



THE NORTON
KNATCHBULL
SCHOOL

Policy on the safe operation of Minibuses

Reviewed by	Site Manager
Approved by the Finance & General Purposes committee	3 rd July 2020
Approved by the Full Governing Body	16 th July 2020
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RATIONALE

The School Minibuses are a valuable resource, their purpose being to help to provide pupils with access to school visits as well as extra-curricular activities. It is essential that all users of this resource are aware of all legal and procedural responsibilities pertaining to their use.

The Headteacher and Governors greatly appreciate that staff volunteer to drive minibuses thereby enhancing opportunities for all pupils.

The responsibility placed upon us when conveying passengers in a minibus is very great indeed. We become responsible for other people's loved ones. They are deserving of our best efforts to ensure that their journey, whether of a hundred miles or just across town, is as safe as possible. This policy is intended to assist all those with such a responsibility to make the right judgments. It cannot replace good judgment, but does provide some rules to follow and a framework, which encourages good practice and helps the sensible exercise of responsibility.

Failure to adhere to this policy will result in disciplinary action being taken.

AIMS

- To provide clear procedures relating to the use of minibuses
- To ensure that all users are aware of their legal responsibilities

Definitions

The Norton Knatchbull School has three minibuses. A minibus is defined as a "small bus" that can carry 9 to 16 passengers excluding the driver. Our larger minibus (registration: WL08 CFO) may only be driven by drivers who passed a CAT B driving test prior to 1.1.97. Drivers who passed a car driving test after 1 January 1997 need to have an additional test and medical report to gain a D1 licence, which covers larger minibuses (weighing over 3.5T). The other minibuses are also 16 seat and weigh below 3.5 tonnes which means that drivers are not legally required to hold the D1 license. Hire of self-drive mini buses for school use must only be done by the Site Manager.

Non-profit making organisations like The Norton Knatchbull School (NKS) are not required to have a PSV [Public Service Vehicle] Operators' Licence.

The minibus may not be used for "hire or reward" and is not available for personal use/hire.

For the purpose of this document the Educations Visits Co-Coordinator (EVC) has overall responsibility for school Journeys and Residential Visits. Nominated drivers must be on the school's list of eligible drivers. Responsibility is devolved to the driver.

Also "Residential" visit is defined as a visit or trip by staff and students organised under the auspices of the School and lasting 24 hours or more in duration. Further, any visit or trip lasting less than 24 hours will be defined as "a School Journey".

Eligibility to Drive a Minibus

Those permitted to drive the School Minibus must be at least 21 years old and have a full clean driving licence that they have held for at least two years. Any endorsements incurred should be disclosed as these may affect eligibility to drive the vehicles. Drivers over 70 must have passed a PCV Medical test. All drivers must be medically fit to drive. Drivers must notify the School of any declarations they have made to the DVLA regarding their health.

Any relevant and/or current health issues should be considered in driving risk assessments.

Drivers who passed their driving test after January 1997 (without group D) are now required to hold a vocational driving license too if they are required to drive all the School Vehicles over 3.5 tonnes.

Authorisation and Competence

The fact that a person conforms to the legal requirements does not make them safe or competent to drive a minibus. Therefore, **all** drivers must have successfully completed Minibus Drivers Awareness training and assessment, organised through the School, before driving the minibus. Minibus drivers must be re-assessed every **4 years**, or after any accident if involved in a blameworthy collision, receives penalty points or a concern about their driving is raised. Those who drive infrequently should be assessed more often and anyone returning to drive a minibus after a long period of not doing so should be re-assessed.

NB – Driving the School Minibus is NOT the same as driving a car, it requires different levels of knowledge, skill and awareness. It also carries different legal responsibilities, which MINIBUS tested drivers will have been made aware of.

Day to Day Minibus Operation

Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the school minibuses and final powers of authorisation over their use. This responsibility may be devolved to the Site Manager or Educations Visits Co-Coordinator.

