**TRANSPORT**

**Will school transport be provided when the schools re-open in September?**

The Council is working to resume its dedicated school transport services for all learners, in line with the latest Welsh Government [guidance](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/operational-guidance-for-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term-version-2.pdf).

We are continuing to encourage parents or carers to take their children to school by walking, cycling, scooting or wheeling, or alternatively by private car, in order to reduce the capacity constraints. We understand that this will not be possible for some people.

While parents or carers may feel apprehensive about the risks in using school transport during the COVID-19 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.

**Will my child’s school transport route be running?**

For most learners already in receipt of free school transport or for whom new arrangements have been put in place for September, all school transport routes will continue to operate as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Every summer, it is necessary to make some changes to accommodate new learners onto school transport. You will have been notified by letter if your child’s transport has changed.

Details of the timetable, including the school bus operator for your child’s journey to school, along with additional information relating to the Mainstream School Transport Service can also be found at:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ParkingRoadsandTravel/Travel/SchoolandCollegeTransport/Schoolbusroutes.aspx> (*Timetables are subject to change and will be updated in August)*.

Secondary learners will need carry their bus pass or where issued their temporary travel slips. They must show the driver their pass or slip in order to travel on the vehicle. Replacements for lost passes can be ordered and paid for by completing the on line form or by contacting the Council on 01443 425001.

Primary learners will have received an authorisation letter confirming their entitlement. Parents or carers must show the driver the letter in order to allow travel on the vehicle. If you have lost your authorisation letter, please contact the Council on 01443 425001.

**If transport was not already provided or you have not received confirmation that your child has been allocated a free seat on school transport, you must make your own way into school.**

**My child has additional learning needs. What transport arrangements will be in place to Learning Support Classes, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools?**

All taxis and minibuses to Learning Support Classes, Pupil Referral Units and Special Schools will continue to operate as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. If your Child is new to additional learning needs transport, you will receive details of your home to school transport towards the end of August.

Every summer, it is necessary to make some changes to accommodate new learners onto school transport. You will have been notified by letter if your child’s transport has changed.

Whilst social distancing is not required on additional learning needs school transport, we are working with schools and operators to provide proportionate safeguards to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on school transport to ensure learners can attend school or college. These include;

* drivers and passenger assistants will wear face coverings or visors and personal protective equipment (PPE) as appropriate,
* vehicles will be cleaned regularly, including anti-bacterial wipe down of handrails, door handles and all surfaces that passengers may touch,
* anti-bac wipes and hand sanitiser will be available,
* on larger vehicles (minibuses), children will be directed to sit in the same seat (where possible) with the same child or children on every journey,
* windows will be open whilst moving to ensure the vehicle is well ventilated.

**My child is not entitled to free school transport, can I pay for a seat?**

In previous academic years, the Council has offered parents or carers whose children are not entitled to free school transport the chance to purchase spare seats on dedicated school transport. However, due to the exceptional challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council has been forced to suspend the discretionary provision of sale of seats for the foreseeable future in order to ensure that entitled students receive the transport in line with the latest Welsh Government [guidance](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/operational-guidance-for-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term-version-2.pdf).

The Council will keep the situation under review. Whilst the situation is so fluid, it is difficult to predict how school transport will evolve over the coming months. An improvement in the COVID-19 situation may mean that there is a remote possibility that we may be able to make seats available later in the academic year. Any change in the provision on sale of seats will be announced via the Council’s website and social media channels.

Whilst some additional public transport journeys at school times are being funded by the Welsh Government, seating capacities remain reduced and in view of these potential constraints impacting on a learner’s ability to attend school, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered.

**Will my child need to social distance on school transport?**

**Dedicated School or College Transport**

Most learners travel on dedicated buses, coaches or taxis, which exclusively carry learners travelling to and from school or college.

The Welsh Government [guidance](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/operational-guidance-for-schools-and-settings-from-the-autumn-term-version-2.pdf) acknowledges that it is not always possible to allow social distancing between learners accessing dedicated school or college transport. Therefore learners on most dedicated school transport will not be able to social distance.

