



# Thirsk School

& Sixth Form College

## Minibus Policy

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# Thirsk School & Sixth Form College

## Minibus Policy

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## Introduction

- 1.0. A minibus is defined as a small bus that can carry 8 to 16 passengers including the driver. This policy relates to the use of minibuses for:
  - i) Activities arranged by or on behalf of the school and its associated organisations.
  - ii) Home to school transport for those students unable to access the NYC school transport service.
- 1.1. The policy is to be fully applied to minibuses owned or leased by the school.
- 1.2. This document does not attempt to repeat all the statutory and regulatory measures relating to the construction and operation of minibuses. Full observance of such measures is a presumption. It is considered, however, that in a school, rules over and above the standards imposed by law are appropriate when the safety of pupils could be involved. This policy seeks to establish those additional measures. There is inevitably, however, reference to some of the statutory and regulatory measures. In the event of any statutory or regulatory measures or any legal precedence establishing requirements more stringent than those set out in this policy, the former shall prevail.

## Minibus Specifications

- 2.0. As a Section 19 "Small Bus Permit" holder the school must ensure that minibuses comply with all the appropriate Minibus, Road Vehicles and Public Service vehicles regulations. Additionally, however:
  - a) All seats will be forward facing and fitted with a safety belt conforming to the bus manufacturers' recommendations.
  - b) Any minibus fitted for towing a trailer shall have a near side exit door accessible to all passengers.
  - c) School minibuses shall display the school bus sign, depicting a silhouette of two children, at both front and rear.

## Emergency Equipment

- 3.0. Minibuses shall be equipped with the following:
  - a) Spare wheel in good condition.

- b) At least one fire extinguisher.
- c) A clearly marked first aid kit, readily available for use.
- d) Emergency triangle.
- e) Torch.
- f) Bin bags.
- g) Hi-vis vest.
- h) Emergency seat belt cutter and hammer.
- i) Dustpan and brush.

#### Maintenance and Safety Check

4.0. Should the driver find any fault with the minibus as per the bullet points below they should report this to the school Site Manager as soon as possible. If the driver believes that the minibus is not safe to use they should *immediately* contact school where SLT and the Site Manager will endeavour to make alternative procedures regarding transport in a responsive/reactive manner. If the driver believes that there is a risk in using the minibus at any point of travel they should stop and not continue their journey. The **driver** is responsible for the following, under the line management of the school Site Manager:

- a) Ensuring that any defects affecting safety are corrected before the vehicle is allowed on the road.
- b) Carry out daily checks to include:
  - i) Tyres.
  - ii) Brakes.
  - iii) Wheels.
  - iv) Wheel nuts.
  - v) Steering.
  - vi) Lights.
  - vii) Warning instruments.
  - viii) Windscreen washers and wipers.
  - ix) Freedom from oil and fuel leaks.
  - x) Safety equipment including seat belts.
  - xi) Relevant fluid levels e.g. AdBlue, engine oil etc.
- c) Arranging for the implementation of time/mileage maintenance in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendation by an approved agent.

4.1. The school **Site Manager** is responsible for:

- a) Ensuring that the vehicle is at all times capable of passing the Group V Department of Transport test (MOT) and that such tests are carried out by an authorised test station, via our leasing company Lex Autolease, annually on a date not later than the anniversary of first registration.
  - b) Preventative maintenance checks and services via lease company and keeping written records of all weekly safety checks, time/mileage maintenance, Department of Transport tests and any reported defects and repairs.
- 4.2. Drivers of school minibuses and borrowed or hired self-drive vehicles are advised to satisfy themselves, so far as they are able, that the minibus is in a safe condition to drive, including:
- a) Carrying out pre journey checks on brakes and visual checks on wheels, tyres, lights, warning instruments, windscreen washers and wipers and the emergency equipment.
  - b) Report any defects. All major defects are to be reported to the Site Manager as soon as possible. Every 3 months the lease company safety review report is reviewed.
  - c) Arrange for the immediate repair of any defects threatening safety which develop during a journey before proceeding with that journey.
- 4.3. The School shall maintain membership of a vehicle recovery scheme via the lease company to ensure that assistance is available day or night wherever the vehicles may operate. All drivers shall be acquainted with the procedure for using this service with details being available from the handbook within the minibus.

