengers from separate households, 1 seated in penultimate row nearside and 1 in rear offside.
14/15 seat minibus	Driver + 3	3 passengers from separate households, 1 seated in first usable nearside, then others 1 per row staggered offside / nearside.
16/17 seat minibus	Driver + 4	4 passengers from separate households, 1 seated in first usable nearside, then others 1 per row staggered offside / nearside. Increased with various household group seating permutations
Coaches and buses	Varies	Typically, 25% seats usable, 1 per row, with front row of coaches seated only on nearside to preserve separation from driver.

25. To maintain on-vehicle social distancing protocols, only entitled pupils whose parents have notified their school that transport will be allowed to travel on the school bus/taxi. List will be issued by the Transport Unit and should not be accepted directly from schools or parents.
26. Passenger assistants where required could reduce capacity, school staff would be required to judge whether a pupil can travel without one.
27. Where pupils/passengers do not behave in accordance with transport guidance and/or generate an unacceptable safety risk to staff, this must be communicated to the school transport team immediately for consideration.

The use of PPE

28. PPE is a scarce resource and should only be used where indicated below.

29. Wherever possible staff will maintain at least a 2m separation between themselves and passengers. In this circumstance PPE is not required.
30. In certain situations, it may be necessary to be closer than the recommended guidance, for example if fastening seatbelts, securing wheelchairs or providing other assistance to passengers. In these cases, face coverings should be worn.
31. Wearing protective gloves and aprons whilst dealing with multiple passengers is a highly effective way of spreading contamination and must be avoided.
32. The most effective way of protecting oneself is good hygiene and frequent hand cleaning. Washing hands for 20 seconds with warm soapy water is best, if this is not available use hand sanitiser.
33. Operators should provide facilities to safely dispose of any PPE if it is contaminated and straight after use.
34. At the end of their shift, drivers and Passenger Assistants (PAs) should minimise possible contamination before entering their own home – key things to do include washing with soap and water, and isolating clothes and personal effects in a box prior to cleaning.
35. Gloves and Aprons are only for use if you are dealing with bodily fluids such as saliva or mucous or perhaps if a passenger has been sick. They are not needed if you are simply guiding a passenger to a seat or fastening seat belts. Good hand hygiene is all that is needed in these cases.
36. Hand washing or sanitising hand gel must be used between applications of PPE.

Vehicle Boarding & Alighting

37. Pupils waiting for buses should do so safely and 2 metres apart, this is a parental responsibility at the home end and school responsibility on the school site.
38. Boarding buses should be done one at a time and 2 metres apart – the vacant seat nearest the rear of the bus must be used first – boarding from the rear of the vehicle to the front for the school bound journey. For the home bound journey pupils should board in order of drop off with those with the longest journey boarding first taking seats at the rear of the vehicle with those being dropped off first at the front of the vehicle seated in drop off order to avoid unnecessarily passing seated pupils when using the vehicle aisle.
39. Alighting buses should be undertaken one at a time, from the most forward seats first, with pupils staying 2 metres apart, working back in turn to the rear seats this

should ensure that pupils walking down the aisle do not pass any other seated pupils.

40. Where a PSV is fitted with a near-side middle entrance, this should be used for loading or unloading in preference to the front passenger entrance. A “continental” door fitted to the off-side of a PSV must not be used due to the risks associated with loading/unloading on the offside of a vehicle
41. Where primary school pupils have difficulty fitting seat belts themselves, the driver should offer verbal guidance and support from a safe distance.

Site Management Arrangements

42. Headteachers have a responsibility to share site management arrangements with operator and school transport team staff.
43. These site management arrangements must be adhered to by drivers, passenger assistants and pupils.
44. Use social distancing where possible in a school site where multiple vehicles may be boarding and alighting. Consideration should be given to staggering departure times to assist.
45. When pupils are boarding drivers may stand off the bus 2 metres away from boarding pupils/passengers; drivers should not congregate; schools may wish to supervise on-site alighting/boarding.

Additional Covid-19 Guidance for Special Educational Needs Transport

46. Where taxi transport is provided for one pupil with a passenger assistant, it will be difficult to maintain social distancing protocols, so this transport may not operate; in these circumstances, alternative arrangements will be made where possible.
47. The passenger assistant should be allocated one of the seats in the seating plan outlined below (see appendix 2) and not sit beside a pupil/passenger.
48. If there is a specific physical, behavioural or medical need the passenger assistant should sit close to, but not next to the relevant pupil/passenger. The PA may need to intervene if there is a specific in-journey incident. Appropriate PPE should be worn.
49. At pick up points, where staff receive passengers from their parents/carers, social distancing guidance must be adhered to and PPE, alcohol hand sanitiser and cleaning deployed appropriately straight before and after passenger handover has occurred; keep a maximum distance from and minimum time with parents/carers - there should be no physical contact with their doors, gates or parent/carer property or belongings

