

School Transport Operator, Driver and Escort Code of Conduct



August 2024

All operators, drivers and escorts must read and fully understand the contents of this booklet and carry one with them, for reference, on every school/college contracted transport journey. When the term 'pupil' is used it also means 'student' if relevant. If any operator, driver or escort has any questions or comments regarding this booklet, please email SchoolTransport@pkc.gov.uk

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1 Contractors/operators – general

Please ensure that staff and vehicles meet all statutory requirements and other instructions of the Council as detailed in the relevant Conditions of Contract and General Specification for Transport of Passengers.

Drivers/escorts should be fully briefed on the operation of education transport arrangements, with particular attention given to this 'Code of Conduct'.

Provide all operational staff with current pupil lists, full operational details and contact telephone numbers and ensure that these are stored securely. Any out-of-date pupil details must be securely destroyed.

Ensure that operational staff undertake the contract/service to the agreed scheduled route and timetable, observing all pick-up/drop-off points detailed on the pupil list – any practical difficulties encountered in achieving this must be reported to the Public Transport Unit.

Operational and office staff should be fully aware of the contingency plans that are in place to deal with vehicle failures, staff unavailability and other emergencies, such as a pupil being taken ill.

Check that any specialist equipment is in good working order and that staff are trained in the correct use of the equipment. Report any breakages/malfunctions to the Public Transport Unit immediately.

It is an expectation that the Contractor shall advise the Council of any Drivers that have been convicted of a road traffic offence (which shall include Drivers that have received a fixed penalty notice for a road traffic offence) during the currency of the contract so that the Council may determine if the Driver is suitable.

2 Drivers – journey checks

Prior to your journey, check that the vehicle is roadworthy and is not in contravention of any relevant regulations or legislation.

Ensure that you have full operational details of the contract/service you are to drive including current pupil lists, timetable/duty board, route map (if appropriate), Code of Conduct booklet and school bus signs (if appropriate).

Ensure that there is a mobile telephone (or equivalent) in the vehicle and you and the escort (where provided) are aware of the procedures to be followed in the case of a breakdown or other emergency. As a minimum you should have contact telephone numbers for your operational base, the school(s) served, any operators connecting with your contract and the Public Transport Unit.

At the end of each journey a cursory check should be undertaken to ensure all pupils have left the vehicle. This is particularly relevant for larger capacity vehicles operated.

3 Pupil lists – general

Pupils are transported to school/college on education transport and additional support needs transport contracts (specifically set up for the purpose) and on local bus and local school bus services. Pupil lists detail the type of transport, give the name of the contractor/operator, show details of any connecting contracts and services, and provide other information on the transport requirements of the specific pupils.

The vast majority of pupils will be making a return journey each school/college day. Where a pupil's travel arrangements differ from the norm, or they have special requirements, an appropriate letter code will appear in the category column. The most common ones will be:

- A** the pupil will travel in the mornings (am) only
- C** the pupil travels on a concessionary basis
- P** the pupil will travel in the afternoons (pm) only
- S** the pupil travels on a safety basis
- W** the pupil must travel in a wheelchair
- B** the pupil requires a booster cushion

Details of other code letters which appear in the category column are shown on the pupil lists.

Updated pupil lists will be issued as required – out-of-date lists should then be destroyed securely, bearing in mind that personal information on the pupils is confidential.

If a pupil list contains information that is thought to be incorrect, this should be notified to the Public Transport Unit for checking and reissuing as appropriate.

4 Pupil lists – education transport/additional support needs transport contracts

The pupil lists show those pupils who have been authorised to travel on each contract. Pupils who are not named on a contract list should not be transported on the contract vehicle, except as detailed in Section 8.

Contractors, if requested to do so by the Public Transport Unit, will contact pupils on their pupil lists prior to the start of the academic year to confirm the transport arrangements for the first morning of the new session.

Some pupils are transported on a concessionary basis and they are identified by the code letter 'C' in the category column. Contract routes must not be altered to accommodate concessions.

The Public Transport Unit will make all decisions regarding which pupils will be conveyed on each contract, including concessions.

A designated pick-up/drop-off point will be allocated for each pupil detailed on the pupil lists. Unless otherwise authorised by the Public Transport Unit, pupils will only be permitted to board/alight the transport contract(s) at the point(s) specified. If a parent/carer or pupil asks a driver to pick up or set down at a different location than that advised by the Public Transport Unit, this should not be agreed to without contacting a member of the Public Transport Unit first.

Teachers or school/college personnel should not be conveyed on contract vehicles without authority having been given by the Public Transport Unit.

Do not agree to requests from pupils/parents/carers for unauthorised pupils to have an 'unofficial' lift to/from a friend's home. In addition, do not agree to requests from unauthorised parents/carers or other adults to have an 'unofficial' lift in a school contract vehicle.

On additional support needs transport contracts, where an escort is allocated to a contract, details about the escort(s) are shown on the pupil list.