#### Loading and Passenger Conduct

- 5.0. The driver's legal responsibilities include the load (home to school transport) and 'Responsible Adults' (see below – section 7.0a for school trips, not home to school transport) have a duty of care. They should ensure that, subject to any over-riding emergency which itself affects safety, the following rules are observed:
- a) Irrespective of size or age every passenger shall have his/her own seat and seat belt. The practice of passengers travelling in the gangways is expressly forbidden.
  - b) The main responsibility for ensuring good behaviour on home to school transport lies with the students themselves. It also lies with parents/carers/guardians. However, if there are complaints that involve students, these will normally be investigated through the school. If students are found to have behaved in an unacceptable way, then any of the normal range of sanctions used by the school may be applied. This could include suspension from school. In addition, the following may also be applied:

- i) Children may be asked to sit at the front of the vehicle for a set period of time and parents/carers notified.
  - ii) Children may be suspended from all school transport services for a period of time - in the case of extreme and persistent behaviour they may be banned permanently from the transport and parents/carers will be expected to ensure that their child attends school.
  - iii) The Pastoral Care system within school will be used with a consideration of involving other external services to support the family regarding behaviour.
  - iv) The police may be asked to investigate and act as appropriate if the behaviour is serious enough to warrant this (serious may be deemed as either a one-off extreme event or repeated, continual low-level behaviours).
  - v) Parents/carers are expected to meet the cost of repairing any damage caused by their children.
  
- c) School transport should arrive at school no later than 5 minutes before the official opening time following the morning 'pick-ups'. Where possible, vehicles should arrive at school no more than 10 minutes before the end of the school day and leave school between 10 and 15 minutes after the official closing time, for the first run, for the evening 'drop-offs'; this allows students time to catch the bus after P5 if they have had a practical subject such as PE or Food Technology.
  
- d) Should a student miss the home school transport the following procedures apply:
  - i) If a student misses the bus into school, they must contact either their parent/carer to contact school directly or contact school themselves. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to then ensure that their child arrives at school.
  - ii) If a student misses the bus home, they must report to reception where one of the reception team will contact home and the Site Manager. If parents/carers are unable to come and pick up their child within a reasonable timeframe, school will organise one of the following options and then notify parents/carers again to confirm the arrangements:
    - a. Site Manager will contact one of the school minibus drivers to ask them to return to school after their last 'drop-off' or in-between 'drop-offs' to collect said student, (dependent upon available seats etc).
    - b. School will organise a taxi to take the student home.
  
- e) In the event of bad weather/roadworks etc that could lead to delays for the morning 'pick-up' the minibus driver will contact the Site Manager who will then contact reception to message all parents. Accurate loading lists and attached routes to be stored via TEAMS and easily accessible to all members of SLT as well as reception staff, Site

Manager, Bursar, Attendance Officer and Minibus Drivers. At the end of the day if there is a delay regarding 'drop-offs' again the minibus driver will contact the Site Manager who will let reception/SLT know.

- f) Every morning the driver will take a paper register as students embark upon the bus. This register is initially generated by the Attendance Officer who will leave them in their pigeonhole in reception, for the drivers to collect the night before. Any changes to the register must be made by the Bursar/Attendance Officer and updated in the SCHOOL MINIBUS team so that all registers are continually up to date and accurate. On arrival at school, after the last morning run, the registers should be handed into reception DAILY by the minibus drivers, so that reception/Attendance Officer can update any absenteeism during the day for the journey home, this is a safeguarding measure. The updated registers can then be picked up for the end of day run when the drivers arrive at school, this is when they will also pick up the register for the following morning.

Should a student not on the driver's list appear for a morning 'pick-up' they should accept the student onto the bus, ONLY if there is space, so that no young person is left unattended; school is the 'place of safety'. If there is no room to accommodate an unaccounted-for student, the driver must contact the Site Manager immediately to alert them, giving the student's name and year group; the driver must reassure the student that the situation will be resolved, instruct them to remain at the stop and take their contact number should they have a mobile phone with them. For the return journey, if there is an extra student wanting to use the minibus, the driver must leave them at school until the situation has been resolved; all parents MUST notify school well in advance if a regular minibus user is expecting a friend to stay at their house etc (see 5.0g below). School would need to check this with the relevant parent/carers ahead of travel. Similarly, all parents/carers MUST notify school well in advance if students need to change their bus days either as 'one-offs' or on a 'longer term' basis; students MUST NOT simply turn up hoping for a seat on a day they are not allocated one.

- g) Prior to the end of the school day the Attendance Officer will liaise with reception to update the register for the end of the school day, taking into account students who have gone home ill etc so that the drivers are informed. Should a student not appear on the bus on the way home who was expected to be there, the driver should not leave until they have reported this to reception. Reception MUST then contact home and follow usual safeguarding procedures to ensure we establish the whereabouts of students. Students must not simply tell the driver if they are not going to be on the bus on the way home, any changes to travel MUST be rung/emailed into school by parents/carers.
- h) All drivers must have up to date medical/safeguarding information regarding the students expected to travel with them. All loading lists, registers, medical and safeguarding information can be found in the SCHOOL MINIBUS team. Whenever there is a change to the loading list the Bursar/Attendance Officer MUST update the DSLs immediately so that they can update any pastoral/medical/safeguarding information on the relevant spreadsheet within the team. Both minibus drivers will be first aid trained from September 2024 and this will be reviewed every 3 years.

