This booklet provides pupils and parents with useful background information about transport arrangements for school pupils in Dumfries and Galloway. The Council attaches a very high priority to getting pupils safely to and from school and it is hoped that this booklet will assist in achieving that aim.

This Guide Will Set Out:

- What school transport means
- Who is entitled to school transport
- What transport is provided
- Ways in which parents can help ensure that the journey to/from school is safe and reliable
- The responsibilities of the Council, schools, parents and pupils
- Safety information
- Parents’ frequently asked questions
- Complaint and contact details

What School Transport Means

Where children live more than the statutory parental responsibility distance from their catchment school, the Council has a duty to transport those pupils to and from school. Pupils who attend an alternative school by parental choice (known as a placing request) have no entitlement to transport. Where a child attends a school as the result of a successful placing request it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to organise transport to the school.

The Council’s Pupil/Parent Support Unit (PPSU) identifies the need for the provision of school transport and Integrated Transport and Commissioning Service (IT&C) engage operators to provide school transport services.

The catchment area for each school is recorded and held within PPSU. This information can be viewed by parents and schools through accessing the Dumfries and Galloway Council website, www.dumgal.gov.uk and clicking the “Find My Nearest” icon.

Who is Entitled to School Transport?

- Pupils who live 2 miles away from their catchment school if they are under 8 years old
- Pupils who live 3 miles away from their catchment school if they are 8 years and over
- Roman Catholic children attending the denominational school for their address and live the above statutory distances from that school.

How do I find out if my child will receive school transport?

When school transport is required for a pupil, the school will contact the PPSU. If your child is eligible, details of the transport arrangements will be communicated to you in time for the new academic year. Any alterations to transport arrangements that occur during the school year will be communicated prior to any changes.
being made. If school bus passes are required these are issued at school.

**Exceptional Request**
Consideration will be given in exceptional circumstances for school transport where the child attends their catchment school but would not normally be entitled to transport.

Where parents believe that there may be grounds for an exceptional transport request then this should be submitted to PPSU in writing. Applications will be referred for further assessment.

Exceptional transport requests can be made when:

- Your child has been recommended on health grounds by a designated medical officer
- Your child has requirements based on educational grounds/additional education needs

**Non Entitled Transport**
If you live near a school transport route, your child may be able to apply for a grace and favour seat. Vacant seats on dedicated school transport services may be allocated to pupils who are not normally entitled to travel. Parents must apply each school year since transport for non entitled pupils automatically ceases at the end of the session.

Parents should also note that transport for non entitled pupils can be withdrawn at any time should spaces be required for entitled pupils, or if the capacity or route of a vehicle is changed.

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**What Transport is Provided?**

There are various services used for the provision of school transport:

- School contract buses hired from private companies on which travel passes are issued for pupils only
- Dumfries and Galloway Council school buses (DGC Buses)
- Taxis, private hire cars and minibuses
- Local bus services on which travel passes (tickets) are issued for children to use for travel to and from the school. It is not possible to offer this transport to non entitled pupils.

Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are not dropped off at school too early or picked up too late.

Where a family lives remote from other children and off any established route, a mileage allowance to allow parents to drive their own children to school in their own car may be offered.
Responsibilities

What are the responsibilities of the Council?

• Providing school transport for entitled pupils
• Designing transport services appropriate to pupils needs
• Placing contracts with bus and taxi firms to provide services
• Ensuring the safety of pupils during the time spent on school transport journeys
• Informing pupils and parents of transport arrangements and any changes to them
• The Council has a common law duty of care for the safety and well-being of pupils throughout the school day including the time spent on school transport.
• Once a pupil has boarded transport the Council assumes responsibility for his/her safety. However, this responsibility is only accepted if pupils behave responsibly as shown in this booklet.

What are my responsibilities as a parent?

• It is parents’ responsibility to get children safely to and from transport pickup and set down points. If you are concerned about your child, you should accompany him/her to the stop and wait with him/her until the transport arrives. Similarly, you should ensure that children are met when the transport returns from school (See later section on safety)

• If your child is unaccompanied make sure that he/she knows and follows the safest walking route, uses the safest road crossing places and knows how to behave responsibly whilst waiting to be picked up
• Make sure that you have discussed with your child what to do if the transport does not arrive or if he/she fails to catch the transport for any reason
• Make sure that your child is aware of these guidelines
• Ensure that you encourage your child to behave properly and safely whilst using school transport
• If transport entitlement is withdrawn for disciplinary reasons parents are responsible for making and paying for alternative travel arrangements
• If school transport is no longer required or there is a change in circumstances you must inform the Council.
• Ensure an application is submitted each school year to request non entitled transport.

What are my responsibilities as a pupil?