5 Pupil lists – local bus/local school bus services

Pupil lists show those pupils who are to receive free transport. Pupils, who are not listed, can be conveyed in any available seats like other members of the general public, on payment of the appropriate fare. Certain exceptions, where a fare should not be charged, are detailed in Sections 7 and 8.

6 Travel passes – education transport contracts

Secondary school pupils who have been authorised to travel on education transport contracts operated by buses or coaches will be issued with a Perth and Kinross Council School Travel Pass and this will state the contract(s) they are allocated to.

Travel passes are not issued to any primary school pupils travelling on education transport contracts, secondary pupils travelling on taxis/private hire cars or on additional support needs transport contracts.

Where relevant, the travel pass colour will be stated on the contract pupil list.

The travel passes will be distributed to pupils by their school/college on the first day of the new session. All listed pupils will travel to school/college on the first morning without a travel pass but should

be in possession of a letter of authorisation from the Public Transport Unit.

Travel passes are only valid for the contract(s) specified on the pass.

The travel passes should be checked on every journey as each pupil boards the vehicle. In the case of a lost pass or defaced pass, the pupil should be advised to obtain a replacement.

Pupils who claim they have lost their pass, but appear on the pupils list, should not be refused access to the vehicle on their in-bound journey, but should be told to obtain a letter of authorisation before their homeward journey.

Pupils, not on the pupil list, who do not have travel passes, can be transported on the in-bound journey if there is spare capacity and their name and address is obtained. The operator should then advise the school. Any such pupil should be refused travel on the homeward journey unless they are in possession of a letter of authorisation from their school/college.

Any school pupil who loses their travel pass or whose pass is damaged will be required to apply for a replacement pass via MyPKC on Perth and Kinross Council's website. When waiting for a replacement pass, a pupil should be in possession of an appropriate letter of authorisation.

Any pupil failing to comply with a request from a driver to obtain a replacement pass should be reported to their school/college.

7 Travel passes – local bus/local school bus services

Every pupil who has been authorised to travel on either a local bus or local school bus service will be issued with an appropriate travel pass.

The travel pass colour for the route in question will be stated on the pupils list.

The travel passes will be issued to pupils by their school/college on the first day of the new session. All listed pupils will travel to school/

college on the first morning without a travel pass but should be in possession of a letter of authorisation from the Public Transport Unit.

Travel Passes are only valid for the service(s) specified on the pass.

The travel passes should be checked by the driver as each pupil boards the vehicle. Pupils, not on the pupil list, who do not have valid travel passes should pay the appropriate fare for the journey.

A pupil without a travel pass, who appears on the pupils list, should not be refused access to the vehicle on their in-bound journey, but should be told to obtain a letter of authorisation before their homeward journey.

If a pupil presents themselves for transport on a feeder vehicle remote from their school or home address, and they do not have a pupil's travel pass and are not on the pupil list, the driver must contact the Public Transport Unit for advice to establish if the pupil should be transported.

If a pupil's travel pass has been damaged, or is not clearly legible, the pupil should be advised to obtain a replacement.

A pupil who loses their travel pass or whose pass is defaced will be required to apply for a replacement pass from MyPKC at Perth and Kinross Council's website. When waiting for a replacement pass, a pupil should be in possession of an appropriate letter of authorisation to enable him/her to continue to receive free travel.

Any pupil failing to comply with a request to obtain a replacement pass, will be required to pay the appropriate fare for the journey.

Schools/colleges have been reminded that a season ticket valid for travel on the route of one bus company cannot be used on another company's buses travelling on the same or a similar route. Education transport contract passes are not valid on local bus or local school bus services.

8 Pupils starting during the school year

A number of pupils (entitled to free transport) will start school/college during the academic year. On an in-bound journey, if a new pupil does not have a valid pass, or does not appear on the relevant pupil list, they should be transported on the vehicle subject to a spare seat being available. The pupil should be informed to seek authorisation for travel from the school/ college office prior to the homeward journey.

While a new pupil's application form is being processed (this will take approximately ten working days) they should be transported on production of a letter of authorisation from their school/college.

9 Safety during the operation of a journey – general

The operator, and their staff, will ensure that the vehicle used has sufficient seating capacity to provide one seat for each pupil entitled to free transport, and a seat for the escort (if allocated).

When undertaking a journey, the operator will take all reasonable steps, and instruct drivers/escorts accordingly, to ensure the security, safety, dignity and comfort of pupils in their care. In cases where an escort is provided, whilst it is primarily the responsibility of the escort to deal with the pupils and their parents/carers, the driver and escort shall always co-operate with each other.

The operator, and his drivers/escorts will observe the following:

- Ensure that pupils are picked up and set down at a suitable and safe place, with particular attention paid to any hazards, traffic or obstruction.

- All doors will be opened/properly fastened by the driver/escort before/after a pupil enters or leaves the vehicle and the driver/escort will forbid pupils to touch the handles of the doors.

