

Mainstream home to school transport – Covid-19 update – Passenger Etiquette guide

This guidance is effective from 1 September 2020 for Cheshire West and Chester Council provided school and college transport during the autumn term 2020, and more widely the use of public transport by students travelling to and from school or college.

It is essential that this guidance is distributed to every parent and carer to keep transported students as safe as possible.

Further information on home to school transport during the pandemic can be found on the Council's webpages: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/news-and-views/incidents/coronavirus-covid-19/services/schools.aspx>

General advice to parents and carers

- To help keep your child and fellow students safe, your child should not travel if they are experiencing any [coronavirus symptoms \(the main symptoms are\)](#):
- - **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
 - **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
 - **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal
- Students must not travel if they are self-isolating as a result of coronavirus symptoms or sharing a [household or support bubble with somebody with symptoms](#)
- They are a confirmed case of coronavirus and have been advised to self-isolate
- Social distancing should be maintained while queuing, boarding and alighting a vehicle where possible.

Parent / Carers must ensure their child is aware of this guide and it is imperative that pupils understand the importance of complying with this information for transport to continue to be provided safely.

Good hygiene before and during the journey

Students must sanitize their hands before boarding any vehicle. Sanitizer will be available on all buses for children to use before entering and upon exiting the vehicle. It is also recommended that children carry their own pocket size hand sanitizers.

Your child should be made aware of the need for good hygiene e.g. if sneezing or coughing use a tissue – used tissues must not be left on the vehicle and should be put in a covered bin after use.

All children must be aware of the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach. Parent / carers are asked to ensure pupils carry tissues on home to school transport. These will need to be disposed of in a covered bin as soon as possible.

Transport operators are required to clean frequently touched surfaces after each journey and carry out enhanced cleaning at the end of each day.

Transport operators must ensure good ventilation of fresh air wherever possible by keeping windows or roof lights open.

Face coverings

It is now the law that children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering on public transport.

- A local decision has been taken in conjunction with the Council's Public Health Team that requires all students, of all ages, to wear face coverings on mainstream home to school transport.
- In line with the guidance, exemptions do apply such as for those pupils who are unable to safely wear/ use a face covering.
- **Face coverings are not mandated for pupils travelling on Special Education Needs (SEN) transport.**

There are exceptions for passengers not to wear face-covering if they fall into the following categories:

- Very young children (defined as those children aged 3 and below)
- Pupils attending school and who are eligible under the Special Educational Needs (SEN) criteria of the Home to School Transport policy-
<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/education-and-learning/schools/school-transport/school-and-college-transport/home-to-school-transport-policy-and-appendices/guidance-notes/guidance-note-sen-transport-may-2016.pdf> .
- Those with respiratory illnesses, as diagnosed and treated by medical professionals.
- Exemption cards are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>
- A face-covering is defined as:

"Face coverings are not the same as face masks. It is important that people do not use medical grade PPE masks to ensure these remain available for frontline staff. These face

*coverings should cover the mouth and nose while allowing the wearer to breathe comfortably and can be as simple as a **scarf** or **bandana** that ties behind the head to give a snug fit."*

For further information on making a face covering follow:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-facecovering>

- Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on their face covering and after taking it off.

The Council believe this in an appropriate approach, because:

- the overall risk to children and young people of serious illness as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low
- they do not mix with the general public on those journeys
- home to school transport often carries the same group of children and young people on a regular basis, and they may also be together in school or college
- the predictability of home to school transport will allow for planning so that protective measures can be put in place (such as track and trace).

Social distancing prior to boarding and alighting buses

Pupils should be aware of the need to social distance while waiting for the bus to arrive in the morning.

Pupils are required to load the vehicle in bus stop order, from back to front, in the morning. Children must return to the seat they chose to sit in the afternoon as this will be classified as your allocated seat.

Pupils should sit with the same constant group of children each day. This means they must board the bus and stop stated on their pass. This is imperative for 'Test and Trace' purposes.

For Test and Trace purposes, drivers must be able to advise who has travelled on each date by marking off pupils on their passenger list and making sure they each go to their allocated seat (i.e. the rearmost seat).

