

Integrated Transport Unit

COVID-19 Pandemic - Information Regarding Home to School Transport For Parents / Carers of Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Background

In response to the global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic emergency, the Welsh Government closed all schools for education from 20 March 2020, with only a limited number remaining open to provide childcare for key workers and vulnerable learners.

On 3 June 2020, the Welsh Government (WG) announced that learners will have the opportunity to return to school from 29 June 2020 for four weeks before the summer holidays. Learners will be taught in small groups but will not be in school every day. Only a third of the learners will be in school at any one time. This is the opportunity for learners to see their teachers, reflect and catch up on their learning and prepare for September.

As social distancing is extremely challenging, we are encouraging parents and carers to take children to school by walking or cycling, or alternatively by private car, rather than using dedicated school transport.

As this will not be possible for some residents, the Council is to resume all its dedicated school transport services, operating at 20% capacity, for vulnerable learners and those who have no other alternative means of transport from 29 June 2020. Only those students who have been contacted by their school to confirm their transport arrangements will be able to travel. Further information is available on the Council's website www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolfaqs.

It is vital that learners should not travel on school transport if they are feeling unwell, particularly if they have symptoms of COVID-19, which include a new, continuous cough, high temperature, or loss of taste or smell, or if they live in a household with someone showing any of these symptoms. They should self-isolate and stay at home.

Information

This information has been produced for families of children and young people with additional learning needs who use home to school transport.

The Council understands that families may be anxious about home to school transport during the COVID-19 pandemic. This information provides detail about the measures we have introduced and how this may affect your family.

It covers information regarding:

1. Safety measures on home to school transport;
2. What is happening over the coming weeks;
3. How this may affect your family;
4. Next steps.

1. **Safety measures on home to school transport**

The Council has followed the Welsh Government guidance <https://www.gov.wales/coronavirus> to ensure that it transports children and young people with additional learning needs as safely as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the number requiring transport increases, we will continue to work within the latest Welsh Government guidelines to maintain the safety of all learners.

Seating and on the vehicle

Social distancing applies to children and young people, as well as adults, in order to help minimise the risk of transmission of the virus. Capacity on the vehicles is reduced to around 20% and those travelling will be spread out.

A seating plan will be in place for all journeys and seats will be clearly marked where they are not to be used. As a minimum, your child will:

- have an empty seat to their right and left OR;
- be seated at the end of a row, with an empty seat next to them;
- there will be no face to face seating.

Larger vehicles may have to be used to ensure social distancing, so it is unlikely that taxis (cars) will be used. The vehicle used to transport your child may be larger than what they are used to. If a taxi is used, there may be a screen separating the child from the Driver and Passenger Assistant.

Vehicles will be well ventilated during the journey, so the windows will be open.

While parents / carers may feel apprehensive about the risks in using school transport during the coronavirus pandemic, they should decide whether to do so or if they prefer, they should make their own arrangements to transport their child to and from school.

If you decide that you would prefer to take your child to school yourself, please advise the Headteacher who can allocate the space to another child who needs the transport.

Drivers and Passenger Assistants

There may be a change to your child's usual Driver and Passenger Assistant due to 'shielding' measures but the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) will endeavour to maintain consistency wherever possible. The same vehicles and staff will be used to provide transport on a daily basis wherever possible.

You will be required to provide assistance when putting your child on the vehicle, such as fastening seat belts whilst ensuring social distancing from the Driver and Passenger Assistant. Please ensure that you wash your hands before providing any assistance and use hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol.

It is appreciated that some children and young people may require additional assistance whilst travelling and social distancing will not be possible. Risk information will be provided in such circumstances and Drivers and Passenger Assistants will need to use the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

PPE will normally include aprons and gloves. Face coverings and visors are not included in current Welsh Government guidance but some Drivers and Passenger Assistants may choose to wear them.

Cleaning and Sanitising

Vehicles will be cleaned before and after each journey paying particular attention to touch points including door handles, keys, handrails, head/armrests, seat backs, seat cushions, seat belts, driver controls.

Where possible cleaning products that will kill COVID-19 virus such as the ones manufactured to British Standard **BS EN 1276** or **BS EN 13697** will be used to protect against COVID-19.

2. What is happening over the coming weeks

You will be provided with the list of days that your child will be attending school. Transport will NOT be provided other than that which has been agreed with the school. The times your child is transported may differ from their usual times but you will be advised of any changes by your child's school before transport commences.