- Ensure that all pupils are properly seated before moving off and remind pupils to fasten their seat belts.

When moving off, drivers must pay particular attention to nearside mirrors in case latecomers attempt to board.

The driver/escort will ensure that pupils remain properly seated while the vehicle is in motion.

As far as is practicable, no pupil will be permitted to leave his/her seat until the driver/escort has opened the door and given permission to alight.

The driver/escort will ensure that pupils are comfortable throughout their journey.

Other than in exceptional circumstances (as authorised by the Public Transport Unit), where a vehicle connects with either a contract or a local service vehicle, the operator will arrange the journey times so that the vehicle arrives at the connection point not more than five minutes before the due departure of the other vehicle. The vehicle should wait for the other vehicle for up to ten minutes after its scheduled time of arrival. Should the other vehicle fail to arrive within that time and there are pupils who should be transferred to that other vehicle, the operator will take all reasonable steps to take those pupils to their respective homes or provide shelter at the operator's own premises (pending alternative transport arrangements being made). Contact details for the operator of the connecting contract/service are stated on the pupils list.

In no circumstances should any pupils be left unattended to await a connection which has failed to arrive at the expected time.

The driver/escort will ensure that all doors and emergency exits remain free of any obstruction, giving a clear exit in the case of an emergency.

Drivers should note that at the set-down points on the homeward journey they should not assist pupils in crossing the road – this is the responsibility of the parent/carer.

Pupils should be discouraged from crossing in front of the vehicle.

In no circumstances will the driver/escort permit any pupil to alight temporarily at an intermediate point on a journey.

The driver/escort will ensure they are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures for the vehicle in use.

The driver/escort will ensure they are familiar with the location and use of the first aid kit and fire extinguisher(s) carried on the vehicle.

Drivers and escorts shall not give passengers sweets, snacks or drinks during the journey or at any other time.

Drivers should not leave the vehicle with or without other pupils still on board to either escort a pupil to their house or collect them from their house.

10 Seat belts

Drivers should ensure that all seat belts are in correct working order and, if requested, should demonstrate their correct use to pupils.

In respect of vehicles adapted to carry up to sixteen passengers, drivers/escorts must ensure that pupils wear the seat belts provided, irrespective of the age of the pupil, unless the Council have specified that an alternative safety system should be used, eg an additional safety harness. Any pupils who refuse to wear their seat belt should be reported to the school and the Public Transport Unit also advised.

For vehicles adapted to carry seventeen or more passengers which have seat belts fitted, drivers must ensure that pupils are fully aware of any seat belt wearing requirements that have been introduced by the Department for Transport (DfT).

In line with the Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Act 2017, all contract vehicles undertaking education transport contracts for Perth and Kinross Council are contractually required to have every forward and rear facing seat fitted with a seat belt. It is good practice,

where practicable, for pupils to be notified that they must wear seat belts through an official announcement by the driver. Operators should contact the Public Transport Unit to report details of a specific contract(s) where they are aware that pupils are not wearing their seat belts. The Public Transport Unit will then liaise with the school(s) about any issue(s) reported.

11 Drop-off/pick-up arrangements at school

Drivers must ensure that they strictly follow the drop-off/pick-up arrangements that have been made by the school or the Public Transport Unit. If there are designated parking bays they must be used and no drop-off or pick-up should take place at any other non-designated area.

In the morning, the vehicle must arrive at the school/college at the stated arrival time on the contract timetable provided by the Council to avoid congestion at the school. This can be anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes before the official start of the school day. In the afternoon, the vehicle must arrive at the school/college at the stated arrival time on the contract timetable provided by the Council. This will usually be 5 or 10 minutes before the official end of the school day. In some circumstances it may be 15 minutes after the end of the school day, for example if the vehicle is required to undertake a double run. If this is the case then it will be clearly stated on the contract timetable provided by the Council.

It is an offence to leave a vehicle engine running unnecessarily while that vehicle is parked. Therefore, when you are parked, please ensure that, if parked for more than a few minutes, your engine is switched off so that it is not idling. Drivers should be aware of the need to improve local air quality for the benefit of people's health in this regard.

If any drivers have problems meeting the times stated on the contract timetable, they, or their manager, should contact the Public Transport Unit so that the timings can be revised.

12 School bus signs

PSV licensed contractors/operators must ensure that school bus signs of the appropriate legal sizes are displayed on school bus routes where it is clearly specified on the pupil list. The front sign must not be less than 250mm² and the rear sign not less than 400mm².

The retro-reflective yellow school bus signs must be placed at the front and rear of the vehicle. The signs must be clearly visible to road users; signs should not be placed behind tinted vehicle windows.

Hazard warning lights can also be used on a discretionary basis as detailed in the Road Vehicles Lighting (Amendment) Regulations 1994.

PSV licensed contractors/operators must clearly display destination signs (outward and return) on the front of the vehicle, including the destination and contract/service number.

