



NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME SCHOOL

Minibus Policy

Introduction

1. A minibus is defined as a small bus that can carry 8 to 16 passengers excluding the driver. This policy relates to the use of minibuses on activities arranged by or on behalf of the School and its associated organisations. Minibuses hired by parents or groups of parents to convey their children to and from School are outside this policy as such journeys are considered to be by private arrangement.
2. The policy is to be fully applied to minibuses owned or leased by the School.
3. This document does not attempt to repeat all the statutory and regulatory measures relating to the construction and operation of minibuses. Full observance of such measures is a presumption. It is considered, however, that in a school, rules over and above the standards imposed by law are appropriate when the safety of pupils could be involved. This policy seeks to establish those additional measures. There is inevitably, however, reference to some of the statutory and regulatory measures. In the event of any statutory or regulatory measures or any legal precedence establishing requirements more stringent than those set out in this policy, the former shall prevail.

Construction of Minibuses

4. As a Section 19 "Small Bus Permit" holder the School must ensure that minibuses comply with all the appropriate Minibus, Road Vehicles and Public Service vehicles regulations. Additionally however:-
 - a. The legislation requires a forward facing seat for each child. Minibuses with a side or rear facing seat can be used but such seats cannot be occupied by a child and the number of children carried should be limited to the number of forward facing seats.
 - b. Each forward facing seat shall be fitted with a safety belt conforming to the bus manufacturers' recommendations.

- c. Any minibus fitted for towing a trailer shall have a near side exit door accessible to all passengers.
- d. School minibuses shall display the school bus sign, depicting a silhouette of two children, at both front and rear.

Emergency Equipment

- 5. Minibuses shall be equipped with the following:-
 - a. Spare wheel in good condition, when supplied
 - b. Jack and wheel brace
 - c. At least one fire extinguisher
 - d. A clearly marked first aid kit, readily available for use
 - e. Emergency triangle
 - f. Torch
 - g. Bin bags
 - h. Hi-vis vest
 - i. Emergency seat belt cutter and glass hammer
 - j. Dustpan and brush
 - k. Vomit sacks

Maintenance and Safety Check

- 6. The Senior Driver is responsible for:-
 - a. Ensuring that any defects affecting safety are corrected before the vehicle is allowed on the road.
 - b. Carrying out periodic/interim checks to include:- tyres, brakes, wheels, wheel nuts, steering, lights, warning instruments, windscreen washers and wipers, freedom from oil and fuel leaks, safety equipment including seat belts.
 - c. Arranging for the implementation of time/mileage maintenance in accordance with the manufacturers recommendation by an approved agent.
 - d. Ensuring that the vehicle is at all times capable of passing the Group V Department of Transport test and that such tests are carried out by an authorised test station annually on a date not later than the anniversary of first registration.

- e. Arranging preventative maintenance checks and services and keeping written records of all weekly safety checks, time/mileage maintenance, Department of Transport tests and any reported defects and repairs.
- 7. Drivers of school minibuses and borrowed or hired self-drive vehicles are advised to satisfy themselves, so far as they are able, that the minibus is in a safe condition to drive, including:
 - a. Carry out pre journey checks on brakes and visual checks on wheels, tyres, lights, warning instruments, windscreen washers and wipers and the emergency equipment.
 - b. Report any defects. All major defects are to be reported to the Bursar's staff as soon as possible. A vehicle defect log and reporting sheet is also permanently held in each vehicle.
 - c. Arrange for the immediate repair of any defects threatening safety which develop during a journey before proceeding with that journey.
- 8. The School shall maintain membership of a vehicle recovery scheme to ensure that assistance is available day or night wherever the vehicles may operate. All drivers shall be acquainted with the procedure for using this service with details being available from the Bursar's secretary.
- 9. In the case where minibuses are hired with driver or made available by other organisations (e.g. field study centres) the senior member of the School staff present may ensure that safety and maintenance standards are adequate and may refuse to allow pupils to use the vehicles where there is justifiable doubt. His/her decision will be final.

Loading and Passenger Conduct

- 10. The driver's legal responsibilities include the load and 'Responsible Adults' (see below - paragraph 14) have a duty of care. They should ensure that, subject to any over-riding emergency which itself affects safety, the following rules are observed.
 - a. Irrespective of size or age every passenger shall have his/her own seat and seat belt. The practice of small children sharing adult size seats is expressly forbidden as also is that of passengers travelling in the gangways.
 - b. Luggage, where possible, shall be stored where it does not block exits or movement to exits. If necessary, luggage should be carried on roof racks, trailers, separate vehicles or secured on unoccupied seats.

- c. Flammable or other dangerous substances should not to be carried in the bus except small quantities of fuel in approved containers which are adequately secured to prevent spillage.
- d. Seat belts shall be worn at all times when the vehicle is in motion. Passengers shall not move around except when the vehicle is parked.