Changes in guidance issued by the Welsh Government as it seeks to control the virus are expected to continue throughout the summer. The Council will be monitoring those changes to ensure that the appropriate transport arrangements are in place for September. You will be contacted before the start of the new Academic Year to explain any changes in transport arrangements for September 2020.

3. How will this affect you and your child

Transport to school will be different from what your child is used to as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures that are seeking to halt its spread. It would be useful if you could talk to your child about PPE and explain that the Driver and Passenger Assistant will probably be wearing gloves, aprons and in some cases a face covering and / or a visor.

Please show them pictures where possible and explain that it is nothing for them to be frightened of. Instead it is a way of making sure that they are safe during their journey to and from school. It would also be useful if you could explain to your child why they are unable to sit next to their friends.

A short social story '*My Journey to School*' follows at the end of this information. It may be of use when explaining to your child how the transport arrangements will differ from what they are used to.

While parents / carers may feel apprehensive about the risks in using school transport during the coronavirus pandemic, they should decide whether to do so or if they prefer, they should make their own arrangements to transport their child to and from school.

If you decide that you would prefer to take your child to school yourself, please advise the Headteacher who can allocate the space to another child who needs the transport.

4. Next steps

Home to school transport will continue to be provided for children and young people with additional learning needs, in line with Welsh Government guidance, and work will continue during the summer holidays to ensure the appropriate transport arrangements are in place for September 2020. You will be advised of transport arrangements before the commencement of the new term in September.

23 June 2020

Integrated Transport Unit

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Related Links

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

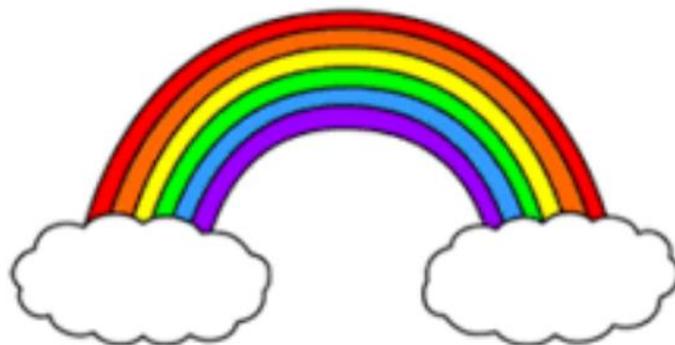
www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolfaqs.

My journey to school

My journey to school will be different

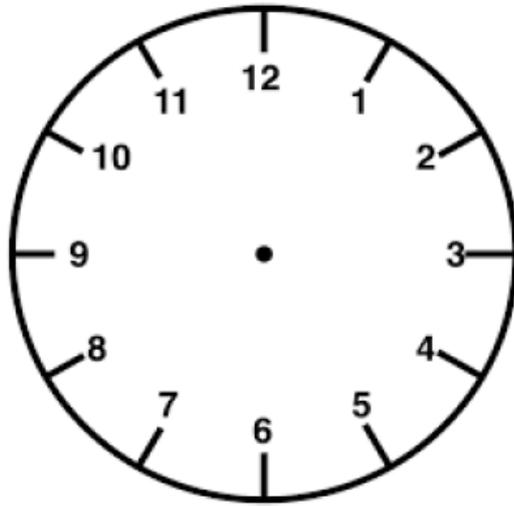


This is to help stop the spread of coronavirus and keep everyone safe



*Stay safe
everyone.*

I might travel at a different time



I might not have the same driver and passenger assistant



My driver and passenger assistant might wear gloves and an apron



They may also wear a mask, visor, or a covering over their mouth.



Do not be afraid it is protect you.

I will travel with less people

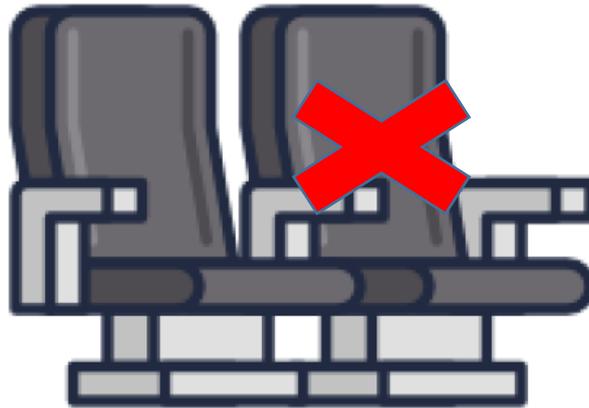
I might not travel with my friends or the same children who were on the minibus before



I may be in a larger vehicle than I travelled in before



I will not have anyone sat next to me



I cannot eat or drink on the minibus

