



# GETTING TO SCHOOL SAFELY

(A Guide for  
Parents/Carers)

**SHROPSHIRE  
SPECIALIST SCHOOL  
TRANSPORT (SEND)**  
SEPTEMBER 2020 ONWARD  
**CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

August 2020



## RETURNING TO SCHOOL— SEPTEMBER 2020

Our objective is to return the specialist school transport network back to 'normal' from September 2020.

As we continue to respond to the national emergency, Covid-19 related measures for transport arrangements will be tailored to the needs of individual SEND pupils.

We will aim to ensure that we can provide transport for every entitled pupil in a Covid-19 safe way, which also allows for a pleasant and comfortable journey.

This information and instructions have been produced using guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Education (DfE).

Our priority is to support children and young people to access their entitlement to a school placement by taking measures to ensure that specialist school transport is as Covid-19 safe as possible. We will do this by:



Working collaboratively with parent carers



Working closely and collaboratively with specialist schools to achieve the best transport outcomes for pupils



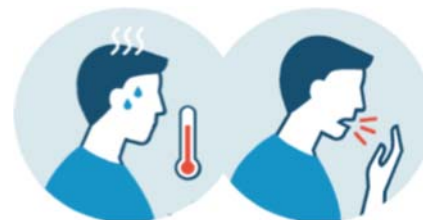
Providing home to school transport for all entitled pupils

## PLEASE NOTE

You may be aware that social distancing on public transport had reduced seating capacities to under 50%; however, the Government has recently relaxed these rules for dedicated (contracted) school transport, with additional safety advice. Information will be outlined within this document.

## PUPILS WHO SHOULD NOT TRAVEL:

The Government and Council advises that people (pupils) should not travel at all if they:



are experiencing any Coronavirus (Covid-19) symptoms

Are self-isolating as a result of Coronaviruses (Covid-19) symptoms or sharing a household or support bubble with someone with symptoms



**NHS**

Have been advised by the NHS test and trace service that they should self-isolate

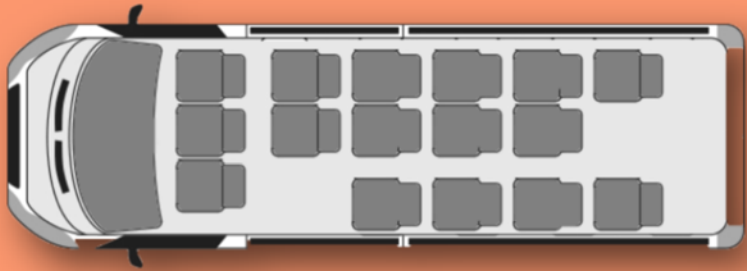
If pupils have any symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) they should self-isolate at home and arrange to have a test to see if they have Coronavirus (Covid-19).

If anyone in the pupil's household or support bubble has symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) every member of the household/bubble should self-isolate.

## ON BOARD SOCIAL DISTANCING

As mentioned previously, the government have said that dedicated (contracted) school transport buses/taxis will return to 100% passenger loading capacities with effect from September 2020.

Where we can, pupils will be seated to reflect Year Groups, with the eldest Year Group 'bubble' sitting at the rear, progressing to the youngest at the front in age order. Whilst this principle accords with general Government guidance, making it meaningful on a SEND bus will be problematic, given that the seating layouts have to accommodate wheelchairs, access needs for individual pupils and Passenger Assistants, specific medical needs and inter pupil dynamics, amongst other things. None the less, we will attempt to provide the 'bubble' arrangement where we can.



## ALCOHOL HAND SANITISER

We will provide alcohol hand sanitiser for pupils to use upon boarding Shropshire Council's Fleet buses, but we are mindful that this may be problematic for some pupils. We expect that specialist school placements will arrange for pupils to wash/sanitise hands as they enter school from the bus/taxi.



## FACE COVERINGS

For children over the age of 11, the DfE say that where possible, face coverings should be worn, especially if children are likely to come into very close contact with others outside their year group or who they do not normally meet. So, where SEND pupils can wear face coverings on provided transport, we would encourage this. However, we recognise that it may not be possible for SEND pupils especially for those with a medical condition and/or an exemption.



Ideally pupils should not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. Hands should be washed immediately on arrival, and disposable face coverings placed in a covered bin or, for reusable face coverings, in a plastic bag. Both transport and school staff will assist with this.

