

GUIDELINES FOR ESCORTS
ON
HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT



INTRODUCTION

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council is firmly committed to offering a quality service to pupils and their families, schools and contractors. We therefore need to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils, operators, drivers and escorts on home to school transport.

All escorts will need to establish good relationships:

- ❖ with the children
- ❖ with their parents/carers
- ❖ with the drivers of the vehicles
- ❖ with schools
- ❖ with other escorts



It is hoped that these guidelines, which have been prepared to assist escorts with their duties, will be helpful.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. An escort:

- (a) is responsible for the care and supervision of the children whilst they are travelling to and from school;
- (b) must meet and board the vehicle before the first pupil is collected;
- (c) must ensure that pupils are securely seated and seat belts are fastened before the vehicle proceeds;
- (d) must see that the vehicle stops at each appointed stopping place and that the children board the vehicle safely;
- (e) must see that the children leave the vehicle safely and are handed over to the staff of the school;
- (f) must see that the children alight at their appointed stops. No child should be allowed to leave the vehicle except at the appointed stop unless a change has been confirmed by the Transport Team.

GENERAL GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

2. Home to School Transport is provided from the child's home address (i.e. main place of residence) to school and vice-versa. No variation to this journey can be accommodated without the prior authorisation of the Transport Team.

Variations may only be agreed in circumstances where the contractor is willing to vary the journey, there is no increase in cost and there is no appreciable time penalty for other children on the journey.

The escort is, therefore, responsible for ensuring any changes to the journey or requests made by parents/school/contractor are passed on and authorised by the Transport Team.

3. In order to safeguard the pupils' well being and to protect escorts and drivers it is important for all pupils to be handed over to a responsible person at the end of the school day.

If a parent/carer is not at home to receive their child, you should contact the Transport Team immediately. The Transport Team will then attempt to contact the parent/carer on the telephone numbers we have on file. However, if we cannot locate the parent/carer then we will contact Social Care Direct on 0845 8 503 503 to obtain advice as to the location to which the child should be taken. The escort and driver will then be notified accordingly.

4. The escort's duties do not end until the last child has been taken to her/his appropriate stop. Escorts **must not** leave the vehicle until all pupils have departed from the transport as **there are no circumstances in which a child must be left unattended on the vehicle**. On no account should this duty be delegated to any other person.
5. It is the responsibility of the escort to ensure the good behaviour, conduct and safety of the children in such a way that the driver is not distracted from his/her duties.
6. Any pupil whose behaviour on the vehicle becomes unreasonable should be reported to the Transport Team, Headteacher and parent/carer as soon as possible. **There are no circumstances in which a child should be discharged from the vehicle, or be allowed to leave at an unauthorised stop**.
7. No child should enter or leave the vehicle whilst it is in motion.
8. In order to exercise reasonable care and control, an escort should sit amongst the children rather than travel in the front seat of the vehicle.
9. Where a vehicle collects a child from the home address, escorts will not normally be expected to leave the vehicle and collect the child from the house. **It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure that their child is taken to and from their home and the transport**. The Transport Team will inform the escort when the parents/carers are genuinely not able to do this. Escorts will, however, be expected to help children in and out of the vehicle and provide assistance to those pupils who may be struggling with books and equipment (wherever possible).
10. As well as bringing their children to the pick-up point in the morning, it is also the parents'/carers' responsibility to collect them from the setting-down point in the afternoon.
11. If an escort has a journey involving both children who are able to walk and children who are in a wheelchair, when arriving at the school in the morning children who can walk should be escorted from the vehicle first. When this has been done children in wheelchairs should then be helped from the transport. Under no circumstances should children in wheelchairs be taken from the vehicle and left unattended.



12. If a child is not at the pick-up point at the appointed time in the morning, the vehicle should proceed on its route without undue delay. If a child is persistently late, then the driver/escort will be instructed to wait for 3 minutes only and then proceed. It will then be the responsibility of the parent/carer to take the child to school.
13. If a vehicle breaks down en route, pupils should not be removed until a relief vehicle arrives. The driver should be asked to telephone the school and the Transport Team so that parents/carers can be advised about the situation.

14. In the case of an emergency, (medical or otherwise) the escort should take whatever action could be expected of a reasonable parent. Children should never be left unattended, either on the vehicle or at a setting down point.
15. If a child refuses to board a vehicle or absconds from the vehicle neither the escort nor driver should give chase or attempt to restrain the child in any way. Instead escorts should verbally advise the pupil to return to the vehicle. If the pupil refuses to do this, then the escort should attempt to track where the child is (where this is possible).

The escort should then immediately inform the school and the Transport Team who in turn will notify the parents/guardians and the Police (if appropriate).

If there are other children in the vehicle the escort must remain with these children.