Proportionate safeguards will be taken to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on dedicated school transport to ensure learners can attend school/settings on the basis that;

* the overall risk to children and young people from COVID-19 is low,
* dedicated school transport carries the same group of learners on a regular basis, and those learners may also be together in school,
* learners will sit together in year groups where possible,
* siblings can sit together,
* there will be no face to face seating,
* there will be no contact between learners and other passengers
* windows and roof vents will be kept open where possible,
* contact will be minimised with individuals who are unwell,
* all passengers, including the drivers and passenger assistants should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser before boarding transport and when arriving at school or home,
* if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, then it will be easy to identify who was travelling on which vehicle, helping to test, trace and protect,
* there will be a rigorous cleaning and sanitising regime between before or after each journey.

**Public Transport**

Some learners use public transport as part of their home to school or college journey. For further information travelling to school/college by public transport can be found here <https://trc.cymru/school-transport>

To also help reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19, learners should;

* minimise contact with individuals who are unwell,
* clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual,
* ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it kill it’ approach.

When waiting for the school bus it is a parent or carer’s responsibility to ensure their child behaves responsibly while waiting for the vehicle. This includes social distancing.

**Will my child be expected to wear a face covering?**

Clear evidence remains that the most effective way to protect your child and others from infection is to follow social distancing rules, avoid touching surfaces and your face, and wash your hands regularly. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions but are recommended where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Primary age learners and those with special needs or who rely on lip reading to communicate may not be able to safely wear a face covering.

Secondary age learners travelling on dedicated school transport must wear a face covering, as most vehicles are full and learners cannot sit together in their year groups, but they are not a substitute for good hygiene. Not only will this measure help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 but also common colds and flu, which will also be a benefit.

Re-usable face coverings will be delivered to the schools. Initially, one face covering is to be handed to those in year 7 and above for their first return trip home. Further face coverings will be available during the coming weeks. They will be replaced at the start of each term. Each mask can be washed up to 30 times. Replacements for lost or damaged face coverings will be available from a stock in schools.

Learners who travel to school or college on public transport must wear a three layer face covering as mandated by the Welsh Government. Further information can be found here <https://trc.cymru/school-transport>.

Learners must not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing them. They must wash their hands immediately on arrival at school or home, dispose of temporary face coverings in a covered bin or place re-usable face coverings in a plastic bag for washing.

**Please note that a refusal to comply with this requirement will result in your child’s place on school transport being suspended. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated.**

**What further precautions must my child take when travelling?**

We ask that parents or carers help communicate to their children the importance of following good hygiene and social distancing, as this will play a key role in keeping everyone safe.

This means taking the following precautions;

* **do not travel** if your child or a member of their household has any of the four identified COVID-19 symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of taste or smell),
* **do not travel** if anyone in the household is required to self–isolate as a contact of a case under Test, Trace, Portect (TTP) or is in quarantine having returned from a country specified by the Foreign Commonwealth Office,
* wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving the house,
* use the hand sanitiser provided before accessing the vehicle,
* avoid physical contact with others,
* windows will be open for ventilation where possible,
* face away from other people when using school transport,
* minimise the number of surfaces you touch, and in particular avoid touching surfaces such as handrails and window ledges,
* do not touch your face,
* do not eat or drink whilst using transport,
* wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise your hands before leaving school.

**Please note that a refusal to comply with health and safety requirements, good hygiene and where possible social distancing could jeopardise your child’s place on school transport. Your support in reinforcing this message with your child would be greatly appreciated.**

**How will your child know where to sit?**

Learners will board dedicated school transport on the basis of the distance to or from school. Those who live furthest will board first and sit at the back, while those who live closest will board last and sit at the front.

Learners will also be encouraged to use hand sanitiser on boarding the vehicle where provided. It is expected that learners will have washed their hands before boarding the vehicle and upon arrival at school.

Learners travelling on coaches or larger vehicles may be asked to use the same seat each day.

Learners using dedicated home to school taxis or minibuses will be asked to sit in the same seat each day.

**How will you ensure that services are not overcrowded?**

Only named passengers that have prior approval to travel, or those with secondary school bus passes for the route, will be allowed to use transport. Drivers will have lists of those primary school learners that will be allocated to their vehicle each day. No pass, no travel will be strictly enforced on secondary school vehicles, and those not eligible to travel will be turned away from the vehicle.

**Will transport suppliers be following health and safety guidance?**

We are asking transport suppliers to follow the Welsh Government guidance <https://gov.wales/restarting-public-transport-guidance-operators>. This guidance includes actions such as regular sanitising, the thorough cleaning of vehicles and the use of PPE.