13 Misbehaviour by pupils

In the first instance the driver/escort should warn the pupil(s) about their behaviour and ask them to stop misbehaving.

In cases of more serious or repeated misbehaviour, the driver/escort should take all reasonable steps to identify properly the pupil(s) concerned. The driver/escort may ask for and retain the pupil's season ticket/travel pass (where issued) as proof of identity. Having identified the pupil(s), the driver/ escort should report the incident directly to the appropriate school/college and to their employer.

A contractor/operator receiving a report of misbehaviour should send the details to the appropriate school/college, with a copy to the Public Transport Unit, as soon as possible to ensure that prompt remedial action is taken.

The driver/escort should not eject a school pupil from a vehicle for misbehaviour. In a severe case of misbehaviour which affects the safety of the vehicle and/or other passengers, the driver/escort will seek assistance from school staff or the police. College students

(mainstream) may, however, be ejected from a vehicle if deemed absolutely necessary for the safety of either the vehicle or the other passengers.

14 CCTV on school transport

The Council will allow and, on specified routes require, the use of closed circuit television and recording systems (CCTV) on buses conveying children to and from schools. Any use of CCTV for education transport purposes is strictly governed by a protocol agreed between the bus operator and the Council. Any failure to follow agreed protocols will be treated as a serious breach of the relevant Conditions of Contract. Taxis/private hire vehicles with CCTV provision must also comply with the same provisions.

15 Delays

In the event that the vehicle is delayed, for whatever reason, by more than 10 minutes in either the morning or afternoon, the operator should at the earliest opportunity contact firstly the school and then the Public Transport Unit to advise them of this, in case concerned parents/carers telephone. Additionally, if the contract is delayed and it connects with another feeder taxi or bus contract, then the Operator must advise the feeder transport operator of this delay. Contact details for connecting feeder operators are noted at the bottom of all pupil lists.

16 Safety in the event of a breakdown or an accident

In the event of a vehicle breakdown or accident, the driver/escort will telephone for assistance or ask another road user to convey a message. At no time should the pupils remaining in the vehicle be left unattended. Drivers/escorts should notify school(s)/college(s)/parents/carers accordingly. If the circumstances are deemed to be dangerous, the pupils should be guided in an orderly manner to a place of safety and instructed to remain there until alternative transport arrangements can be organised.

On no account should any pupil be permitted to either walk home with, or be transported home by, any adult who has not been authorised by the pupil's parent/carer directly to the driver. This includes other pupil's parent/carer or adults that the pupil agrees to go with. It must be the pupil's parent/carer who authorises the adult to the driver.

If an accident occurs, involving either a vehicle whilst undertaking a journey for the Council or a passenger on any such vehicle, the operator must immediately (by telephone) advise the Public Transport Unit of the incident, and within three days supply a full written account of the circumstances surrounding the incident. If any party involved in the accident suffers an injury (however minor), the incident must be reported to the police as soon as is reasonably practicable, and in any case within 24 hours. In the event the transport becomes immobilised, pupils shall be instructed to stay on the vehicle until rescue can be organised. If the circumstances are deemed dangerous, the pupils should be guided in an orderly manner to a place of safety and instructed to remain there until alternative transport arrangements can be organised.

17 Adverse weather conditions

In adverse weather conditions the operator, and the escort (where provided), should liaise with parents/carers and the school(s)/ college (s) served regarding the operation and routing of the school/ college transport vehicle to ensure the safety of the pupils. Operators should fully participate in any arrangements set up by schools/ colleges to ensure prompt transmission of information to parents/ carers/pupils during periods of adverse weather.

The driver must use his/her discretion to decide whether a road is passable or not.

At their discretion drivers may abandon a morning journey and return all pupils, already picked up, to their homes and into the care of a responsible adult. The driver/escort must advise their employer and the school(s) college(s). If schools/colleges decide to close early,

operators will be expected to respond to requests for transport as soon as is practicable after notice of the closure is given. Likewise, operators may also request that homeward journeys operate earlier than usual if weather conditions are deteriorating. Operators should liaise directly with the staff of the school(s)/ college(s) concerned on the issue of early closures.

In the event of the journey to school/college being cancelled by the operator on the grounds of adverse weather conditions, the operator of education/ additional support needs transport contracts will not be responsible for transporting pupils home in the afternoon. However, if the morning journey fails to operate for any other reason, the operator remains responsible for operating the return journey, provided that it is part of the normal contract.

If a pupil is conveyed in the afternoon only and the contract has not operated in the morning then the operator should ensure that the school and parent/carer are aware that the contract will not operate its afternoon journey.

In the case of local bus/local school bus services, the operator should operate the scheduled afternoon journey, weather conditions permitting.