- i) Luggage shall be stored where it does not block exits or movement to exits. If necessary, for trips or fixtures, luggage should be carried on roof racks, trailers, separate vehicles or secured on unoccupied seats.
- j) Flammable or other dangerous substances should not be carried in the bus.
- k) Seat belts shall be worn at all times when the vehicle is in motion. Passengers shall not move around except when the vehicle is parked.

### Drivers

6.0. Minibuses shall only be hired from approved contractors who, as recognised Public Service Vehicle operators, work to the highest legal standards.

6.1. Drivers of school or hired self-drive minibuses must:

- a) Be 23 years of age or over.
- b) Have held a full driving licence for at least 3 years and must have a D or D1 category or PSV or PCV annotation shown on their licence. The school operates under a Section 19 permit and therefore any vehicle above 3500kg may only be driven by a category D1 licence holder. These rules apply to the UK only.
- c) Declare any 'unspent' convictions for traffic related offences. Where there are such convictions, they must be referred to the schools' insurers who must confirm that they will not affect the insurance of the vehicle. In any event unspent convictions for drink driving, dangerous or careless driving will lead to prohibition from driving minibuses on school journeys.
- d) The school is not responsible for any fine received that is a result of driver error; a example would be parking or speeding fine. Any financial penalty should be settled by the driver themselves.
- e) Be currently free from any known illness, disability or condition which can make it unsafe to drive. Disorders of the heart, circulation, brain and nervous system, mental illness and addiction to alcohol or drugs, poor vision, loss or limited use of limbs are typical examples. Any such disorders should be declared to the Office Manager and Site Manager upon interview and/or completion of DBS documents. If there is any doubt qualified medical advice may be sought.
- f) All drivers require CPC and MIDAS training.



## Crewing of Minibuses

- 7.0. The term "Responsible Adult" used in this section is defined as an employee employed as a minibus driver, a teacher or teacher's assistant in the current employ of the school; any other adult who with the approval of the Headteacher is given and accepts a supervisory role in relation to pupils of the school.
- a) When pupils of the school are travelling on a minibus the driver of which is not a Responsible Adult eg a trip or fixture, a Responsible Adult must travel on the vehicle. This should also be read in conjunction with the school's External Visits policy which takes primacy should any advice contained in this policy contradict in any way.
- b) Where parties from the school are operating from a base other than the school and that base has a staff who will assist in the case of an emergency (e.g. a field study centre or armed services camp) the lengths of journeys noted above will refer to that base rather than the School.

## Driver Fatigue

- 8.0. The safety of pupils is paramount. The school will support any Responsible Adult who decides with reasonable grounds that the driver of the vehicle, or they themselves if they are the driver, are for any reason, not entirely fit to drive and should, therefore cancel, delay or break a journey.
- 8.1. During journeys, drivers should take breaks as they consider necessary, but as a minimum it is advised that nobody drives more than 2 hours without a break. After two hours the break should be a minimum of 30 minutes. The maximum number of driving hours in any one day would normally be 8 hours, including breaks.

## Speed

- 9.0. All normal speed limits are to be observed but a maximum speed limit of 60 mph on Motorways and Dual Carriageways and 50 mph on all other roads is imposed on all minibuses carrying pupils of the school. It should be noted that the minibus fleet has been fitted with speed limiters as required by regulation.

## Manoeuvring Of Vehicles

- 10.0. Drivers should be particularly aware that in many instances the vehicle may be manoeuvred on school premises or other areas where children are likely to be moving about. They must always ensure vigilance, only reverse when safe to do so and consider the use of a guide to assist as necessary.

### Overseas Travel

- 11.0. The law concerning driving of minibuses overseas is different to that in the UK and requires such vehicles to be fitted with tachographs and drivers to comply with EC regulations concerning driving hours. Advice must be sought from SLT and Site Manager before a minibus is taken overseas, and use of a professional driver would be advised in most circumstances. A PSV licence is required by law when driving a minibus or vehicle with more than 8 seats overseas regardless of whether a category D1 licence is held.

### Finance

- 12.0 The cost of home to school transport that is delivered by the school minibus is payable half termly via parentpay. The charge for each half term will show on the student parentpay account and should be settled before the end of that half term. Discounts are available for students in receipt of Pupil Premium Funding @ 15% and siblings benefit from a reduction of 10%. Failure to keep up with payments may result in seat allocation being removed.