If a child becomes aggressive whilst in the vehicle, placing others at risk, the escort and driver will need to make an informed decision about the safest way of continuing with the journey. If the escort/driver feels it is unsafe to continue they may return the pupil to their home address or to the school (whichever is appropriate) and the parent/guardian will be notified accordingly.

16. If escorts are transporting a child who suffers from seizures they need to be aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a child suffering a seizure en route to/from school.

As with all seizures, it is important not to restrain the child. The most important thing is to prevent the child from hurting himself/herself and to provide reassurance. There is no need to open their mouth or to try to put something between their teeth. ***If the seizure lasts for more than a few minutes, or if one seizure leads straight into another, then urgent medical attention must be sought.***



The protocol to follow in such circumstances is to ring 999, or to arrange for the driver of the vehicle to divert to the nearest hospital, if it is no more than 10 minutes away.

If escorts are in any doubt whatsoever about a child's medical condition then they must immediately call for the emergency services in order that the child can receive urgent medical attention.

17. Journeys are organised for the benefit of the children we transport and they are subject to change **at any time during the school year**. This could include:
 - ❖ adding extra children;
 - ❖ removing children;
 - ❖ splitting a single journey into two separate journeys;
 - ❖ moving escorts to other journeys if we have to because of the needs of the children.

Your operating hours are variable and may be adjusted upwards or downwards during the year in accordance with any changes.

18. Occasionally, it may be necessary for an escort to deliver items, such as correspondence, money or medicines, to a designated member of school staff, or from school to home. If this is the case it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that items such as correspondence or money should be placed in a sealed envelope clearly marked with the child's name as well as the name of the person receiving the item. Parents are encouraged to avoid sending cash, wherever possible. Escorts are asked to respect the confidentiality of such matters.

Similarly, it is the parent's responsibility to ensure medicines are marked with the child's name and placed in a bag clearly displaying the child's name. The escort should then ensure the bag is kept out of reach of children whilst on the vehicle and delivered to the appropriate member of school staff.

19. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that any child who suffers from asthma and requires an inhaler makes appropriate arrangements for this to accompany them at all times whilst on the vehicle. The inhaler should be placed in a bag clearly displaying the child's name. The escort should then ensure the bag is kept out of reach of children whilst on the vehicle and delivered to the appropriate member of staff.

If the inhaler is required whilst the child is in transit it will be expected that older children will be able to administer this themselves. In exceptional cases ie. very young children, the escort may help provided the parent of the child has given their prior written consent and the escort is clearly provided with instructions on how to administer this.

Apart from those escorts who have been specifically trained to administer suction, rectal diazepam or have been given permission by parents to help with asthma inhalers and have received the appropriate training **NO DRUGS/ MEDICINES SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED** by escorts.



20. There must be **NO SMOKING** on the vehicle by escorts or drivers. Escorts must not leave children unattended on the vehicle for the purpose of smoking.
21. Children must not be offered food or drink as this might be contrary to their dietary requirements. In addition, such an offer may encourage some children to accept favours from strangers.
22. Pupils whilst in transit should not normally consume food or drink. The only exception may be diabetic children who may need to consume food or drink, which they may carry, to raise unexpected low blood sugar levels. **However, this should not normally occur in pupils with well-controlled diabetes.**
23. Escorts must treat all pupils fairly and maintain a civil and polite attitude at all times. **NEVER** make personal remarks, swear, argue or threaten pupils.
24. Escorts are expected to arrange dental and doctor's appointments outside their normal working hours unless these are of course emergencies. In the circumstances a dental or doctor's appointment card will be required to verify proof of attendance and in most cases these will be deemed as unpaid leave of absence.

Attendance at hospital appointments will attract paid leave but the Transport Team will require two weeks advance notice of the appointment together with a copy of the hospital appointment card or letter. Other than in the most exceptional of circumstances approval will NOT be given for unpaid leave during term time.

25. Drivers are responsible for securing wheelchairs with clamps and webbing restraints and operating tail-lifts. However, escorts should be made familiar with both and this could be best undertaken on the 'dummy runs' prior to the commencement of journeys in September.
26. Drivers should have access to a mobile phone, radio or other two-way communication. However, escorts should familiarise themselves with the appropriate communication should they need to raise the alarm in the case of an emergency.
27. As a general rule the Transport Team do not allow parents to travel on any of the home to school transport journeys but there may be occasions when this is allowed as a "one off". For example, if a parent has been due to attend an annual review in school and they have no transport and live at the opposite end of the district to the school the Local Authority may help out. In order to do this the Transport Team must receive prior notification, there must be escorts on the journey, sufficient room on the vehicle for the parent and there must be no additional costs incurred by the Transport Team as a result.

This will, however, be the exception rather than the rule and the decision as to whether a parent travels or not must be approved by the Transport Team and not individual escorts or contractors.