On homeward journeys mainstream pupils should always be set down at the usual set-down point. If in adverse weather conditions the vehicle is unable to take pupils to that point, the pupils should not be allowed to walk home without the accompaniment of a responsible adult who is either their parent/carer or a responsible adult whom the parent/carer has confirmed to the driver that they may walk their child home. If this is not feasible, the operator should either leave the pupils with a known neighbour, (if their parent/carer has advised the driver they are agreeable to this) where they can remain under shelter until they are collected by their parents/carers (mainstream pupils only); return them to their school(s)/college(s) and place them in the care of responsible staff; or provide shelter at the operator's own premises.

In the case of pupils with additional support needs, it is very important that the operator has agreed appropriate set-down arrangements

with each pupil's parent/carer and the appropriate school(s)/college(s).

In the event that transport becomes stuck because of blocked roads, pupils shall be instructed to stay on the vehicle until rescue can be organised. If the circumstances are deemed to be dangerous, the pupils should be guided in an orderly manner to a place of safety. On no account should any pupil be permitted to either walk home with, or be transported home by, any adult who has not been authorised by the pupil's parent/carer directly to the driver. This includes other pupils' parents/carers or adults that the pupil agrees to go with. It must be the pupil's parent/carer who authorises the adult to the driver.

18 Driving licences, photo-identification and protection of vulnerable groups

All drivers of taxis/private hire vehicles **must** carry a valid photo-identity badge issued by their licensing authority and their driving licence when undertaking education transport duties.

Each escort shall carry some form of personal photo-identification during the operation of the contract.

All drivers of PSV licensed vehicles **must** carry their driving licence when undertaking education transport duties.

All drivers and escorts undertaking Regulated Work **must** be appropriately vetted in accordance with the requirements of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (PVG Act).

19 Smoking (including e-cigarettes and similar devices)

Smoking by any person on a school/college contract/service vehicle is legally forbidden. Drivers and escorts (where provided) should ensure that this is enforced.

Drivers and escorts must never smoke or vape in the vehicle during the operation of the contract/service, including when travelling to the

first pick-up point in either the morning or the afternoon. They must also never stand outside their vehicle and smoke/vape whilst waiting for the pupils to board at schools/colleges.

‘No smoking’ notices must be displayed on the vehicle where they are visible to passengers.

20 Early closure - christmas/summer term

On the last day of term prior to the Christmas holidays, and on the last day of the Summer term, it is customary for all Council-managed schools in Perth and Kinross to close at lunchtime. All pupils should be uplifted within thirty minutes of the early school closure time (except for local bus services, when the pupils should be uplifted within one hour). Operators should liaise directly with the school(s) about lunchtime closures and the transport arrangements which will be necessary to transport the pupils home.

21 Education transport surveys

Throughout the academic year Public Transport Unit staff will undertake periodic surveys on school/college transport routes. The surveys will be used to gain detailed information on the number of pupils travelling, routes and pick-up points, and may include a check of the pupils’ travel passes and a check of vehicle and driver details. On-site surveys will also be carried out at schools/colleges.

22 Further information for additional support needs transport contracts

Where an escort is required to travel on an additional support needs transport contract, the escort must be uplifted prior to any pupils (who require their attendance) boarding the contract vehicle and must remain on the vehicle until all such pupils have completed their journeys. It is primarily the responsibility of the escort to deal with the pupils and their parents/carers, the driver and escort shall always co-operate with each other.

Unless instructed to the contrary by the Public Transport Unit, the escort should sit in the rear of the vehicle where they can best supervise the pupils in their care.

Pick-up and drop-off

Whilst the parent/carer of each pupil is responsible for accompanying the pupil between their home and the vehicle, the escort and driver are specifically responsible for helping each pupil in boarding, and alighting from, the vehicle. Physical assistance should be given if requested by the pupil or their parent/carer (see below for advice on support levels).

Escorts should not go to the door of a pupil's house to collect them or to accompany them from the vehicle to the house.

If a pupil is not ready when a contract vehicle arrives at the usual pick-up time, the vehicle should wait for up to 5 minutes. If, however, this happens on more than one occasion, the Public Transport Unit should be notified so that, with a view to preventing similar occurrences, the parent/carer can be contacted.

Pupils should never travel on the lap of either an adult or another child.

On arrival at the school/college, the driver/escort will ensure the pupil (s) passes into the care of a responsible member of staff, as instructed by the school/college concerned. For the return journey, the contractor will follow the instructions issued by the school/college and/or Public Transport Unit regarding pick-up arrangements at the school/college.

If on the contract's return journey there is no one at home to receive a pupil, for safety reasons the escort/driver must not leave the pupil alone or with a neighbour, unless specific approval for the latter has been previously given by either the parent/carer, the school/college, or the Public Transport Unit. If no such arrangement exists, the escort/driver should immediately notify the Public Transport Unit of the situation, and the contract vehicle will then proceed with the

remainder of the route. After the last point on the route has been served, the contract vehicle will return to the pupil's home and, if there is still no one to receive them, the Public Transport Unit should again be contacted for instruction on the appropriate course of action.