## TEMPERATURE TESTING DEVICES

We have investigated whether contactless temperature testing devices may be of help in identifying pupils who may be ill with a fever and hence should not travel on school transport. However, the Government's MHRA say that temperature screening products are not designed to screen people for COVID-19 symptoms. This is because they do not perform to the level required to accurately support a medical diagnosis.

The Council's current position is that it will not undertake temperature screening on school transport with these devices.



## SOCIALLY DISTANCED EMBARKATION

We expect pupils, parents and staff to be socially distanced whilst boarding buses/taxis where possible – parents and school staff will be expected to support this protocol for boarding, both at home and at school.

## JOURNEY GUIDELINES

Whilst travelling, we will endeavour to ensure that the Covid-19 safety rules are applied as best as we can. These include pupils staying seated, avoiding physical contact, facing forwards and away from others, and not shouting or raising their voices.

## PUPILS REFUSED ACCESS ON ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

Due to the need for increased cleaning of vehicles between routes and the distances often travelled the Specialist Travel Team cannot offer a return journey if a school temperature check identifies a child as possibly symptomatic and a school decides they must return home. We urge parents to make contingency arrangements should this scenario arise.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Q** Will my child have transport provided if we had it already?  
**A** Yes – there is every expectation that every child who previously had home to school travel arrangements in place will have this continued from September. We aim to operate all routes at the same capacity as before.
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- Q** Will my child's transport arrangements change?  
**A** Unless your child has moved schools, home address or any other significant change the arrangements should be the same as they were last school year. If your child has changed schools or you have moved, you will need to reapply for school transport. Please see link below.

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/sen-transport/>

COVID-19 has placed a significant amount of pressure on the transport industry, we are hopeful all operators will be re turning in September and arrangements will be the same. Whilst we cannot foresee every eventuality and things will arise that are not expected, if you do not hear from us by 24th August then we are expecting the same arrangements will be in place for your child.

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- Q** Will my child have to wear a face covering on transport?  
**A** If your child can wear a face covering and is over the age of 11 it is encouraged that they do. If your child falls within the exemption criteria, then it is not expected they wear any type of face covering. Please see full Government guidance for face coverings including exemptions below.

<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>

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q Will face coverings and/or PPE be worn by Drivers and Passenger Assistants?**

**A** On public transport a face covering is a mandatory requirement.

On the majority of school transport vehicles, it is unlikely Drivers and Passenger Assistants will wear PPE

However following liaison with Public Health and a Risk Assessment being undertaken there may be circumstances that a Driver or Passenger Assistant will wear PPE.

Parents and carers should also be aware that a Driver or Passenger Assistant could choose to wear a face covering should they wish to, this would be a personal decision for that individual.

If your child is likely to be upset, alarmed, or find it difficult to access transport if the Driver or Passenger Assistant are wearing a face covering/visor, please contact the Specialist Travel Team so they can discuss other travel assistance options with you such as Travelling Expenses or a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) should you wish to.

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**Q What happens at collection and drop off?**

**A** Parent, Carers and pupils will be expected to maintain social distancing in family groups whilst waiting for their transport to arrive to collect or drop off their children.

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**Q My child attends a Short Breaks service where they usually have transport from school directly to the short breaks setting, will this happen as normal?**

**A** The Specialist Travel Team are informed who requires Short Breaks via the Social Work Team. Please ensure you have contacted your social worker to ensure this has been requested if required. Any requests will be accommodated as normal.

**Q Will there be social distancing on transport?**

**A** From September 2020 the Government have made it clear there will be no social distancing on dedicated contract school buses and taxis, to ensure that all children can attend school, which means that vehicles will operate at 100% capacity – it's important to note that no members of the public travel on these buses and they are restricted to the same group of pupils.

Where we can, pupils will be seated to reflect Year Groups, with the eldest Year Group 'bubble' sitting at the rear, progressing to the youngest at the front in age order. Whilst this principle accords with general Government guidance, making it meaningful on a SEND vehicle will be problematic, given that the seating layouts have to accommodate wheel chairs, access needs for individual pupils and Passenger Assistants, specific medical needs and inter pupil dynamics, amongst other things. None the less, we will attempt to provide the 'bubble' arrangement where we can.

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**Q What happens if our school are doing staggered start and finish times?**

**A** At the moment the Specialist Travel Team will be doing a single collection and drop off service as currently no schools have told the Specialist Travel Team of any alternative arrangements for start and finish times. The Specialist Travel Team have made schools aware that this is unlikely to be something they could accommodate due to not having the volume of operators, drivers and staff that would be required to undertake this.

