



Northumberland County Council

Parent or carer of pupil
using home to school
transport

Your ref:
Our ref: ROF/DL/MC
Enquiries to: Rick O'Farrell
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Tel direct: 0345 6006400
Date: 25 August 2020

Dear Parent or Carer

RE: SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE USING DEDICATED HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS FROM SEPTEMBER 2020

With all children returning to school this September, your child's school will have provided you with information on how teaching and learning will be organised in order to keep pupils and staff as safe as possible in the light of COVID-19. To support this, the Government has published guidance on making it as safe as possible for children and young people to travel on Home to School Transport, and this document sets out the measures the Council is putting in place to implement this guidance, for which we require your support.

For pupils travelling on Home to School Transport, there are additional requirements that the Council is asking parents and carers to support us with in order to reduce the risk of transmission of infection among children and young people, the transport operators and school staff while on the journey to and from school. This guidance should also reassure you that effective measures are being put in place to keep children and young people safe.

The guidance below forms part of these measures and therefore, we would be grateful if you would read the information and guidance carefully and work with us in implementing the actions set out.

Part 1 - Precautions before travelling on Home to School Transport

- a) If your child or any of their household shows any signs of having COVID-19 symptoms, they **MUST NOT** board any form of Home to School Transport. Guidance on what symptoms to look out for can be found at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

Please alert your child's school and the Home to School Transport Team if you are not sending your child to school for this reason and subsequently inform them if your child or a member of the household tests positive for COVID-19.

- b) If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 at school, you will be asked by school to make arrangements to have your child taken home - **your child will not be able to travel home on Home to School Transport**. If you are unable to arrange for your

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child to be picked up, alternative arrangements may be made. Guidance on self-isolation should then be followed which can be found at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/>

- c) If your child has been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms whilst at school or on home to school transport, they **do not** need to self-isolate unless:
 - i) Your child then develop symptoms
 - ii) Your child is requested to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Part 2 - Actions when travelling on Home to School Transport

If possible we ask that the following actions are undertaken but we fully appreciate that the steps outlined below may not always be possible for every child, given their special needs and disabilities.

- a) All children and young people **to clean their hands before boarding Home to School transport and after disembarking.** This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser. We ask that parents support this requirement by talking to your child about the importance of cleaning their hands regularly.
- b) We ask that parents and carers **ensure their child has a pack of tissues** available in case of sneezes while on school transport. Please explain the ‘**catch it, bin it, kill it**’ approach to sneezing to your child, **so that they know to place a used tissue in a bin as soon as possible** after their journey.
- c) It is now mandatory that children and young people aged 11 and over should wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated home to school transport. A face covering is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth and fits securely round the side of the face. This does not apply to people who are exempt from wearing a face covering which include:
 - i) children under the age of 11 (Public Health England do not recommended face coverings for children under the age of 3 for health and safety reasons)
 - ii) people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability

Guidance on how to wear a face covering can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#how-to-wear-a-face-covering>

Children under 11 may wear a face covering if they are able to handle it as directed.

- d) The Government guidance for dedicated transport to schools makes clear that social distancing guidelines for public transport do not apply on dedicated home to school or college transport. This is because the overall risk to children and young people of serious illness as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) is very low, the children 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 and the predictability of home to school transport will allow for planning so that protective measures can be put in place.

- e) However, where possible seating plans will be put in place to ensure children from a particular year group sit together in the same part of the vehicle. There may also be new instructions concerning the boarding and alighting from vehicles. Parents and carers are asked to speak to their child about these matters and liaise with the driver to ensure a common understanding in relation to where each child sits on board the vehicle for the duration of the journey.
- f) Schools will be making arrangements for safe entrance into school for pupils arriving on transport and for queuing for transport at the end of the school day. Equally, it is important that you have arrangements in place to ensure your child maintains social distancing and mix only with other children from their year group when waiting at the pick up point in the morning and following drop off in the afternoon. It is essential that children and young people understand and adhere to these arrangements and your support in explaining this to them is welcomed.
- g) The arrangements for pick up and drop off at or near home will already have been communicated to you by our Home to School Transport team when it was confirmed to you that your child qualifies for transport. Any changes to these arrangements will be communicated to you separately.

Finally, we fully appreciate that parents of children with serious medical conditions in particular may have particular concerns in relation to school transport arrangements. If you have concerns about these arrangements in relation to your child's health condition, please seek a medical opinion from the health professionals supporting your child. If necessary and where required we will make changes to these travel arrangements to keep all children safe.

Thank you in advance for assisting schools and the local authority to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in Northumberland.

Yours sincerely



Rick O'Farrell
Interim Executive Director