Drivers require to take extra care when manoeuvring in to/out of a parking bay at the school/college – whilst all pupils are supervised there is always a risk of pupils moving around the vehicle.

Level of pupil support provided during transport

To comply with Child Protection policies and procedures, close and physical contact can be used if you need to:

- support Moving and Handling transitions in and out of the vehicle

- hand over to/from school staff

- support communication and interaction

- promote independence such as taking belongings.

Offering hugs, holding hands and other comforting through physical touch when it isn't required for the above reasons should not happen.

Moving and Handling

There are many aspects to ensuring a pupil is transferred safely to school, from the equipment used to secure them safely in the vehicle to the practical support for access in and out of the vehicle (Moving and Handling).

Some key areas for Moving and Handling include:

- Pupils who travel in wheelchairs require clamping to secure them safely. The driver/escort should contact the Public Transport Unit if they are unsure if they have the correct equipment or require training to fit and secure a wheelchair safely (refer to Section 24).

- For pupils that have limited or full mobility it can be difficult to know the exact levels of support required. As a general rule:

If a pupil can safely step in and out of the vehicle independently then they should do so and be met by the driver/escort.

If the height of the vehicle is too high for a pupil to safely step in or out of, the operator should supply a metal framed step with a grip surface for pupils to step in and out safely.

Hand-holding may be required when necessary to support mobility, but the driver/escort should ensure no grip or hold is placed over joints or wrists.

If a pupil does not need to hold hands, then the driver/escort should consider and promote the pupil's independence by walking alongside them instead.

Car/booster seats must be used in line with the manufacturer's instructions. The type of seat will depend on the height and weight of the pupil and will determine if it is a car seat and what type of harness support is required. Car/booster seats should also be of an appropriate height/depth to allow a pupil to independently position themselves into safely with minimal handling.

Additional Equipment – sometimes based on an assessment of risk during transport additional safety equipment may need to be considered. Please discuss with either the Public Transport Unit or school staff.

Seating/Equipment – the operator, with the support of Public Transport Unit will ensure that drivers and escorts are fully trained in the correct use of all the equipment being used.

Drivers/escorts should avoid any lifting of pupils from their seats. The only exception may be for nursery-age pupils (unless otherwise identified) who could be lifted if they cannot transfer independently from a car seat safely to the ground or into a buggy. This should be agreed in advance by a member of school staff.

All other pupils, whether using a car/booster seat or not should **not** be lifted to and from the vehicle either onto the ground or into a buggy/wheelchair.

Drivers/escorts should speak to school staff for advice or an assessment if they are unsure.

Food

Pupils may have food in their school bags for a snack or items made during the day. Drivers/escorts should refrain from allowing pupils to eat during the journey. In addition, other foods which may be on board the vehicle, such as sweets, biscuits or other treats should be placed out of sight and not shared during the journey.

It is important to note that some pupils can have intolerances or allergies that the driver/escort may not be aware of. In addition, sugary items eaten can have a negative effect on pupil behaviour/ routines which can make the start of the school day or going home at the end more challenging for the pupil.

The driver/escort should not offer a treat to encourage or reward a pupil but instead have an alternative option (agreed with parents/ carers) in place if appropriate.

Clothing/accessories

Drivers and escorts should dress appropriately bearing in mind their role and tasks. Limiting personal accessories can help reduce risks of incidents or harm. Recommended examples include:

Long-sleeved or high-necked clothing – to provide reduced exposure to skin areas for an escort supporting a pupil who may want to attempt a scratch or nip.

Flat, supportive shoes or trainers – to allow the driver/escort to move quickly to support a pupil in a safe manner for both parties.

No dangling items such as lanyards, necklaces, earrings, scarves etc and long hair tied back – to reduce being grabbed or held on to.

Routines and changes

Any change in driver, escort or vehicle should be a planned change as it is good practice to explain to parents/carers, pupils and school staff as early as possible. Many pupils cope very well with changes, however some do not and require as much preparation as possible. Parents/carers may also want to explain key information to drivers and escorts, so they have the reassurance their child's welfare is monitored and supported on the transport.

What might appear to be a small or simple change in the journey to/ from school can have an impact on the pupils and parents/carers who become very familiar with the routine of their journey. It also helps school staff meet the right vehicle or staff when the handover takes place. Consistency of the transport staff and vehicle can make a real difference to the pupil's experience of the journey.

Communication

Prior to starting a new contract, drivers/escorts should arrange to meet the pupils who are to be conveyed and their parent(s)/carer(s). More than one visit may be required. Drivers/escorts should ensure they are provided with the contact telephone number(s) of each parent/carers.

If a pupil has seizures or has other specific medical conditions, please ask to be briefed by the parent/carers or their school about what behaviour/physical changes to monitor and what action you should take in an emergency. A specific protocol may be put in place to support this.