28. The provision of home to school transport is all about balancing the needs of the service against what is safe and reasonable in all the circumstances. No escort will be allowed to take their own child on any of the journeys. It is, therefore, important that any childcare arrangements are put in place prior to accepting any escort work.
29. If escorts are encountering problems on their journeys then it is important that any concerns are put in writing to the Transport Team. It is important to provide a clear written statement in order that we have an official record of your complaint/concern. This may be part of a formal investigation and help us take any necessary action.
30. Any escort who becomes pregnant must notify the Transport Team in writing immediately. A certificate from your doctor or midwife confirming your pregnancy will be required. There may be particular work situations where there are recognised risks to new and expectant mothers and/or their child and it is, therefore, important you notify the Transport Team in order that the appropriate risk assessment can be carried out.
31. The general policy of the Local Authority is to provide travel assistance between home and school only. However, there may be exceptional cases where pupils are transported to/from respite centres. These can be quite complex cases and will be the exception rather than the rule. In the circumstances no pupil escort must transport a child to respite without the prior approval of the Transport Team.
32. Whilst it is a very rare occurrence there will be situations when adverse weather conditions apply. If it is felt by the Contractor that due to health and safety conditions it is unsafe to undertake the journey it will have to be cancelled. If this happens the Contractor will be responsible for notifying the Escorts concerned.

Every effort will be made by the Transport Team to notify parents and schools but in cases of severe weather it may not always be possible to notify parents promptly because of the work involved. We hope that these occasions will be extremely rare.

33. If escorts are to avoid injury, any handling should be carefully considered and planned beforehand.

For whatever reason, a child may resist attempts to lift or transfer them. This situation, apart from a risk of being bitten, scratched, punched etc involves severe risk of back injury.

An escort should not place themselves at risk and rather than risk injury by handling an aggressive or unco-operative child, they should adopt an encouraging and reassuring manner and wait for assistance. It is often far easier for 2 or more "handlers" to carry out a lift together than it is for one person.

It may be that an older child requires a car seat as opposed to a booster seat which the child has outgrown or they may need to travel in a wheelchair. The vehicle transporting the child may no longer be appropriate. If you have any concerns then please notify the Transport Team immediately.

34. **All accidents/incidents to escorts and pupils must be reported to the Transport Team at County Hall** (this includes physical injuries such as biting, scratching and damage to property such as spectacles being broken).

If the vehicle has been involved in an accident and the emergency services are called it is important for the escort to reassure the children as much as possible. **NEVER LEAVE THE CHILDREN UNATTENDED.**

It is important that the Transport Team are notified as soon as an accident occurs in order that the school and parents/carers can be advised about the situation.

Details will then be recorded in the Accident Book maintained by the Transport Team. The escort(s) will be sent an accident/incident report form which you must complete and return to the office and you will be advised on how to complete the form, if required.

35. All escorts must wear their individual identity badges at all times. New escorts must carry their letter of appointment until the identity badge is issued.
36. Single person journeys (SPJ) will only be provided as a last resort in cases where pupils place themselves, escorts, driver and other road users at risk – these will normally be pupils who present severe and challenging behaviour. There will also be some cases where a SPJ is approved due to the special requirements (ie complex medical needs) of the child. Single journeys will normally be for a fixed period pending a review and must be supported by a written recommendation from the Headteacher at the school and the Special Educational Needs Group.
37. The protection and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and we all have a part to play to make sure that children are safe. If you are worried or concerned about any child in your care then you must report your concerns direct to the Transport Team in the first instance. The Transport support Officer will then take full details and pass these to the appropriate agencies for investigation. All information will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

If you are unable to contact the Transport Team then you should contact the Headteacher at the school or alternatively Wakefield Social Care Direct on 0845 8 503 503.

The issues you raise may be of a highly sensitive nature and in the interests of confidentiality and child protection you must not discuss your concerns with friends, parents or other work colleagues.

38. From time to time there are a number of children who experience problems on home to school transport and when this happens we may have to remove them as an interim measure until a solution can be found. This is always done as a last resort to provide us with an opportunity to work closely with parents, school and other professionals in trying to come to a satisfactory conclusion and to eventually place the pupil back on home to school transport.

Following the issue of a warning letter to parents regarding their child's behaviour it will be normal policy for the school to convene a meeting where all relevant personnel, including parents, will be invited to explore issues surrounding the difficulties and discuss possible solutions.

The LA will make the decision as to whether a child should be withdrawn from transport. This is not a decision that can be made by individual escorts, drivers, Operators and Metro. However, it is appreciated all parties including parents will normally be involved in the final decision making process by the LA.

39. Escorts will be required to make every possible effort to attend relevant training courses organised by the Home to School Transport Team and to participate in the supervision/appraisal process.
40. Escorts must wear designated protective clothing at all times whilst on duty in line with health and safety procedures and to use appropriate safety equipment, where appropriate (i.e. high visibility tabards)