

Integrated Transport Unit

TRANSPORT

1. Will my child's usual school transport route be running?

The Council has resumed its dedicated school transport services, although the available seating capacity may continue to be limited by the latest Welsh Government guidance.

We are encouraging parents and carers to take children to school by walking or cycling, or alternatively by private car, rather than using dedicated school transport. We understand that this will not be possible for some people.

Your child's transport may look different. Some changes may include travelling with different pupils, transport staff wearing PPE including masks or visors. We understand that the changes to the school journey may be unsettling to some children and young people. Please explain these changes to your child in advance to help them prepare.

2. My child has additional learning needs. What transport arrangements will be in place to Additional Learning Needs Classes, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools?

We are working to provide the same transport routes into Additional Learning Needs Classes, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools, although the available seating capacity may continue to be limited.

We are encouraging parents and carers to take children to school by walking or cycling, or alternatively by mobility car or private car, rather than using dedicated school transport. We understand that this will not be possible for some people.

We understand that families may be anxious about home to school transport arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will do our best to provide support and keep things as consistent as possible by trying to use the same contractor, driver and passenger assistant but we may need to provide larger vehicles to enable social distancing.

Your child's transport may look different. Some changes may include travelling with other pupils, alternative routes with different journey times, transport staff wearing PPE including masks or visors. We understand that the changes to the school journey may will be unsettling to some children and young people. Please explain these changes could be explained to your child in advance to help them prepare.

3. What will school transport look like when schools return in the autumn term?

The Welsh Government has issued guidance for the reopening of schools in September and the Council will be working to those guidelines going forward.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/operational-guidance-for-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term.pdf>

It is important for parents/carers and children to practice social distancing wherever possible. Passenger assistants will only be provided for additional learning needs transport. Their role will be to ensure the safety of passengers and ensure that they are sitting in the correct location. Children should be shown how to secure their seat belts, ensuring that personal contact is kept to an absolute minimum.

4. What precautions must my child take when travelling?

We ask that parents and carers help communicate to pupils the importance of following good hygiene and social distancing, as this will play a key role in keeping everyone safe.

This means taking the following precautions:

- For all secondary pupils it is mandatory (unless exempt on medical grounds) to wear face coverings on home to school transport
- do not travel if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, self-isolating as a result of COVID-19 symptoms, sharing a household with somebody with symptoms or clinically extremely vulnerable;
- consider if using school transport is absolutely necessary;
- wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving the house;
- keep a social distance from people outside of your own household throughout the journey to school, including at the bus stop and on the vehicle;
- avoid physical contact with others;
- windows will be open for ventilation,
- face away from other people when using transport;
- minimise the number of surfaces you touch, and in particular avoid touching surfaces such as handrails and window ledges;
- do not touch your face;
- keep the time spent near others as short as possible when using school transport,
- do not eat or drink whilst using transport;
- wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving school;

Please note that a refusal to comply with health and safety requirements, good hygiene and social distancing could jeopardise your child's place on school transport. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated.

5. What will the arrangements for social distancing be on school transport?

Social distancing on dedicated home to school transport is not required (see guidance) Pupils should maintain social distancing from others who are not in their household if they are over the age of 11 if possible (social distancing does not apply to children under the age of 11) If this is not possible they should avoid physical contact and face away from others. A face covering will be required on public transport from 27 July 2020, and for all secondary pupils it is mandatory (unless exempt on medical grounds) to wear face coverings on home to school transport.

While parents/carers may feel apprehensive about the risks in using school transport during the COVID-19 pandemic, they should decide whether to do so, or, if they prefer, they should make their own arrangements to transport their child to and from school.

Seating arrangements will be carefully considered in line with the school transport guidance. All appropriate actions will be taken to reduce and mitigate risk on the basis that:

- the overall risk to children and young people from COVID 19 is low,
- school transport carries the same group of pupils on a regular basis, and those pupils may also be together in school,
- pupils will sit together in year groups where possible,
- siblings can sit together,
- there will be no face to face seating,
- there will be no contact between pupils and other passengers,
- windows and roof vents will be kept open,
- contact will be minimised with individuals who are unwell,
- all passengers, including the drivers and passenger assistants should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before boarding transport and when arriving at school or home;
- if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, then it will be easy to identify who was travelling on which vehicle, helping to test, track and trace;
- there will be a rigorous cleaning and sanitising regime between before / after each journey.

6. How will you ensure that services are not overcrowded?

Only named passengers that have prior approval to travel, or those with secondary school bus passes for the route, will be allowed to use transport. Drivers will have lists of pupils that will be allocated to their vehicle each day. No pass, no travel will be strictly enforced for secondary school vehicles, and those not eligible to travel will be turned away from the vehicle.

7. Will transport suppliers be following health and safety guidance?

We are asking transport suppliers to follow the Welsh Government Guidance <https://gov.wales/restarting-public-transport-guidance-operators>. This guidance includes actions such as regular sanitising, the thorough cleaning of vehicles and the use of PPE.

8. Will my child be expected to wear a face covering?

Clear evidence remains that the most effective way to protect your child and others from infection is to follow social distancing rules, avoid touching surfaces and your face, and wash your hands regularly. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.

Younger children and those with special needs or who rely on lip reading to communicate may not be able to safely wear a face covering. For all secondary pupils it is mandatory (unless exempt on medical grounds) to wear face coverings on home to school transport

At the daily Welsh Government coronavirus briefing on the 13 July 2020, the First Minister announced that in order to help reduce the risk of transmission whilst using buses, trains and taxis, where it is not always possible to maintain a two metre physical distance while travelling, it will become mandatory for people to wear a three-layer face covering from the 27 July 2020.