50. An additional risk assessment should be carried out in partnership between schools and transport staff where circumstances change or where there are additional issues present.
51. For pupils/passengers who may require rescue medication it may be necessary to seek support from NHS Nursing Staff within schools because of the potential infection risks that this may cause.
52. If the PA needs to fasten a passenger's seat belt/harness, this should be done with minimal physical contact, wearing appropriate PPE.
53. When applying or removing fluid resistant face masks or other PPE, it is important that the wearer's hands are washed/cleansed before and after each use
54. If drivers or PAs must manoeuvre wheelchairs, they should clean the wheelchair handles and brake levers prior to pushing the wheelchair. Likewise, if installing car seats or booster seats, clean the hard surface areas (e.g. outer shell, buckles) before installing in the vehicle and clean them after use – for these tasks PPE should be worn, and this should include disposable gloves and fluid resistant face masks/face visors
55. Proper planning and the use of appropriate PPE will be needed for wheelchair users and those with disabilities where handling and sustained contact may be required for getting on and off vehicles, as in the ambulance procedure
56. Any unnecessary moving and handling or close sustained contact with the pupil/passenger will be avoided
57. If pupils or passengers present an unacceptable safety risk to staff or other pupils/ passengers, the Council reserves the right to withdraw transport without notice. Transport cannot be refused should a passenger refuse to wear a face covering.

What to do if a passenger displays symptoms

58. If anyone becomes unwell with the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) in a transport or school setting they must be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance.
59. If they need clinical advice, they should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care Centre or a hospital.
60. If a member of staff or a passenger has helped someone who was taken unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.

61. It is not necessary to close the transport setting or send any staff home unless government policy changes.
62. Transport will not be provided for a pupil who shows symptoms at school and parents will be required to plan for collection.

Local Bus Services (public bus) Covid-19 Guidance

63. Whilst the general principles above will apply, the Government have provided specific guidance for the use of public transport and this should be adhered to.

The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#public-transport>

Appendix 1 – F.A.Q

Should pupils use hand gel on transport?

- Parents and teachers should encourage pupils to wash their hands or use hand gel before and after travel.
- The best option is for all passengers to wash their hands fully before getting on the vehicle as washing hands doesn't dry skin out like gel does.
- Depending on the passenger the use of hand gel might not always be possible or desirable if they have sensitive skin or allergies.

Should pupils wear face coverings?

- If the 2m social distancing cannot be maintained on transport, then a face covering should be worn by the driver and passenger assistant.
- Operators cannot refuse to transport pupils who do not wear a face covering.

I'm a driver when should I wash my hands?

- You should wash your hands (or use hand gel) frequently, especially before entering and after leaving a building or vehicle.
- If required to assist a passenger hand gel should be used both before and after.

When do I use PPE?

- PPE is not needed where staff remain at least 2m from the passenger.
- Face coverings should be worn when you will be working within 2m of a passenger. This will be most of the time for PAs and occasionally for drivers. Masks can be worn for the whole of a journey but should be disposed of as soon as they are removed, they should not be reused.
- Wearing protective gloves and aprons whilst dealing with multiple passengers is a highly effective way of spreading contamination and must be avoided. The most effective way of protecting oneself is good hygiene and frequent hand cleaning. Washing hands for 20 seconds with warm soapy water is best, if this is not available use hand sanitiser.
- Gloves and Aprons are for only for use for if you are dealing with bodily fluids such as saliva or mucous or perhaps if a passenger has been sick. They are not needed if you are simply guiding a passenger to a seat or fastening seat belts. Good hand hygiene is all that is needed in these cases.

- Hand washing or sanitising hand gel must be used between applications of PPE.

Where can I obtain PPE?

- PPE should be available from your employer.

How do I dispose of used PPE?

- Used PPE items must be placed in a waste sack, which in turn must be placed in a second waste sack (double bagged). This must then be kept safely for 72 hours after which it can be put into general waste bins for final disposal.
- Used PPE disposed of in this way is not "clinical waste" therefore yellow clinical waste sacks should not be used as it may be refused by authorised waste handlers.

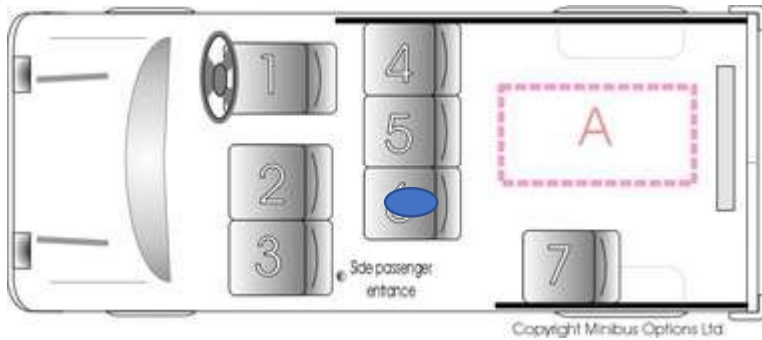
What can we do while travelling?

