

Mainstream home to school transport COVID-19 update

Passenger etiquette guide

This guidance is for students traveling on Cheshire West and Chester Council provided school and college transport and students travelling to school or college on public transport from the autumn term 2020.

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 [COVID-19 symptoms](#). These include:

- **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.
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- Students should not travel if they have tested positive for COVID-19 and have been advised to self-isolate, if they are self-isolating as a result of COVID-19 symptoms or if they are sharing a [household or support bubble with somebody with symptoms](#).
 - Social distancing should be maintained while queuing, boarding and exiting a vehicle where possible.
 - Parent and carers must make sure their child is aware of this guide and understand the importance of complying with this information so transport can 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 exiting the vehicle. It is also recommended that children carry their own pocket size hand sanitizers.
- All students should practice good hygiene and be aware of the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach. Students should carry tissues on home to school transport and dispose of used tissues in a covered bin as soon as possible after use.
- Transport operators will clean frequently touched surfaces after each journey and carry out enhanced cleaning at the end of each day.
- Transport operators will keep windows or roof lights open, wherever possible, on home to school transport to provide good ventilation.

Face coverings

- By law, children and young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering on public transport.
- A face-covering 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. It is important that people do not use medical grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) masks to ensure these remain available for frontline staff.
- In west Cheshire, the Council has taken the decision that all students, aged 3 and over, must wear face coverings on mainstream home to school transport.

Exemptions do apply. Passengers do not need to wear a face-covering if they:

- are unable to safely wear or use a face covering
 - are aged 3 or under
 - are a pupil attending school who is eligible under the Special Educational Needs (SEN) criteria of the Home to School Transport policy
 - have a respiratory illness, that is diagnosed and treated by medical professionals.
- Students are able to download an exemption card from the [government website](#).
 - Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on and taking off their face covering.
 - [The Government website provides](#) further information on making a face covering.

The Council has made this decision about face coverings on home to school transport because:

- the overall risk to children and young people of serious illness as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low
- students 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, such as track and trace, can be put in place.

Social distancing prior to boarding and exiting buses

- Students should maintain social distancing while waiting for the bus to arrive in the morning.
- Students are required to get on the bus in bus stop order, from back to front, in the morning. Students must sit in the same seat they sat in for the morning journey when traveling home on the bus in the afternoon, as this will be classified as your allocated seat.

- Students 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 essential for COVID-19 Test and Trace purposes.
- For Test and Trace purposes, drivers of school buses must be able to provide details of the passengers that have travelled on their vehicle. They will do this each day by marking off students on their passenger list and making sure they each go to their allocated seat.
- This approach has been taken to assist in the sharing of information with the Council's Public Health Team, if a student who uses home to school transport is confirmed to have COVID-19. If students 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. If the information collected by the Council's transport operators 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 to collect students in the afternoon, students will need to ensure they follow the driver's instructions to allow each student to board individually. Students must use the rearmost available seat.
 - Parents and carers should ensure their child is aware that unfortunately sitting next to a friend is not possible at the current time. In some cases, students from the same household may be able to sit together where the vehicle arrangements allow.
 - Pupils must remain seated for the duration of the journey.

Arriving at school

- Once the vehicle has arrived at school, students must remain in their seat until the driver advises otherwise. The driver will direct 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 students 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 students seated so that those exiting at the first stop, sit at the front of the bus.

Passenger behaviour 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.
- Passengers 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. This is to help limit the number of people that would need to self-isolate if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- No standing is allowed on home to school transport. Passengers must sit when there are seats available on buses.
- Passengers must act in a respectful way and distance from the driver when boarding and exiting the vehicle. This will help ensure drivers can remain on the same routes and transport operators can continue providing services.

What will happen if students don't follow the rules?

Most students are complying with the protocols provided, however in a small number of cases, there has been reports of students 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 and carers and students that students need to wear a face covering, sit at the rearmost seat, board and exit the vehicle as instructed by the driver and wear their face covering for the duration of the journey.
- If the driver does note issues of students not following the rules, such as passengers removing their face covering after boarding the vehicle, names of those students will be provided to their school. Schools are working in partnership with the Council's Transport Commissioning team to facilitate safe travel and students will be spoken to by school staff.
- If larger numbers of students 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 students 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. This 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 and carers:

- Please encourage children to walk or cycle to school where possible.
- Parents and carers must ensure that their child does not travel if they, or anyone in their household, has symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Parents and carers must make sure that their children understand the arrangements for queuing and getting on home to school transport and, where they should sit in the vehicle.
- Parents and carers must make sure that their children understand when they will be expected to wear face coverings on home to school transport.
- Bus drivers are not mandated to wear a face covering but many may choose to do so.
- The driver of the school bus 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, schools and the Council's Transport Commissioning team to do so.