They must ensure that the driver is assessed in their competence to drive, meets appropriate health standards and conforms to School insurance requirements. The original licenses of everyone on the School's approved list of mini bus drivers must be checked annually for penalty points, disqualification or limitations. These checks are carried out by the PA to the Headteacher and a record is kept, together with a copy of all licenses. The Headteacher's PA keeps records of the persons who have been authorised to drive the minibus, the date they were authorised and when they are due for re-assessment.

Drivers' Responsibilities

Those wishing to use the minibus should have booked it out via the online minibus booking system (accessed via the Room Booking Database). All bookings should indicate the times when the vehicle is required.

Drivers should collect the keys and paperwork from the site office. Keys will be issued by a member of the site team, who will check that the driver is listed on the School's list of authorised drivers. Drivers must complete a minibus vehicle check/log sheet prior to every journey (Appendix 1). If the checks give cause for concern about the vehicle's safety, they must not take it on the road and should seek guidance from the Site Manager. **NB: the driver is legally responsible for the condition of the vehicle.** *Drivers should be aware that their licence will suffer if the vehicle is found to be defective.*

Drivers must carry their driving licence **on all** journeys and should at all times adhere to all national laws relating to roads, driving and vehicles.

Before commencing a journey, drivers should undertake a 'physical check' to ensure that all passengers are wearing seat belts. On long journeys where several stops are made, this check should be made before commencing each section of the journey.

The minibus should be collected from and returned to its designated parking bay or garage and the keys and paperwork returned to site office at the end of the journey.

Any defects noted should be reported to the Site Manager as soon as possible. More serious defects **MUST** be reported **IMMEDIATELY**.

The site staff will, in most cases, manage the refilling of fuel. For longer journeys requiring refuelling the fuel card is kept with the vehicle documents. If you use the fuel card you must complete the fuel section on the journey form and attach the fuel receipt. The fuel card is restricted to purchases of fuel and will only work for the vehicle for which it is allocated.

All staff are expected to do a full vehicle sweep on return from every journey and clear any litter/lost property. Vehicles must be returned sufficiently fuelled and in a clean condition. If the minibus is damaged or left in an unacceptable condition the department booking the minibus will be charged the cost of repair and cleaning.

Monthly maintenance checks will be carried out by the site team and any additional cleaning will be charged to the department.

Drivers must notify DVLA Swansea and the Site Manager and Headteacher about any medical condition or defect that might affect their driving and restrictions applied by DVLA, including courses of prescribed medicine and eyesight. They should immediately inform the Site Manager and Headteacher if charged with any motoring offence, even if in their own car, motorcycle, or any other vehicle.

Any penalties incurred whilst driving e.g. parking speeding are the driver's responsibility. The Duty Manager is normally contactable on mobile (07719262065) if there are any concerns.

Vehicle Log Sheet

A log must be maintained for each minibus giving details of the driver, journey and mileage. This enables the site manager to monitor vehicle use, and provide drivers with a clear record of their driving

activities. A log entry should be completed for every journey. The logbook is held in Site Manager Office.

Vehicle Checks and Maintenance

In order to ensure that vehicles are safely used on the highway it is imperative that they are maintained to the very highest standards. The School will undertake regular inspections, service and MOT the buses.

Fire Prevention and First Aid Kit

Each vehicle is equipped with an Emergency Breakdown Pack, including first aid and fire extinguishers. The extinguisher must be in plain view for ease of access in an emergency. The minibus must not be used if an extinguisher is not fitted. Any items used from the first aid kit must be reported to site staff so that stock can be replenished.

SatNavs

If a SatNav is used, the route must be set before the start of the journey. If it is necessary to make adjustments or input new information, this should only be done when the minibus is stationary and in a safe place. When using a SatNav it is essential to be aware of road signs, markings and signals. It may not always be appropriate to follow the SatNavs instructions.

When using a map or written directions, it is important to stop somewhere safe to check directions. Directions must never be checked whilst driving.

