

Protocol for Primary and Secondary School home to school transport

Children must not travel if showing any symptoms and should follow the national guidance for households with possible COVID-19 infection including testing and self-isolation.

The protocol is to be reviewed with effect from December 2021 or earlier if called for.

1. Context

- 1.1. This protocol is based on guidance from Transport Scotland and The Covid-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues and should be read alongside their arrangements for schools August 2021. The advice is contingent on current levels of infection within Scotland and is subject to change in response to any notification or instruction given by the Scottish Government.

2. Reduction in travel on school transport

- 2.1. As far as it is safe and practicable to do so, children and their parents/carers should be encouraged to travel to school on foot, bike or scooter.

3. Social distancing and Face Covering

- 3.1. There will need to be flexibility in the use of this advice and variation between areas depending on transmission in their local community. This could mean that further distancing or face coverings may be required on transport if prevalence of Covid-19 increases.
- 3.2. All passengers aged 12 years or above are to wear face coverings on transport (unless exempt). This does not apply to children aged under 12 years (please note that the regulations apply to age and not school year group).
- 3.3. Children will not be expected to practice physical distancing from each other.
- 3.4. Pupils from different schools may share transport and zoning is not required.

- 3.5. It is recommended that drivers and other staff on school transport maintain social distancing where this is possible and that pupils should be supported to understand that, where possible, it is safer to keep a distance from other people.
- 3.6. It is accepted that for the welfare and safety of children with Additional Support Needs, it may not always be possible for escorts to social distance from the children in their care. In these situations, the school will undertake a risk assessment.
- 3.7. In vehicles where a screen has been installed, children may sit directly behind the driver.
- 3.8. The front seats in cars and minibuses, next to the driver, are to be out of use to maintain social distancing. In larger vehicles, where a passenger seat is over 1m from the driver, this can be used. At times there may be exceptional circumstances whereby transport in the front seat may be allowed with special authorisation from the Transport Officer.
- 3.9. Where a vehicle does not have a screen between the passengers and the driver, there should be a social distance of 1m between the driver and the nearest passenger.
- 3.10. Where vehicles are used for one school and then go on to serve another school (where children are not mixing), operators are to maintain high cleanliness standards and clean all handles and regularly touched areas before picking up the second set of pupils.

4. Boarding and alighting

Drivers are to be responsible for opening and closing passenger doors; this reduces the number of contacts with the door handles.

5. Seatbelts and car seats

To avoid close proximity between driver and children, parents to be asked to encourage their children to put seatbelts on themselves, so far as possible. Where assistance is required (likely to be youngest children), the parent/ responsible adult should be encouraged to assist when boarding at home (as the first children to board will be seated at the rear, there should be no need for parents to pass other children to carry this out). When boarding at the school, the school staff may be able to assist as required (again loading and securing children at the rear of the vehicle first). However, the legal responsibility of drivers of non-PSV vehicles to ensure seatbelts are worn properly is unchanged; normally a visual check should be sufficient.

6. Parent-provided Equipment

Parent-provided equipment such as car seats and booster seats are to be cleaned before entering the vehicle. Parents are to be responsible for this cleaning in the

morning. Each afternoon all plastic and metal areas of parent-provided equipment are to be wiped down again with disinfectant before being returned to the vehicle for the homeward journey.

7. Ventilation

Maintaining good ventilation within vehicles reduces the chances of transmission.

Ventilate vehicle with opened windows wherever possible (but be aware of need to avoid risk of children leaning out of windows etc).

Operate extractor systems where available.

Do not set controls to recirculate air.

8. Cleaning

All driver areas are to be cleaned with a disinfectant at least daily. If more than one driver utilises the vehicle, then cleaning should take place between driver changes as well as daily. If there are facilities to steam clean a vehicle, this can be utilised.

Hard surface areas that are utilised or touched by passengers should be wiped down with disinfectant or hot soapy water **before and after each trip**.

Drivers are to focus in particular on the inside and outside door handles as well as the steering wheel and dashboard when cleaning the driver's cabin. Focus on metal, plastic and other hard parts of head restraints, armrests, seatbelts and handrails when cleaning the interior of the vehicle.

If possible, wear disposable gloves and aprons when cleaning the vehicle and remove and dispose of these safely before moving onto any other work. If gloves are not available, make sure that your hands are washed thoroughly with soap and water or use disinfectant hand sanitiser.

If a face covering, or any rubbish, is found on the vehicle after the children have alighted, this is to be bagged and disposed of safely. The same rule applies whether it is an expensive reusable face covering or a single-use mask.

9. Hygiene

9.1. Driver

All drivers are to maintain good hygiene practices, washing their hands frequently or using hand sanitiser. Hands are to be cleaned every time the driver enters or leaves the vehicle.

Transport staff must wear face coverings when loading, securing and unloading wheelchairs or car seats and may choose to do so while driving. Where face coverings are required drivers are to use them safely:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- Change and wash your face covering daily.
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it in your usual waste, making sure it is securely bagged.

9.2. **Passengers**

All children are to maintain good hygiene practices, washing their hands often and using hand sanitiser before boarding transport.

Children aged 12 years or above must wear face coverings when travelling on transport (unless medically exempt) and are to follow the advice below:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- Face coverings should be bagged separately while at school (do not allow contact with books etc)
- A clean face-covering should be used for the return journey.

Parents are to provide face coverings for their children and drivers are not expected to have disposable face coverings on board for children who have forgotten or misplaced theirs. Schools **may** have additional supplies for these scenarios. Please remember that children without face coverings are not to be refused travel.

10. **PPE - other**

Disposable gloves and aprons to be considered when cleaning the vehicle between journeys.

11. **Personal belongings**

Children to minimise the transport of bags etc on transport and are not to carry large musical instruments or art equipment.

12. Carriage of passengers with symptoms

Any child, young person or other learner who starts displaying coronavirus symptoms while at their setting should wherever possible be collected by a member of their family or household.

In **exceptional** circumstances, where this is not possible, and where a symptomatic child or young person or other passenger needs to be transported to their home, you should do the following:

- If possible use a vehicle with a full height partition screen between the driver and the passenger;
- The driver and passenger should maintain a distance of 2 metres from each other;
- The driver should use PPE (face mask as opposed to face covering);
- The passenger should wear a face mask if they are able to do so;
- No other child is to travel in the vehicle;
- An escort may travel if required but must wear PPE and maintain distancing where possible.

13. Use of consistent driver

The same driver should be used for the operation of the contract unless operational circumstances make that impossible on a given occasion. The vehicle must be cleaned between any change of driver.

14. Seating Plans

Schools are encouraged to provide seating plans for their pupils and forward these to contractors so that children are kept in particular bubbles and remain in the same seats for each journey. In a situation where a case of Covid is identified, this also provides better information as to which children were in closest proximity.

Contractors are asked to support schools that have chosen to continue with seating plans by reminding children about where to sit and by trying to avoid changes to the vehicle used where possible.

15. Lateral Flow Testing

Drivers on home to school transport are eligible to participate in the home testing scheme. Details of the scheme have been sent to operators who will be able to collect kits from schools by prior arrangement, however it must be noted that participation in the scheme is voluntary. Tests can also be collected from other locations or ordered on line. Please see the Scottish Government website at

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): getting tested in Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/covid-19/getting-tested) for further details.

16. Other

In a small number of cases reduced social distancing, or variations to other mitigating factors will be required for the health and welfare of the child (for example, when close contact with a transport escort is required). In these cases, THC Transport Officer will provide further instructions.