This approach is to assist in the sharing of information with the Council's Public Health Team if a student on board is confirmed with COVID-19. If children sit in the same places, with the same people around them, **at all times**, this reduces the number of children that would have to isolate if there is confirmed case of COVID-19. i.e. – if information was not reliable then the whole vehicle could potentially have to isolate rather than a select few that have been classified as a close contact.

Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected individual.

When the vehicle arrives, pupils will not be able to board as they have done previously. Pupils will need to ensure they adhere to driver instruction to allow each pupil to board individually. Pupils must use the rearmost available seat. Parent/ carers should ensure their child is aware that unfortunately sitting next to a friend is not possible at the current time. In some cases, pupils from the same household may be able to sit together where the vehicle arrangement allows it. Pupils must remain seated for the duration of the journey.

Arriving at school

Once the vehicle has arrived at school, pupils must remain in their seat until the driver advises otherwise. The driver will verbally advise the student in the seat nearest the front of the bus to depart first, followed by the next nearest to the front, and so on, allowing pupils to depart whilst respecting social distancing.

The same procedure will take place for the afternoon route, with school staff assisting with social distancing prior to boarding and pupils seated so that those alighting at the first stop, sit at the front of the bus.

Passenger Behavioural Summary

Passengers should wear face coverings at all times unless they are exempt from wearing one.

Passengers must not place their bags on seats to avoid other pupils sitting down.

Passenger must board the vehicle and sit next to those that are allocated to the same bus stop as them.

Passengers must not save seats for their friends, that are allocated different pick up points, as this will affect our ability to ensure the least amount of people possible isolate if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Passengers must sit when there are seats available on buses (no standing is allowed).

Passengers must act in a respectful way and distance from the driver when boarding and alighting. This is to ensure continuity of drivers and sustainability of operators to carry out work.

Managing issues of non-compliance

Most pupils are complying with the protocols provided i.e. boarding at their stop and sitting at the rearmost seat, and wearing a face covering.

However, in a small number of cases, there has been reports of pupils moving around the bus to sit with friends, choosing to stand where seats are available, making seats unavailable by putting bags on seats and removing face coverings on the journey.

To make the journey as safe as possible for all passengers:

- In the first instance, we are reminding all parent/ carers and pupils of the need to wear a face covering, sit at the rearmost seat, board and alight as instructed by the driver and wear their face covering for the duration of the journey.
- If the driver does note issues of for example, passengers removing their face covering after boarding the vehicle, names of those pupils will be provided to the school. Schools are working in partnership with the Council's Transport Commissioning team to facilitate safe travel and pupils will be spoken to by school staff.
- If larger numbers of pupils attempt to move around the bus, stand up, or remove face coverings during the journey, drivers may be asked to turn the bus back and return to the school for support and this will affect the times of others arriving home.
- If pupils continue to refuse to comply with the above protocols, the Council's Transport Commissioning team will review the situation and take further action as necessary to facilitate safe travel.

Transport protocols are based on the latest Department for Education Home to School Transport Guidance which states:

'The [home to school travel and transport statutory guidance](#) sets out our expectation that schools should promote appropriate standards of behaviour by pupils on their journey to and from school.

The [guidance for schools on returning in the autumn term](#) sets out that schools should consider updating their behaviour policies with any new rules and policies. This may include rules relating to behaviour on the way to and from school. It also includes the consequences for poor behaviour and deliberately breaking the rules and how they will enforce those rules, including any sanctions.'

Summary for Parents/ Carers:

- Please encourage children to walk or cycle to school where possible.
- Parent/ Carers must ensure that their child does not travel if they or anyone in their household has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Parent/ Carers to ensure that their children understand any arrangements for queuing for and getting on home to school transport, and where they should sit in the vehicle.

- Parent/ Carers to ensure that their children understand when they will be expected to wear face coverings on home to school transport.
- Parent/ Carers to be aware that bus drivers are not mandated to wear a face covering but many may choose to do so.
- Driver must focus primarily on the safe driving of the vehicle. This means that they are not able to police behaviour on the vehicle during the journey and will need the support of parents, school and Transport Commissioning to do so.