Portable SatNavs must never be positioned over an airbag as it would be thrown around the minibus if it went off. The SatNav should be kept close the driver's line of sight so that it can be glanced at it easily. However, it is important that a clear view out of the windscreen is maintained at all times.

Passengers

No vehicle must carry more than one passenger per seat, irrespective of the age of the passengers. The stated passenger capacity of the vehicle must not be exceeded, and standing passengers are not permitted. Passenger seats must be forward facing with an appropriate seat belt.

All children must travel in rear seats (any seat behind the driver) if a child car seat or an adult seat belt is not fitted in the front. The driver is responsible for ensuring that:

- Children aged from three years up to their 12th birthday, and under 1.35 metres (approximately 4'5") tall use an appropriate child restraint if available, or if not available, wear the seatbelt
- Children aged 12 and 13 years (and younger children who are 1.35 metres or taller) use the seat belt.
- Passengers aged 14 years or more travelling in the front seats, or any exposed seat, must wear a seat belt.

Luggage

There are many recorded cases of passengers being injured by unsecured luggage in the event of sudden braking, an emergency stop or an accident. All luggage and authorised equipment must therefore be stored safely and securely. Care must also be taken to ensure that luggage does not block the vehicle gangways, hindering emergency evacuation.

If at any time the Students distract the driver, s/he should stop the bus until the Students are settled. Do not try to continue. Remember that they may also be distracting other drivers.

Where possible park the bus with the side doors to the kerb. Where this is not possible, Students should remain seated until you are able to supervise them from the road.

Reversing Vehicles

Reversing vehicles can be particularly hazardous. The best way of avoiding a reversing accident is to avoid reversing a vehicle wherever possible.

- Always check behind your vehicle before reversing – if necessary, ask another adult/member of staff to watch the area into which you will be reversing.
- If you use a guide, ensure they can be seen at all times whilst manoeuvring – if two members of staff are present, one should be the guide when reversing.
- Ensure rear view mirrors are clean and properly adjusted at all times.
- Students must **never** direct a reversing vehicle.

Passengers' Responsibilities

Drivers should expect responsible behaviour from passengers. For example, passengers are expected to remain in their seat, wear the seat belt, not cause any disturbance or distract the driver, and follow reasonable instructions from the driver to ensure the safety and comfort of themselves and other passengers. Where passengers' behaviour repeatedly causes problems for drivers and driver's assistants, the AHT (behaviour) must be informed and consideration given to whether the passenger should be conveyed by minibus in the future, or whether special supervision arrangements are needed. Any breaches of School rules will be dealt with using usual School policies and procedures

Driver's Assistant

The School owes a duty of care to all passengers conveyed in the minibuses it operates. There may be occasions when an additional adult is required. When possible, this person should be positioned near the back of the minibus to observe behaviour and maintain good order. If the minibus is at full capacity the Drivers' Assistant may sit in the front. The driver's assistant can make and receive phone calls so the driver does not have to. They should also help with reversing and need to be visible at all times to the reversing driver. They should assist in a breakdown or accident and can act as a relief driver if they are trained and authorised to do so.

If the minibus is at full capacity the Passenger Assistant may sit in the front. They must be familiar with passengers who have specific medical needs or challenging behaviour.

Drivers, Driver's Assistants & Passengers

Alcohol/Drugs Policy

Alcohol, illegal drugs and certain prescription drugs plus some over the counter drugs, pain killers, hay fever and cold remedies etc., will affect driver ability, putting their safety and that of their passengers and other road users at risk.

Therefore, everyone driving School vehicles will adhere to the following:

Alcohol

No alcohol to be consumed during the working day.

No alcohol to be present in your system when driving. Be careful about alcohol consumed during the previous evening. IF IN DOUBT, DON'T DRIVE. YOU COULD PUT YOURSELF AND OTHERS AT RISK AND LOSE YOUR LICENCE.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in or around any vehicle.

Drugs

The possession and use of illegal/controlled drugs is a criminal offence. No one should drive if under the influence of drugs or if drugs remain in the system.

