

## **FAQ's Home to School Transport – Parents & Carers**

### **Q. Should I take my own child to school rather than use school transport?**

Yes, where this is possible. Government advice is that where possible, parents and carers are encouraged to take children to school by walking or cycling, or alternatively by private car, rather than using public transport.

If you wish to make your own travel arrangements and your child is eligible to receive travel assistance from the Council then we may be able to provide you with funds to support your travel expenses.

If your child is eligible for special educational needs travel assistance we may be able to offer you a personal travel budget (PTB). Further information regarding PTB's is available via the Council's website: <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport/personal-travel-budget.aspx> If you are interested in accepting a PTB please contact the School Planning Team via email:

Schoolplanningandpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

If your child is eligible for mainstream travel assistance we may be able to offer you a mileage allowance. If you are interested in accepting this offer please contact the Transport Commissioning Service on 0300 123 7039.

We understand that this won't be possible for some families. If this is the case and your child is eligible to receive travel assistance from the Council then we will make the necessary travel arrangements.

### **Q. What if I am unable to take my child to school?**

If you usually receive Council provided school transport and still require this from 1 June 2020 you should confirm this with your child's school, who are contacting all parents and carers to confirm likely pupil numbers. The school will then inform the Council's school transport team. The form that this travel assistance takes may be different from previous arrangements due to the significantly reduced capacity on transport and will need to be planned in advance of pupils attending school. In addition, we have also asked schools to let us know whether there will be any changes to the school day, or pattern of attendance, so that we can incorporate any necessary adjustments to the travel arrangements. We will confirm the transport arrangements with you before the school return date.

The Council is working to resume all Council-provided school transport where required and ensure vehicles are thoroughly cleaned. Social distancing on school buses is extremely challenging and we are therefore encouraging all parents to follow government guidance and where possible to take their children to school by walking, cycling or private car.

### **Q. How will safe travel on school transport work in practice?**

We recognise the trust that parent/ carers are putting into transport arrangements working safely. We need to work together to ensure that transport that continues to operate and operates safely.

It is important for parents/carers and children to practice social distancing wherever possible. This means taking the following precautions:

- keep a 2 metre distance from people outside of your own household
- avoid physical contact with others
- face away from other people when using public transport
- keep the time spent near others as short as possible when using public transport
- minimise the number of surfaces you touch
- wash your/your child's hands immediately before boarding transport for at least 20 seconds.
- immediately upon finishing your journey, we recommend hand washing for at least 20 seconds or that you sanitise your hands as soon as possible.
- Ensure that your child does not attend school/ use school transport if they display any of the symptoms of Coronavirus - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>. If your child develops symptoms at school, you will need to make arrangements for your child to be collected.
- Ensure your child is aware that transport arrangements may not replicate what was provided previously. Your child may be allocated a seat on vehicles with reduced capacity. In addition, if regular transport staff are unavailable eg due to displaying symptoms, an alternative Driver or Passenger Assistant may transport your child (please note that ALL Drivers and Passenger Assistants are subject to an enhanced DBS check).
- Where your child requires additional support on the vehicle, there may be a need for a more individual risk assessment.
- A 'Passenger Agreement' will be shared with all parent/ carers in relation to the expected behaviours (appropriate to your child's needs) to make safe travel work. For example, this will include pupils socially distancing at bus stops, and continuing to board, respecting social distance rules for the safety of all. Where pupils do not adhere to that agreement, you may be contacted to collect your child to ensure the safety of remaining pupils.

**Q. What does this mean for students who are not eligible for Travel Assistance for the Council?**

A. Students who are not eligible for travel assistance will not be provided travel assistance from the Council and should be encouraged to walk or cycle to school.

**Q. Will there be any changes to the school transport route?**

Potentially yes. Each school is considering its own local opening arrangements on a phased basis. We are working closely with schools and other educational settings to provide transport that best fits with each of these arrangements. We will confirm the transport arrangements with you before the school return date.

**Q. What if the student normally uses Public Transport either funded by the Council or by parents?**

A. The Council are working with public transport operators to understand available capacity. Where a pupil is eligible for travel assistance and normally uses public transport, the Council will review whether this is still an available option, and where it is not what other options are available.