Pupils with additional support needs express themselves using a wide range of communication methods. Some pupils may be non-verbal and cannot always explain or demonstrate what they want or need. Escorts should always involve, interact and communicate with the pupil(s) throughout the journey to build up positive relationships. This will help the escort to understand and meet the needs of the pupil(s) during the journey.

Drivers/escorts should always be respectful about the language and tone they use and should not discuss anything which is not suitable for a child to hear and should not swear during the journey or handover to staff. Examples of this include discussing or making comments about other pupils and/or their parents and commenting on other road users driving. If drivers/escorts have any concerns these should be raised with school staff/manager and always away from the pupils or other individuals. Whilst pupils may not have the same range of communication or spoken language it does not mean they do not understand or will not repeat what they listen to. Drivers and escorts are encouraged to liaise with parents/carers and school staff who can provide information, hints and tips surrounding individuals preferred communication methods.

It is important for drivers/escorts to build relationships and good communication with parents/carers to aid the handover in the morning and afternoon. Parents/carers are handing their child over to someone they perhaps do not know so having a positive relationship takes away levels of stress or concern around this. Occasionally parents/carers may ask you to pass information onto school staff or vice versa, however all communication about the pupil's wellbeing and their day in school will be passed directly between school staff and the parent/carers. Any pupil communication diaries or letters in school bags are confidential for the parents/carers only.

Parent/carers will liaise directly with drivers/escorts if a pupil is to be off sick, not in school on any day or half-day, attending after school clubs or on holiday so the driver/escort is aware that pick-up/drop-offs will be different. In addition, some pupils attend respite so parents/carers will let drivers/escorts know so that the appropriate pick-up or drop-off can be made at this location on specific days. If the driver/escort is asked by a parent/carer to alter a pick-up or drop-off location on an ad-hoc basis, details of this should be referred to the Public Transport Unit to check and agree.

Medication

On no account should a driver/escort administer medication to a pupil unless they have received written instructions, and appropriate training, from an authorised member of the school staff. If a child is likely to need emergency attention/medication, ie in the event of an epileptic seizure, the contractor shall have in place protocols agreed by the parent/carer and school on how to manage the situation which may include dialing for the emergency services or taking the child to a nearby hospital/medical centre.

An escort will convey medication (which must be in its original packaging and properly labelled) between a pupil's home and their school/college, always ensuring it is handed directly to an authorised member of staff and/or the parent/carer. No medication should be left in a school/overnight bag.

Confidentiality

As much information as possible about individual pupils and their additional support needs will be provided to operators. It must be appreciated, however, that the Council has to respect the confidentiality of available information and therefore it may not always be possible to supply operators with information they request.

In the course of their duties, drivers and escorts may occasionally gain awareness of highly confidential personal details pertaining to the pupils on the route, but under no circumstances should this be discussed with anyone other than a parent/carer, staff at the school/college or a Council Officer from the Public Transport Unit. In particular, care must be taken never to discuss any personal situation within the hearing of pupils.

Triggers/behaviour support

The school can give advice to drivers and escorts about how to manage communication and behaviour support for the pupil where this might help the journey to and from school.

Protective clothing or equipment can be offered to aid the safer transportation of pupils and reduce the impacts on transport staff of distressing behaviours. This may be an arm guard for escorts or additional seat belt security. If a driver/escort would benefit from such equipment, they should contact school staff or the Public Transport Unit.

Reporting incidents

Incidents within the vehicle or during the transport journeys may occur. If a driver/escort wants to report an incident or has an issue that is related to safety, or the general operation of the transport then please report concerns to the Public Transport Unit. Drivers/escorts may also find it helpful to discuss a specific issue with the school first.

23 Wheelchairs and other specialist equipment

The contractor must ensure that drivers and escorts are fully conversant with the correct use of all specialist equipment on the vehicle including passenger lifts and ramps.

For any vehicle which is wheelchair accessible, the contractor and his operational staff must ensure that the vehicle is equipped with sufficient wheelchair restraints, and fully functional, lap and diagonal or full harness wheelchair passenger restraints, to accommodate the situation when the vehicle is conveying its permitted legal maximum number of people in wheelchairs.

Wheelchairs must have their parking brakes applied, any power unit switched off, and be restrained before travel. All passengers travelling in wheelchairs must be provided with a suitable passenger restraint anchored to the vehicle. Passengers must never be carried in wheelchairs facing sideways.

Instructions on the correct use of wheelchair restraints etc should be available adjacent to the wheelchair spaces. In addition, storage space should be available for items such as folded wheelchairs or walking frames, together with suitable restraint equipment. Similarly, a secure,

low-level storage facility shall be provided for spare wheelchair and passenger restraint equipment. Spare equipment must not be left lying on the vehicle floor.

The Contractor and operational staff must comply with the most up-to-date best practice guidance published by the Department for Transport and/or related organisations when conveying passengers in their wheelchairs. Failure to comply with the relevant guidance will render the Contract liable to immediate termination.