Certain prescribed and over the counter drugs can affect driver performance. Check with your doctor if you are unsure and obtain clearance to drive in writing.

Planning for regular journeys and special trips

Approval

Approval of minibus use, whether for regular journeys such as sporting fixtures, or for "one off" use, such as a school visit, must be given by the appropriate level of management as part of the School's existing trips policy and procedures. This management responsibility must be consciously and consistently exercised, as an error in judgment could lead to severe consequences. Where minibuses are used on regular routes e.g. sporting fixtures, regular reviews of usage should be instituted. Points that managers must consider in approving and reviewing minibus use are shown in the following checklist:

- Is a safer/cheaper/more appropriate alternative to the minibus available?
- How will luggage/equipment be carried?
- Have driver's hours and rest periods been taken into account?
- Is approval required from any other source, e.g. appropriate Manager, school governors, parents, careers?
- It is recommended that prior to approval being given a journey plan form should be completed.

Regular Short Journeys

The shortest safe route should be taken which takes in all necessary stopping points. Consideration should be given to short term hazards such as road works which may justify a route change or detour.

Longer Journeys and “One Off” Trips

In planning for longer journeys proper route planning is vital. The length of the journey (and thus the need for breaks/second drivers) can be assessed, stopping points with toilets identified for comfort breaks, parking locations found and alternatives listed. Potential problems or dangers can also be identified. For short or long journeys, regular or otherwise, a list of passengers with the name of the driver/escorts should be made and retained in school, with a copy for the driver. For both short and long journeys sufficient time should be allowed so the driver is not tempted to rush.

Comfort Breaks

Where journeys of more than 2 hours are undertaken, a comfort break of at least 15 minutes should be planned to allow passengers and driver to use toilets, take refreshments and simply get out of the vehicle for a short term. The venue(s) should be identified when planning the trip. Where passengers have special needs, extra care should be taken in identifying suitable facilities, e.g. a disabled toilet, parking facilities which allow sufficient room for a passenger lift to be used etc. Passengers' needs may dictate that a break is necessary on a shorter journey, and this should be considered at the planning stage.

Additional Safety Measures

Mobile Telephone: Staff should carry a School mobile telephone whenever possible. **Mobile telephones must not be used by a member of staff whilst driving and must only be used by the driver when the vehicle is stopped in a safe place.** Further advice about mobile phones and driving is available in RoSPA's Guide 'Driving for Work: Mobile Phones'

Breakdown Recovery:

The School maintains membership of a breakdown organisation for all staff driving the minibuses in case of breakdown. The membership card is issued with the keys to the vehicles and instructions for use are given on the card. Information List: a full list of all passengers, including the driver(s), must be left with Reception. Information regarding the destination and anticipated departure/return times must also be included (either as part of the visits and trips paperwork) or if not a visit/trip, given to Reception prior to departure. An emergency contact number (in most cases a School mobile telephone number) must also be left with Reception.

Breakdown and Accident

An Incident Checklist can be found in the mini bus pack that is provided by the site team and must be taken on every trip.

In the event of breakdown or accident a mobile telephone may save a great deal of difficulty. The School have a mobile phone that is available for use on trips (obtainable from Student Reception).

Breakdown on Ordinary Carriageways

- Move the vehicle as far to the left as possible.
- Switch on the hazard lights.
- If you attempt to find a telephone, do not leave passengers alone in the vehicle.
- If you break down, contact a SLT Duty Manager. Inform them of the situation (i.e. female driver alone etc.). (Duty Manager Mobile 07719262065)
- If someone stops to offer help, stay inside the vehicle with the doors locked. Open the window sufficiently to ask them to go to the nearest telephone and notify the police or rescue service for you. Do not get into the car with a stranger or attempt to hitch a lift.
- If a mechanic or the police arrive and are not in uniform or are in an unmarked vehicle, ask to see some form of identification before getting out of the vehicle.
- Deploy warning triangles or cones if it is safe to do so.

