

Learner Transport Protocol September 2021 (mainstream and ALN settings)

Introduction

This protocol reflects Welsh Government guidance and sets out the expectations and key points for parents/carers, their children and for transport contractors and their staff when travelling on or operating school transport on behalf of Denbighshire County Council.

It is to be applied across all school transport routes serving education settings in Denbighshire and colleges and schools where the transport starts within Denbighshire.

Expectations for Parents and Learners

It is the parents' responsibility:

- (a) To ensure learners do not travel if anyone in the household is symptomatic, has a positive LFT or PCR or has been contacted by Track Trace and Protect Team telling them to isolate for a stated period.
- (b) To ensure that your child aged 11 or over has a supply of face coverings before travelling each morning and afternoon. **Your child aged 11 or over is required to wear a face covering on school transport unless medically exempt.**
- (c) To remember that no person is currently able to sit in the front of a car or a minibus next to the driver
- (d) To acknowledge a zero-tolerance for poor behaviour on transport (to include circumstances where a learner fails to follow instructions given).
- (e) To ensure learners wash their hands (or for younger learners that parents do that for them) or use appropriate-strength sanitiser before leaving their home or school to board their vehicle.
- (f) To remind learners to board and alight transport single file. For those over 11 years of age and over to maintain a distance where possible while waiting and queuing.
- (g) To remind learners they must ensure they follow any instructions given by their driver or school/college staff.
- (h) To remember that the School Travel Code and behaviour framework will continue in operation. Any learner that misbehaves, causes damage to the vehicle, injury to the driver or other passengers or in any way threatens the health & safety of other passengers may be subject to an immediate ban from Denbighshire School Transport for the learners involved.
- (i) Parents will need to discuss with their children a contingency should a learner at a bus stop not be picked up by the driver (e.g. if the driver has become ill and as a consequence the transport is aborted last minute). Secondary and college learners should ensure that they carry with them their bus passes at all times. If your child is left on the roadside you will need to ensure your child knows what to do and you should discuss this with your child.

Available Seating on Transport Vehicles & Use of Face Coverings

Type of Transport	Dedicated learner transport vehicle	Publicly available bus service
Primary schools	All seats available for use except immediately beside the driver or in taxis where seats are face to face Face coverings need not be worn	Not applicable
Secondary schools and colleges	All seats available for use except immediately beside the driver or in taxis where seats are face to face Face coverings are required	Face coverings are required
ALN School settings (primary and secondary)	Face coverings need not be worn All seats available for use except immediately beside the driver or in taxis where seats are face to face	

Learners who qualify for free transport who travel on local bus services will need to follow the respective operator's instruction. They will need to continue to follow Welsh government guidance, which states that a face covering must be worn on all public transport.

Use of Face Coverings

These are required for all learners in secondary and tertiary education no matter the vehicle on which they travel.

Your child aged 11 or over is required to wear a face covering at all times while travelling. It is your responsibility to ensure that your child has a supply of face coverings before travelling each morning and afternoon.

Some learners, however, need not wear a face covering. This includes those for whom doing so would create a medical risk, cause distress, and where a learner has additional learning needs.

Drivers should wear face coverings.

Where drivers have to assist in the buckling of seat belts for small children or in loading wheelchairs then face coverings alongside the frequent application of hand sanitiser should be used.

Staying as Safe as Possible

Learners should take the following precautions:

- For those aged 11 or over, keep a distance from people outside of your own household while waiting for your transport
- Try to minimise the number of surfaces touched
- Wash or clean hands with appropriate sanitiser before boarding transport and upon finishing your journey
- Ensure that if a child is symptomatic that they do not use transport or attend school
- Ensure your child follows all instructions from drivers and staff, sits and remains in their seat for the duration of the journey
- Have a contingency in place should the transport not arrive (e.g. if a driver is unwell at short notice).
- If your child develops symptoms at school, you will need to make arrangements for your child to be collected. Symptomatic children shall not be permitted to use learner transport or local bus services.