• Leave home in good time to avoid the need to rush
• Dress warmly in case there is an unexpected wait and wear something bright so that motorists can see you
• Use the pavement if there is one – where there is no pavement walk facing on-coming traffic
• Stand well clear of the edge of the road while waiting for school transport
• Give the driver a clear hand signal that you want the vehicle to stop
• Travel only on the transport on which you have been allocated travel
• Let other passengers off before boarding.
• Behave appropriately and safely when boarding, travelling and alighting from school transport
• Remain seated for the journey and fasten the seat belt if there is one
• Do not ride on the platform adjacent to the driver, talk to or otherwise distract the driver while the vehicle is moving
• Follow the driver's instructions
• Never throw anything within the vehicle or interfere with emergency door or bells
• Never leave the vehicle until it has stopped
• Ensure that passes are kept safe and carried at all times - if a pass is not shown the driver is entitled to refuse entry to transport.
• Do not smoke
• Misbehaviour on buses or taxis could result in you losing your school transport entitlement.

• Taking reasonable care of the children in their vehicles
• Reporting misbehaviour to the school
• Supervision of pupils on the vehicle during the journey to and from school
• Reporting any incidents of bad behaviour to the Headteacher of the school who will undertake disciplinary measures as may be necessary

What are the responsibilities of transport operators and their drivers?
• Provide services as specified by the Council
• Safe operation of their vehicles, including deciding whether road conditions are safe

What are the responsibilities of schools?
• Providing supervision for primary pupils from transport arrival in the morning to departure in the afternoon
• Issuing travel passes at the beginning of the new academic year
• Disciplinary measures in cases of unacceptable behaviour
• Reporting service unreliability, breakdowns and poor timekeeping.
• Ensuring any Non Entitled Pupil applications are appropriate and may realistically be accommodated on existing transport.
Safety

We make safety a top priority. Bus travel is one of the safest forms of transport and all buses are licensed and routinely inspected by VOSA. All taxis and private hire cars used for school transport are required to hold appropriate insurance cover to transport pupils to and from school. All drivers have undergone Protecting Vulnerable Group (PVG) checks.

Parents should be aware that not all buses with more than 16 seats are required by law to have seat belts fitted. If seatbelts are provided it is the driver's responsibility to ensure that passengers under 14 years old wear a seatbelt. Passengers over 14 years old are responsible for wearing seatbelts.

To minimise the risk of accidents parents seeing children on to/off transport should always stand on the same side of the road as the transport pick up/set down takes place.

Parents’ Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if my child loses his/her school bus pass?
They should immediately obtain a temporary pass from the school – this will allow him/her to travel until a permanent replacement can be obtained.

What do I do if school transport fails to arrive on time?
Your child should be at the pick up point at least 5 minutes before the scheduled pick up time. We advise your child to wait at a pick-up point for up to 15 minutes after the transport was due to arrive. After 15 minutes it can be assumed that their transport will not run that day. You should ensure your child knows what to do if the transport fails to turn up. You should ensure that there are suitable care arrangements in place in the event of school transport not operating.

What do I do if my child wants to use a different bus?
It is not always possible to transfer to another school bus service. If there is a requirement to change then you should contact the Council for further advice. Your child should not try to use a different bus before he/she receives approval and a new pass from the Council.

What happens if a child misbehaves on school transport?
Incidences of misbehaviour will be investigated. Any child misbehaving could be banned from using school transport, sometimes permanently.

What happens if schools close early due to bad weather or any other emergency?
Every attempt will be made to inform parents. A set of emergency instructions are used to involve
transport contractors, other schools using the same transport, and parents whose children have a long way to walk home from the drop-off points. Phone calls will be made to this priority group of parents informing them of the time transport will leave school.

Schools can also inform parents of a school closure or emergency using Groupcall which is an automated text messaging service. If you feel that your child should not walk home alone in bad weather from the drop-off point or from school it will be your responsibility to meet him/her.

Drivers will not normally set children down at any point significantly different from the usual one. If it is not possible to set children down at the normal drop off point then children will be taken to a nearby school for their safety. Children must follow any instructions given to them by the driver in any emergency and should not leave the bus to make their own way home.

Parents can also find information on school closures on the school website and also [www.dumgal.gov.uk](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk). Arrangements have also been made with local radio to relay information about school closures.

**What happens if there is a cancellation of transport in the morning?**

Drivers will then return children to their normal drop off point. Parents should ensure that some arrangement has been made at home to cover this possibility.

If your child travels to school on connecting services drivers will be told to wait for each other and not to leave any children standing in adverse weather conditions. Should the connecting service not arrive children will be returned home. If the connecting service does arrive but cannot complete the journey to school, that driver will return children to their homes. Parents must ensure that their children are warmly dressed just in case the journey to school is very slow or even halted in bad weather.

In normal circumstances pupils should not wait more than 15 minutes if the bus is late. In severely cold weather this 15 minute rule need not apply. Should the school transport for your child not operate in the morning because of adverse weather conditions but you decide to take your child to school yourself then you are expected to collect your child either at the end of the school day or at the time of early closure. Do not bring your children to school when buses do not run unless you are certain of being able to collect them at the end of the school day - even if the weather worsens.

It is Council policy that schools remain open except in the severest of weather conditions, therefore children who live within a short walking distance of school will be retained throughout the school day.
Making a Complaint and Contact Details

If you have any concerns about school transport or wish to make a complaint about an operator you should contact your child’s school who will liaise with the PPSU and IT&C to investigate the complaint.

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30 Edinburgh Road
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