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**FAQs**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q** Will transport be provided if my child is refused access to school following a temperature check?

**A** Due to the need for increased cleaning of vehicles between routes and the distances often travelled the Specialist Travel Team cannot offer a return journey if a school temperature check identifies a child as possibly symptomatic and a school decides they must return home. We urge parents to make contingency arrangements should this scenario arise. However, it is important to note that no pupil should be put on school transport if they are unwell, showing any symptoms or have a high temperature. (Parents may want to routinely take their child's temperature if they wish)

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**Q** If I choose to take my child to school myself while Coronavirus (COVID-19) is still a concern, will we lose our transport offer?

**A** No, if you want to transport your child yourself that is an option. The Specialist Travel Team can offer Personal Travel Expenses (mileage rate at 0.40p per mile) or a Personal Travel Budget (A personal travel budget is a sum of money allocated to parents/carers to enable them to get their child to school that is paid monthly. It offers families choice and flexibility, and how the money is spent is completely at the families own discretion – please contact the team for further details.)

If you choose to transport your child, you can take one of these for a period and not lose your entitlement to your child returning to a school bus. If your circumstances change and you can no longer take your child yourself, you can reinstate the usual arrangements by speaking to the Specialist Travel Team, please allow us as much notice as possible to under take this.

**Q** Will we have the same transport, Driver, and Passenger Assistant as last year?

**A** There is no guarantee that any transport will be the same from September due to a variety of reasons. The current situation has placed a significant pressure of transport providers and some may have a different pool of drivers available due to some choosing not to return to work for personal reasons. This means that some of the Drivers and Passenger Assistants may be different. There may also be short notice changes made where a driver or travel assistant is required to self-isolate. As you will appreciate during this national emergency managing transport arrangements has been difficult but Council staff are working hard in challenging circumstances to provide the best service possible.

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**Q** My child attends Severndale Specialist Academy, is there anything different we need to be aware of?

**A** We have not been informed of any changes to the arrival and departure of transport at Severndale Specialist Academy. For any other school queries please contact them directly. The Specialist Travel Team will assume all parents want the same arrangements for home to school transport for September unless they hear from individual families who want to transport their own child for a period of time.

**FAQs**

# GOVERNMENT SAFER TRAVEL GUIDANCE

For information, key Government guidelines include:



Pupils should not travel if feeling unwell or if they have any Covid-19 symptoms



Enhanced bus/taxi cleaning regimes, particularly for regular touch points



Providing the most on-board ventilation possible, consistent with a comfortable journey



Keeping any physical contact to the minimum, where possible



Minimising the time spent close to other people, where possible



Covering mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of the elbow when coughing or sneezing



Travelling side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow



Touching as few surfaces as possible



Wash hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise hands before and after the end of your journey



Facing away from others



Avoiding loud talking, shouting or singing



Avoid touching your face where practical



## GOVERNMENT COVID-19 TRAVEL ADVICE

Government Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Education (DfE) advice should be adhered to and can be found using the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

### Face Coverings

<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>



## PARENTS CONSIDERATION

Parents need to be aware of these arrangements and if they consider there are specific reasons why their child may not be able to travel on school transport at any one time, they should advise us accordingly. Whilst home to school transport will be available for pupils as it was before, parents do have the choice if they want their child to use the service or not. Parents can take their own child and be reimbursed expenses if they feel this suited their circumstances better.

## COUNCIL GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROVISION

The Council's 'School Transport and other Council Passenger Transport' should also be followed and this is published on the Council's internet site - it will be updated to reflect the new plans for September 2020.

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/school-transport/>



Shropshire  
Council

## SUMMARY

Finally, we recognise that partnership between schools, parents and the Council's transport team is incredibly important, and we are keen to work actively and closely with everyone on achieving the very best outcomes for our pupils, even more so during this time of national emergency. You can be assured that we will continue working to make safe and satisfactory arrangements for school transport for September 2020 and beyond.

We look forward to welcoming pupils/students back to school transport in September.



Passenger  
Transport  
Group

PASSENGER TRANSPORT GROUP  
SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL  
107 LONGDEN ROAD  
SHREWSBURY  
SY3 9DS

[special.transport.team@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:special.transport.team@shropshire.gov.uk)