Transport Protocol

Expectations for Learners

Learners will board calmly and one at a time, without pushing.

Parents in allowing their children to use learner transport accept and agree to the terms set out in this protocol. Parents will need to share this document with their children and discuss it with them.

On public health grounds, there shall be a zero-tolerance policy regarding behaviour and seating on learner transport, including at stops and the boarding and alighting of passengers. Learners who do not comply with these requirements will have their transport withdrawn with immediate effect.

We need to maintain an accurate list of learners to be able to cooperate with the Test Trace Protect procedures and if necessary we shall share your details with the appropriate agencies who help to stop the spread of coronavirus. It is therefore important that only those who are eligible may use dedicated school transport.

All learners will need to wash their hands thoroughly in accordance with national guidance before leaving their home for the learner transport journey and again in the afternoon at school.

If a child becomes symptomatic at school, learners shall not board the vehicle. Instead, schools will invoke their own policies for virus containment and deal with the learner without their boarding a vehicle. Parents will need to collect their child.

Expectations for Contractors

Contractors will have a revised and enhanced risk assessment and safe systems of work pertaining to the use of vehicles and employment of drivers during coronavirus. The Council has provided a model risk assessment to assist contractors. The contractors' assessment will include good practice at contractors' premises. Contractors shall share their completed assessments with the Council.

In order to reduce the possibility of infection, contractors will normally dedicate the same driver and same vehicle to each contract.

Drivers will consider their own fitness before undertaking each learner transport journey. Drivers are to be aware of their contractors' risk assessments, safe systems of work and national guidance.

On dedicated school transport vehicles over eight seats, drivers will load passengers back to front and unload from front to back where possible.

For vehicles without an appropriately approved screen, drivers may leave their cab to wait outside the vehicle while learners board and alight. This is recommended. Learners will need to allow the driver to leave by keeping a distance from the entrance.

Drivers are reminded that for any vehicle 8 seats and under, no passenger is currently able to sit in the front next to the driver. The use of face to face seating is also not allowed, except in circumstances where it has been approved by a transport officer.

To assist with the compliance and enforcement of the above, all vehicles with a capacity of over 16 seats will be fitted with operational CCTV. Contractors shall notify the Council if this not the case. Failure to provide a vehicle with such working equipment shall result in the application of financial deductions as specified under the Conditions of Contract.

Parking at establishments and settings will be at the direction of schools and colleges.

Schools are encouraged to ensure there are appropriate numbers of staff available to meet vehicles/leaners and upon arrival staff will escort learners from the vehicle to the building and, for the afternoon return, from the building to the contract vehicle in boarding order.

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While on education premises as elsewhere, drivers shall remain at an appropriate distance from all other drivers and staff.

Vehicles should be naturally ventilated by use of opened windows or where available roof lights rather than climate control, air conditioning or forced air systems that recirculate air. Drivers of coaches that do not allow openable windows should ensure air conditioning is not set to recirculate air.

Cleaning

Contractors will ensure all vehicles are thoroughly cleaned once a day to a standard above that usually undertaken. Surfaces requiring special attention include steering wheel; handbrake, switchgear and fascia; door handles (inside and out); window handles/buttons; seats and hard surfaces around seats that have been occupied.

Normal cleaning products are sufficient for the purpose, including easily disposed of disinfectant wipes, though “fogging” remains a preferred and additional method of cleaning.

Additionally, contractors will ensure that all internal and external touch points are wiped down between trips.

Drivers should wash hands frequently or use a suitable sanitiser gel can that should be a minimum of 70 per cent alcohol. Drivers must not leave cleaning products/sanitiser where passengers can reach them.

Seatbelts

Wherever possible, learners should be responsible for buckling their own seat belts. This may not always be possible for young children or those with specific additional needs. In such circumstances, where a pick up is at a home address, parents should ensure their children are safely buckled. Please where a face covering if boarding the vehicle to assist your child. A member of the school staff should assist them at school.

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