

Update 16th February 2021 – Return to School

Home to School Transport – COVID 19

Questions and Answers

1. Should I take my child to school rather than use school transport?

Current advice is that where possible, parents and carers are encouraged to take children to school by walking or cycling, or alternatively by private car.

Public transport will be available but current physical distancing measures will mean that you should plan your journey well in advance and check with www.travelinescotland.com or by downloading the mobile app for travel updates and travel alerts.

You can also check with Lothian Buses at www.lothianbuses.com using the online journey planner or mobile app.

2. What will happen if social distancing measures change?

Arrangements will be made between schools, transport teams and transport operators to ensure that appropriate school transport provision is in place to support senior phase learners' return to school.

It should be emphasised that progress depends on all of us complying with rules set out in each phase. As rules change we will update information on School Transport.

3. Will public transport be operating a full service?

Please be patient when travelling at busy times. The journey may take longer due to reduced capacity and physical/social distancing measures and you should allow sufficient time for the journey. You may have to wait for the next bus in order to keep a safe distance.

4. Should I wear a face covering on transport.

Current guidance is that you should wear a face covering on public transport unless you are under 5 years old or have a medical condition that prevents you from doing so.

Face masks should be worn by all children aged five and over, bringing it into line with guidance for public transport.

As well as this change to the wearing of face coverings, we need to reinforce the importance of maintaining high standards of cleaning, personal hand and respiratory hygiene and physical distancing, where possible.

Please note there are exemptions; for example

If the child has a health condition or is they are disabled, including hidden disabilities, for example, autism, dementia or a learning disability.

5. Are there hand sanitisers on public transport buses?

Lothian Buses have not fitted hand sanitiser stations on their vehicles but recommend that you wash your hands before travelling and after. If you cannot wash your hands you are encouraged to use your own hand sanitiser. Schools carry some supplies of individual hand sanitiser if you are unable to supply your own when travelling on public transport to school.

6. Will my child continue to get free school transport from February 2021?

Yes, if you have already been allocated free school transport that entitlement will remain. The Transport Team is working with schools to find the best way to manage transport for the limited number of senior pupils permitted in school per day. The Council is working to resume all Council-provided school transport where required and will ensure vehicles are thoroughly cleaned.

7. How is the Council preparing for the return of school transport?

In our preparations, we are of course taking full account of the coronavirus emergency and are looking at what additional measures we need to put in place to reduce the risk of the virus spreading and to safeguard our pupils and staff. We are working closely with colleagues in Health Protection Scotland, Health and Safety and Schools regarding what these measures will look like, considering national guidance, and we will be instructing all transport operators on the measures they need to ensure are in place before transport arrangements can be agreed.

The Scottish Government advise that social distancing on dedicated school buses is required in Mainstream Secondary Schools buses. However, Scottish Government and Transport Scotland also advise parents and carers where possible to take their children to school by walking, cycling or private car.

It is important for parents/carers and children to practice social distancing wherever possible. This means taking the following precautions:

- apply the social distancing measures from people outside of your own household
- avoid physical contact with others
- face away from other people when using transport
- keep the time spent near others as short as possible when using transport
- minimise the number of surfaces you touch
- immediately upon finishing your journey, we recommend you wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands as soon as possible.

The Council is working to resume all Council-provided school transport where required and will ensure vehicles are thoroughly cleaned.

8. Will the usual school route be running?

As schools are considering their opening arrangements, we are working with schools and Communities and Families to arrange transport that best fits with schools' opening arrangements taking account of "*Technical guidance for providing senior phase practical work in-school - Prioritising the Return of Senior Phase Learners*" (Education Scotland).

Schools and education colleagues are working hard to provide updated requirements at short notice. On receipt of the information provided by schools we will coordinate transport requirements and schedule the transport.

The Travel Team are also working hard with Special Schools to meet demand at short notice and allocation will be confirmed directly with schools in the first instance as soon as they have addressed requirements.

9. Will school transport have social distancing in place?

We are working very closely with our transport suppliers to ensure they follow current Scottish Government guidance.

Current Scottish Government guidance does not recommend social distancing on dedicated school transport for Special Schools as this is treated as an extension of the school estate. However, Senior Phase Learners will require to physically distance.

Scottish Government guidance recommends social distancing on public transport and recommends that where possible and safe to do so, pupils walk, cycle or wheel to school or are accompanied by parent/carer.

The City of Edinburgh Council is working hard to develop *Safe Spaces for People* to enable children and adults to use public spaces safely.

10. How do I cancel my School Transport?

We understand that parents and carers may not wish to use school transport and have made other arrangements. Please contact school transport to cancel your application if you have changed your mind so that we can allocate the space to another child.

Given the challenges to allocate available places we would ask that you inform school transport if you no longer wish to proceed with your application. This will help us to allocate the space to a child and family who need school transport.

SchoolTransport@edinburgh.gov.uk or telephone Travel Hub on 0131 469 2950.

We are also asking parents to consider taking their child to school wherever possible as not only is this in line with government guidance, it will also reduce pressure on the school bus network and reduce congestion around the schools.

11. How will I know if my child is still eligible for school transport?

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/download/12869/school-transport

If your application for Assisted Transport meets the criteria the Travel Hub will inform your child's transport provider of the days your child will be attending school and any further details provided to you from your child's school that relate to opening hours and days of attending if they are different from what is normally in place.

The Council's statutory walking/qualifying distance is:

- **2 miles or over for primary aged children**
- **3 miles or over for secondary aged children.**

12. How will you ensure school transport is safe?

To ensure the safety of everyone who is travelling we also need to ask you to remind your child of the absolute necessity of behaving appropriately onboard the vehicle, to take up specific seats as directed by the driver, to follow the driver's instructions including when boarding and leaving the transport and to remain seated for the entire journey.

13. Will school transport follow Health and Safety Guidance?

We are instructing transport suppliers to follow Scottish Government guidance which includes actions such as regular and thorough cleaning of vehicles. The Council is also providing local, detailed guidance to our transport suppliers to support them in putting in place the appropriate health and safety measures.

14. What will happen if changes occur during the academic school year and how will I be informed?

The Coronavirus emergency has meant that we have needed to make extensive changes to our school transport arrangements to support children with a safe return to school and to keep the spread of infection to a minimum. We will consider what changes or different arrangements might need to happen during the academic year taking into account the latest national guidance. If there are any changes we will contact parents/carers and schools directly as soon as possible. We will update the Council website as required www.edinburgh.gov.uk/coronavirus

USEFUL CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

SchoolTransport@edinburgh.gov.uk or telephone The Travel Hub on 0131 469 2950.

www.travelinescotland.com

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