- Ensure the social distancing guidelines described above are maintained.
- Maintain Good Ventilation by: -
 - Ensuring that the heating system is set to use outside air – **not** to recirculate
 - Keeping windows open where possible.

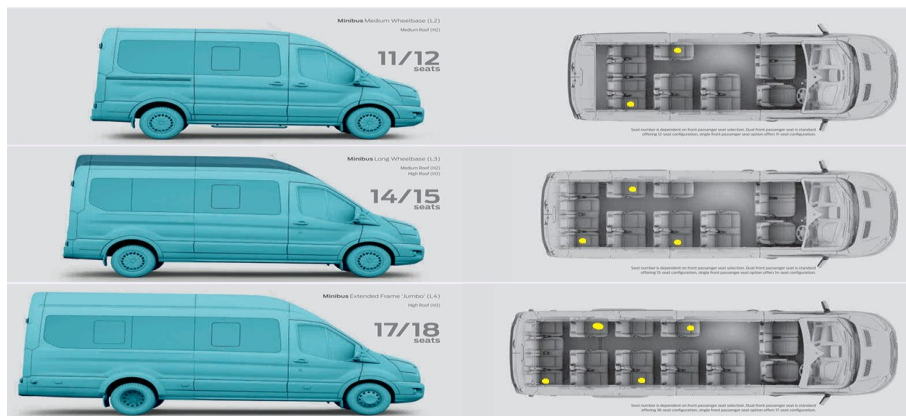
Appendix 2 – Recommendations for Social Distancing on vehicles

Seating arrangements should be in accordance with the principles outlined above, the following diagrams indicate how seating arrangements could be provided, with the coloured dots indicating the only seats to be occupied:

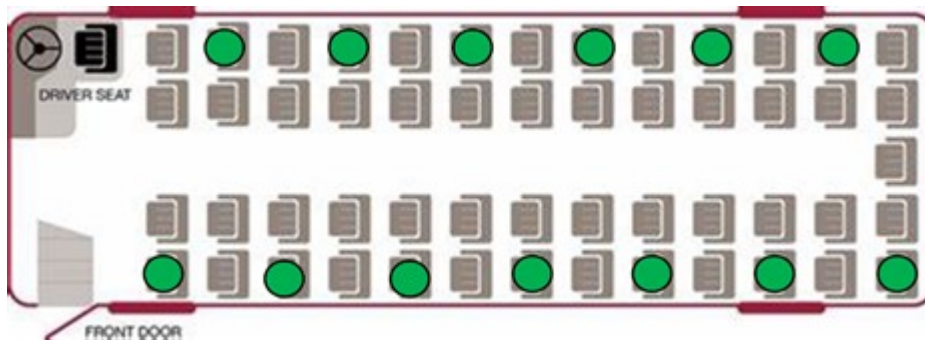
Wheelchair Accessible Taxi



Minibuses



Coach



Appendix 3: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Information

We would recommend that operators read and are aware of the PPE information contained on the governments PPE hub which also includes information from the government on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidelines.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

When procuring PPE it is essential to ensure it is to the correct specification. We recommend that you use the government specifications standards detailed in the below link when ordering PPE and request the CE Mark and EN Certification before ordering.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-specifications-for-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

Please also to ensure certification provided by suppliers is legitimate as unfortunately there are counterfeit certification in circulation. The link below will assist you in this process.

<https://www.ukas.com/news/counterfeit-ms-certificates/>

The suppliers Staffordshire County Council have used / are using are as follows:

Type IIR fluid resistant surgical masks	A.D. Merchandising Castle Industrial Supplies Limited
Aprons	Arrow County Supplies Medequip CMT
Gloves	Arrow County Supplies Fluid Branding
Face visors/ eye protection (more effective than glasses/goggles)	Fluid Branding
Sanitising hand gel	Arrow County Supplies CMT

Contact details: -

AD Merchandising Limited – Katie Wiggins / Account Director / katie@admerchandise.co.uk / 0161 848 9800 / 07748 685 998 / www.admerchandise.co.uk / Paragon House, 48 Seymour Grove, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0LN

Arrow County Supplies - Jordan Wainwright / Customer Insight Support / 01743 283603 / 07890514274 / www.arrowcounty.com
Joseph Blackledge / Customer Inside Manager / 01743 283605 / 07468 471344 / Joseph.blackledge@arrowcounty.com

Fluid Branding - Jade Shapcott/ Account Manager / jade.shapcott@fluidbranding.com / www.fluidbranding.com / 0345 634 2935 / 01752 987372 / Unit 2 Faraday Mill Business Park Prince Rock Plymouth PL4 0ST

Castle Industrial Supplies Ltd – Julien Harris – Sales Consultant 01524 734040/
julien@castleindustrial.com

Medequip – Chris Dallender chris.dallender@medequip-uk.com

CMT – James Haughton – Area Sales Manager 020 8311 1144
James.haughton@cmt.co.uk