

8.0 Transport

8.1 MINIBUS POLICY

This section is a summary of Liverpool City Council's Corporate Minibus Policy and as such can be used as a checklist during the planning of an educational visit after reading the full document.

Vehicles must: -

Be regularly and suitably maintained & inspected. A designated member of staff should hold the responsibility for overseeing maintenance and care of the minibus. Any defects should be reported immediately and appropriate remedial action taken. All necessary repairs must be carried out before use. Maintenance and other records should be kept for at least 3 years. Containers of fuel must NOT be carried.

Carry a suitable fire extinguisher.

E.g. foam/carbon dioxide, and should be readily available for use.

Have clearly indicated emergency exits. Passengers should be made aware of them.

Have suitable first aid provision (at least two first aid boxes) readily available for use.

Have passenger and driver seat belts fitted and available for every person on the minibus, the driver is to ensure they are used.

Ideally have high back seats to protect against whiplash. Vehicles with side facing seats should not be used.

Have adequate wheelchair & passenger restraints provided where wheelchair users are to use the minibus.

Have a register of all staff authorised to drive the minibus and their competencies e.g. undertaken MIDAS assessment. A record of the use (Vehicle Mileage/Log) of the minibus should also be maintained.

Have an Operating Permit. A minibus that is used to carry passengers for "Hire or Reward" is normally classed as a Public Service Vehicle (PSV). It must therefore comply with PSV Operator Licensing and Passenger Carrying Vehicle Driver Licensing requirements. Some schools and voluntary organisations may be exempt from these requirements if they are eligible for a 'Minibus Permit' granted under section 19 of the Transport Act 1985. For further information see Liverpool City Council Minibus Policy and Guidance.

Have an approved towing bracket if it is necessary to connect a trailer to the vehicle. Drivers unfamiliar with towing trailers should take a practice drive to master manoeuvring and reversing. Trailers should be suitably maintained and inspected. A second adult should assist the driver in confirming that trailer lights work properly before commencing a journey. A maximum speed limit of 50 m.p.h. should be observed when towing.

Drivers must:

- Be at least 21 years of age.
- Hold a suitable full driving license.
- Have successfully completed suitable training and assessment.
- Have appropriate health and driver training records.
- Notify the Head Teacher/ Manager if there is any change in their circumstances that may affect their suitability to drive.
- Carry out a vehicle check prior to using the vehicle.
- Be familiar with the vehicle and highway codes before carrying passengers.

Anyone passing a standard driving test after 1st January 1997: Cannot drive a vehicle with more than eight passenger seats without undertaking an additional "D1" type test and cannot tow a trailer exceeding 750Kgs gross weight without an additional "E" category on their licence.

Driver Responsibilities

- Prior to using the minibus the driver must check the essential elements of the vehicle (see "General driver pre-journey checks", below) and report any defects in writing.
- If a major defect (e.g. brake failure) occurs en-route, the journey must stop until the defect has been repaired by a competent person. It is recommended that mobile phones, if they are available, be provided to drivers. But they must not be used by the driver whilst driving.
- Luggage should be stowed safely and neatly so it does not obstruct gangways or exits. Roof racks when used, should have goods evenly distributed on them and suitably secured.
- Drivers are legally responsible for the vehicle they are driving and should observe current legislation for driving, (speeding, parking restrictions etc).
- It is the driver's responsibility to ensure the vehicle is not overloaded with passengers or goods and that seatbelts are worn.
- Drivers must never drink and drive. Alcohol can stay in the blood for up to 24 hours, therefore it is considered good practice that alcohol is not consumed 12 to 24 hours before driving.
- If drivers become tired or unwell they must stop at a suitable place until they recover.
- Drivers are responsible for returning the bus in a suitably clean and tidy condition.
- In case of fire or other emergency, a driver's primary responsibility is the health and safety of his passengers by ensuring they leave the vehicle quickly to an area of safety. They must be protected from other vehicles as far as possible.
- The fighting of engine or other fires is best left to the emergency services.
- Drivers should ensure that passengers are suitably supervised. An additional adult should act in a supervisory capacity for journeys with young children, disruptive pupils or pupils with educational needs.

Drivers Hours

- Before starting out on a journey due consideration must be given to the time to be spent 'at work' (not simply behind the wheel) and the distance to be covered. Wherever possible a relief driver must be carried to cater for a long journey or in case of illness. In addition : -
- Drivers must take a break of at least 15 minutes after driving for 2 hours.
- Drivers must not be behind the wheel for more than 6 hours during a working day (for 'professional' drivers this limit may be increased to 8 hours).
- The length of a driver's working day must not exceed 10 hours i.e. between starting work (not just starting driving) and finishing.

General driver pre-journey checks

(see Corporate Minibus Policy Safety Checklist)

- The vehicle handbook that lists the manufacturer's details; covering the design and operational standards should be available to the driver.
- Brakes and steering operate correctly.
- All lights, instruments and horn operate correctly.
- Windscreen wipers and wash operate correctly. Adequate supply of windscreen wash fluid.
- Correct fluid levels – fuel, oil, brakes, coolant etc.
- First aid kits are in place.
- Fire extinguisher, where provided, is in place.
- Windows clean and there is good visibility.
- Tyres should be free of cuts and cracks, correctly inflated and have a minimum of 2.0mm of tread.
- All luggage and other objects should be suitably and safely stored.
- Spare tyre carried, in good condition, satisfactorily inflated. Wheel changing gear present.
- Internal (and external mirrors where fitted) are in good condition and correctly aligned.
- Seat belts are working correctly.

No smoking

- Liverpool City Council has an employee 'No smoking policy' that should be extended to all passengers in vehicles.

8.2 THE USE OF PRIVATE CARS

It is possible for the Group Leader, Supervisors, other staff and adult volunteers to use their own cars, for transporting Group Members providing that: -

- The head of the school/establishment has agreed the use of private cars as part of their overall transport policy.
- The car cannot carry more than 8 passengers.
- Any money paid for its use is not more than the vehicle's running costs (no hire or reward) and arrangements for any payments are made or agreed before the journey.
- Evidence is provided that the vehicle is insured fully comprehensively and for business use.
- The driver recognises they have a duty of care to passengers, road users and others and are known to be responsible adults.
- Simple checks should be made to confirm the vehicle's road-worthy condition.
- Evidence of driving ability should be drawn on and if necessary simple checks made.
- Cars must not be overloaded.
- Each passenger should have their own seat and suitable seatbelt.
- If private cars are to be used for long journeys there should be arrangements made (RAC, AA etc.) for breakdown assistance and recovery.
- The names of the pupils/young people being transported in each car should be kept by the school/youth centre organisation so that if an accident occurs the school is aware of the children who are involved.
- Parent/adults are never alone with a child/young person.
- Driver's licences should be checked.

This section should be read in conjunction with child protection procedures. Some parents may not want their child(ren) to travel with other parents, or with particular parents. They should be given the opportunity to make their views known.

8.3 HIRING OF COACHES

It must be checked that seatbelts are fitted when hiring coaches. Some companies may provide buses, or offer service vehicles which do not legally require seatbelts. Whilst buses may be suitable for short local journeys with 30 mile per-hour urban speed restrictions, coaches should be used for longer journeys or those using motorways or other high speed roads. It is preferable however for all transport to be fitted with seatbelts.