Certain pupils with additional support needs, whilst not requiring to travel in a wheelchair, will need to make use of specific types of restraint systems for folded wheelchair and specialist seating. Such equipment will be supplied by the Council, and contractors will fit these as required. All equipment must be maintained in good condition, securely anchored, and be fitted and used strictly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Non-adherence will render the contract liable for immediate termination. All equipment supplied to the contractor will remain the property of the Council and should only be used for the specified transport of the nominated pupil. It must be returned or replaced at the end of the contract period, or when the pupil leaves school or no longer requires the equipment.

When conveying pupils in special seats the contractor, and his operational staff, must adhere to the general principles highlighted in Medical Devices Directive Report MDD/92/07 'Safety Guidelines for Transporting Children in Special Seats' or equivalent.

The contractor shall not use specialist seating or restraint systems supplied directly by the parents/carers or schools/colleges unless authorised by the Public Transport Unit.

24 Reversing alarms

PSV licensed vehicles shall be fitted with an audible external reversing alarm for automatic use in conjunction with reverse gear.

25 Communication systems

The contractor shall ensure there is a two-way communication system within the vehicle that is fully functional throughout the operation of the contract. It shall be available to the Council either directly or via the contractor's base (in which case the base must be manned).

Any use of mobile communications, within the vehicle, must not contravene regulations governing the use of hand-held mobile telephones whilst driving.

Bluetooth hands-free mobile communications should not be used by a driver whilst driving the Contract vehicle.

When Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles are fitted with Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), drivers should not respond to calls or messages received via this system whilst any pupils are being transported in the vehicle. If the driver is being contacted on an urgent matter, they must pull over to a safe location before they answer any urgent call or message.

26 Social contact with pupils

Previously, as part of a driver conduct investigation, it came to light that some school transport drivers were 'chatting' on social networking sites with pupils, and this was deemed to be both inappropriate and unprofessional. Operators and their staff should not contact pupils, or comment on any of their education transport contract details, via social networking sites.

Operators and their staff should not pass on their own mobile phones to any pupils to use during the journey.

27 Information for parents/carers and pupils

Pupils, parents/carers and their respective responsibilities have not been forgotten. An online information booklet 'Travelling to School' is available, on the Council's website for pupils (and their parents/carers) who are transported to/from school.

28 Term dates

Full details of Perth and Kinross Council school term dates, including single day holidays, are published on Perth and Kinross Council's website www.pkc.gov.uk

Information on the term dates and single day holidays for schools outwith Perth and Kinross, and Perth College UHI, will be published on the relevant Council, school and college websites.

Operators should ensure that they check the term dates on all relevant websites and are fully aware of the days all their contracts should operate.

29 Roads issues

Contractors/operators with comments or concerns on road issues (including gritting, snow clearing, overhanging trees, road surface defects, etc) should contact the Council's Customer Service Centre on 01738 476476 (available 24 hours a day, seven days per week).

30 Contact details - Education and Learning

Matters relating to school transport entitlement and sports conveyance timetables should be referred to the undernoted:

Mainstream School Transport Entitlement and Sports Conveyance Timetables

Email FBSSchools@pkc.gov.uk

Additional Support Needs Transport Entitlement Rachel Balfour -
Email RBalfour@pkc.gov.uk

31 Contact details - Perth College UHI

Email pc.enquiries.perth@uhi.ac.uk

Tel 01738 877000

32 Contact details- Public Transport Unit

If you have queries about, or comments on, education transport operation in Perth and Kinross, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant member of staff below:

Public Transport Team Leader

(Blairgowrie, Coupar Angus, Guildtown, Perth City ASN transport and Carse of Gowrie)

Moray Fraser – Email MJFraser@pkc.gov.uk

Public Transport Team Leader

(Auchterarder, Crieff, Kinross, Bridge of Earn, Perth City mainstream transport, Methven, Scone, Highland Perthshire and Stanley)

Margaret Roy – Email MRoy@pkc.gov.uk

Public Transport Technician

(Auchterarder, Crieff and Kinross)

John Strachan – Email JStrachan@pkc.gov.uk

Public Transport Technician

(Blairgowrie, Coupar Angus, Guildtown and Scone)

TBA – Email SchoolTransport@pkc.gov.uk

Public Transport Technician

(Bridge of Earn, Perth City mainstream transport, and Methven)

Paul Dailey – Email PDailey@pkc.gov.uk

Public Transport Technician

(Highland Perthshire and Stanley)

Becky Hay – Email BHay@pkc.gov.uk

Public Transport Technician

(Perth City ASN Transport and Carse of Gowrie)

Jamie Gordon – Email JGordon@pkc.gov.uk

33 Translation and communication in other formats

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

BSL users can contact us via Contact Scotland BSL, the online British Sign Language video relay interpreting service. Find out more on the Contact Scotland BSL website <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>