Breakdown on the Motorways

The general procedures are the same as the guidelines for ordinary carriageways. However, extra hazards exist on the motorway.

- Stop on the hard shoulder as far to the left as possible. Turn your steering wheel to the left so that in the unlikely event of a shunt the car does not end up in the road.
- Put your HAZARD LIGHTS on.
- Find the nearest emergency telephone that puts you straight through to the POLICE. These are one mile apart along all stretches of motorway.
- If another vehicle or driver approaches you, pass their details on to the operator and tell the driver that you have done this. If they are just trying to help they will understand.
- Occupants should exit the vehicle to a place of safety:
 - Only use the doors nearest the verge.
 - If there is a crash barrier, all passengers and the driver should assemble on the non-road side of the barrier.
 - Keep clear of the vehicle and well onto the verge.
 - If you are alone leave one passenger door unlocked, so you can get back in the vehicle quickly if you have to.

Guidelines in the Event of an Accident

If you are involved in an accident and you are not injured, see whether anybody is badly injured. If medical attention is required, ensure help is summoned immediately. Do not remove injured people from the car unless they are in danger. Loosen tight clothing, especially around the neck and make sure they are warm. Do not give them anything to eat or drink.

Try to reduce the risk of further collisions if possible by moving the vehicle/s off the road or warning on-coming traffic of a hazard. Do not put yourself at risk by standing on the carriageway.

You will be required to provide the vehicle registration number and current mileage.

Insurance Policy Number will be placed in the vehicle wallet. If the police are in attendance you must obtain the police incident number and the police officer's number.

You are legally obliged to stop after a collision with a person, vehicle, dog, livestock or property. Please take all necessary details of other drivers involved, i.e. make and registration of the vehicle, name and address of the driver, name of insurers and certificate number if known. You must, if required to do so by a person having reasonable grounds, provide the same information. If, having stopped, the exchange of information is not completed for any reason, the driver should report the accident to the police as soon as possible. If possible, obtain names and addresses of witnesses, sketch plans or even photographs, may be of value. **Do not admit liability.** If you are involved in an accident with an unoccupied car, leave a note on the car with your work telephone number. If you are in any doubt as to whether any incident should be reported to the police, please contact The Senior Management Team.

Drivers must not continue to drive a vehicle after an accident resulting in damage to the construction of the vehicle until the vehicle has been inspected. If in doubt, do not drive.

If the vehicle cannot be driven, follow the guidelines – In the event of a breakdown.

All accidents, however minor, must be reported to the Site Manager as soon as possible. If an accident happens outside of school hours, that involves injury to a person or significant damage to property and/or vehicle, the SLT Duty Manager must be contacted. An accident report form should be completed as soon as possible, including police incident numbers and police officers' details. Failure to report an accident may prejudice the position of the School and affect its right to claim under its motor insurance policy.

Notification of Delays

If as a result of any unforeseen circumstances, such as accident or breakdown, there will be a significant delay before passengers reach their destination, then arrangements must be made to inform those awaiting their arrival. These may be spouses, parents, carers or friends. The driver or escort should contact the School, with as much information as possible including the new projected arrival time. Outside of school hours, the SLT Duty Manager should be contacted.

Trailers and Towing

The total weight of the minibus and trailer must not exceed the gross weight shown on the vehicle's plate. When using the vehicle for towing, staff should do so without passengers at first, until they are able to handle and manoeuvre the vehicles correctly and confidently. **It is not permissible to tow a trailer on the new minibus** if you do not hold D on your licence. It will exceed the weight restriction for driving.

Other considerations:

- Comprehensive Insurance cover has been obtained through the School's Insurers for the minibus. Any queries on vehicle insurance can be discussed with the Finance Manager .
- This policy is written in conjunction with the RoSPA guidance to Health & Safety at School and the DVLA Driving a Minibus guide.
- The Minibus is provided for school use only; under no circumstance is it permissible to be used for personal or private hire.