Drivers

- 11. Minibuses complete with driver shall only be hired from approved contractors who, as recognised Public Service Vehicle operators, work to the highest legal standards.
- 12. Drivers of school or hired self-drive minibuses must:-
 - a. Be 23 years of age or over.
 - b. Have held a full driving licence for at least 3 years and must have a D or D1 category or PSV or PCV annotation shown on their licence. However, it should be noted that drivers who passed their driving test after 1 January 1997 are not routinely awarded a D1 category endorsement. They may drive any minibus not exceeding 3500 Kg provided they receive no payment for driving and do not tow a trailer (this is increased to 4250 Kg if the vehicle is accessible (i.e. has wheelchair ramps). The school operates under a Section 19 permit and therefore any vehicle above 3500kg may only be driven by a category D1 licence holder. Those under 3500kg may be driven by a category B licence holder. These rules apply to the UK only.
 - c. Declare any 'unspent' convictions for traffic related offences. Where there are such convictions they must be referred to the schools insurers who must confirm that they will not affect the insurance of the vehicle. In any event unspent convictions for drink driving, dangerous or careless driving will lead to prohibition from driving minibuses on school journeys.
 - d. Be currently free from any known illness, disability or condition which can make it unsafe to drive. Disorders of the heart, circulation, brain and nervous system, mental illness and addiction to alcohol or drugs, poor vision, loss or limited use of limbs are typical examples. Any such disorders should be declared to the Bursar or HR Coordinator without delay. If there is any doubt qualified medical advice may be sought.

Crewing of Minibuses

13. The term "Responsible Adult" used in this section is defined as an employee employed as a minibus driver, a teacher or teacher's assistant in the current employ of the School; a member of the administrative staff of the School who, with the approval of the Headmaster, is an adult leader in a school organisation (e.g. Scouts, CCF); any other adult who with the approval of the Headmaster is given and accepts a supervisory role in relation to pupils of the School.
14. When pupils of the School are travelling on a minibus the driver of which is not a Responsible Adult, a Responsible Adult must travel on the vehicle. This should also be read in conjunction with the school's External Visits policy which takes primacy should any advice contained in this policy contradict in any way.
15. When the driver of a minibus is a Responsible Adult it may be considered appropriate to have another Responsible Adult on the vehicle to control the pupils, to assist in the case of an emergency or to take over driving if the driver becomes unfit. The requirement will vary with the age of the pupils, the length of the journey, the timing and the driving conditions. The following general guidance on the provision of a Responsible Adult additional to the driver will apply although further advice can be sought from the External Visits Coordinator whose advice and policies take primacy over this document:-
 - a. Junior School pupils will normally be accompanied by a second Responsible Adult on other than short journeys.
 - b. On journeys within a 20 mile radius of the School a second Responsible Adult is not normally required.
 - c. On journeys within a 20-40 mile radius of the School a second Responsible Adult is required either in the minibus or travelling in another vehicle which moves in convoy with the minibus.
 - d. On journeys outside a 40 mile radius of the School a second Responsible Adult who is also a minibus driver is required.
 - e. Where parties from the School are operating from a base other than the School and that base has a staff who will assist in the case of an emergency (e.g. a field study centre or armed services camp) the lengths of journeys noted in paragraph 15 will refer to that base rather than the School.

Driver Fatigue

17. The safety of pupils is paramount. The School will support any Responsible Adult who decides with reasonable grounds that the driver of the vehicle, or they themselves if they are the driver, are for any reason, not entirely fit to drive and should, therefore cancel, delay or break a journey
18. During journeys, drivers should take breaks as they consider necessary, but as a minimum it is advised that nobody drives more than 2 hours without a break. After two hours the break should be a minimum of 30 minutes. The maximum number of driving hours in any one day would normally be 8 hours, including breaks.

Speed

19. All normal speed limits are to be observed but a maximum speed limit of 60 mph on Motorways and Dual Carriageways and 50 mph on all other roads is imposed on all minibuses carrying pupils of the School. It should be noted that the minibus fleet has been fitted with speed limiters as required by regulation.

Manoeuvring Of Vehicles

20. Drivers should be particularly aware that in many instances the vehicle may be manoeuvred on school premises or other areas where children are likely to be moving about. They must ensure vigilance at all times, only reverse when absolutely safe to do so and consider the use of a guide to assist as necessary.

Overseas Travel

21. The law concerning driving of minibuses overseas is different to that in the UK and requires such vehicles to be fitted with tachographs and drivers to comply with EC regulations concerning driving hours. Advice must be sought from the Bursar before a minibus is taken overseas and use of a professional driver would be advised in most circumstances. A PSV licence is required by law when driving a minibus or vehicle with more than 8 seats overseas regardless of whether a category D1 licence is held.

Prep School Pupils – Home to School Transport

22. Home to school transport is available for prep school pupils in Year 3 and above.

23. Prep pupils arriving from the morning school bus journey will be escorted into the school by the school minibuss driver.
24. Prep pupils must be met at the end of their journey home by a parent or other responsible person (aged over 16) whose name has been given to the driver prior to the journey. However, pupils from Year 5 and 6 may be dropped off to go home on their own if the school has been previously informed in writing.

Policy reviewed by SMT: January 2024

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Next Review Due: September 2024