For any passengers who are not eligible for transport, they will need to review their travel options. Parents may wish to contact the relevant bus company directly. Public transport information can be found by visiting the Traveline website - <https://www.traveline.info/>

**Q. Will school transport have social distancing in place?**

We are working very closely with our transport providers to ensure that as much as possible is done to encourage social distancing, in line with the government guidance. Prior to Covid-19 there was very high demand for home to school transport and as such the majority of our vehicles had fully allocated seats making this a significant challenge.

Officers have worked with transport providers to review contract vehicles, incorporating revised layouts reducing the overall capacity. The revised layouts have been reviewed by the Council's Public Health team and approved.

We are also asking parents to ensure that they consider taking their child to school wherever possible as not only is this in line with government guidance, it will also reduce pressure on the school bus network.

**Q. How will my child know where to sit?**

Seating arrangements will vary dependent on each situation and transport contract.

Special Education Needs contracts will be very specific and your child will be allocated a seat working from the back of the bus at first pick up to the front available seat at last pick up.

For mainstream home to school contracts, unavailable seats will be taped off and pupils will board from the back of the bus at first pick up to the front of the bus at last pick up. Your child will need to travel in the seat available, and it is important that they are aware that they will be unable to travel sitting next to friends as may usually be the case. All pupils must ensure that their bags are stowed at their feet, not on seats.

For travel assistance provided via public transport, we will be asking each transport provider to consider if there are any practical changes they can make on vehicles in light of expected passenger numbers to encourage social distancing, such as cordoning off seats along with maximum passenger numbers to take into account social distancing. Transport providers are asked to recommend any changes and agree with the Council those arrangements in advance.

**Q. What if the student normally travels in a vehicle where social distancing is not practical?**

A. Prior to any transport restarting, all vehicles are being reviewed to ensure they are suitable. This may lead to some changes of vehicle operated.

**Q. What if vehicles become overcrowded?**

We are working closely with our transport providers to monitor vehicle capacity levels to identify maximum capacity. Where necessary we will ask transport providers to make changes and inform schools, parents and carers.

We ask that parents and carers help communicate to students the importance of following social distancing seating changes on vehicles, as this will play a key role in keeping everyone safe.

**Q. What if the student normally has a Passenger Assistant.**

A. If a Passenger Assistant is strictly required for travel, this will continue to be the case. However, as some staff will no longer be available, there may be a change of staff. Parents should also be aware that due to public health advice, if any member of Transport staff is unable to work due to the need to self-isolate, there may be a need for a change of staff at short notice. Should there be any issues with numbers of Passenger Assistants available, parents will be contacted directly.

**Q. Will transport providers be following health and safety guidance?**

We are asking transport providers to follow the government guidance where they can. This guidance includes actions such as regular and thorough cleaning of vehicles. The Council is also providing local, detailed guidance to our transport providers to support them in putting in place the appropriate health and safety measures.

Government guidance does require the use of face coverings for transport staff, although some staff may choose to wear a face covering.

**Q. What if my child becomes unwell during the school day?**

You will be expected to collect your child from school. Transport will only be provided in extremely exceptional cases where you can sufficiently demonstrate why you are unable to collect them yourself

**Q. If my child has a cold will they still be transported?**

No. If your child or a member of your household displays any of the following symptoms you should not leave the house. This is in line with Government and NHS advice:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

[Check if you have Coronavirus symptoms](#)

It is essential that you ensure your child does not travel if they have any of these symptoms. If your transport operator is aware of a symptom prior to travel, transport will be declined.

**Q. Will this mean an increase in traffic on school sites?**

Potentially yes. We will have to ensure social distancing rules are following when allocating pupils their seats. This will mean we will not be able to fill vehicles as efficiently as we would previous to Covid. This may mean there will be an increase in the number of vehicles on school sites. We will work closely with schools to assist them with developing safe site management plans.

**Q. What will happen with school transport for the new school year in September 2020?**

The Coronavirus pandemic has meant that we have needed to make some extensive changes to our school transport arrangements for this current school year. We have already begun considering what changes or different arrangements might need to happen from September 2020 when the new academic year starts. This will be based on Government announcements over the coming months. If there are any ongoing changes needed from that point we will ensure you are advised as soon as possible.