

**Forest Oak School
&
Merstone School**



**Code of Good
Practice for Safer Minibus
Driving**

Reviewed: Spring 2017

Forest Oak School & Merstone School
Code of Good Practice
For Safer Minibus Driving

It is important that everyone involved with the use of the minibus understands the risks and takes notice of the guidance contained within this Code of Good Practice, ensuring that every minibus journey is a safe one.

A minibus is defined as a motor vehicle designed or constructed to carry more than eight but no more than sixteen passengers in addition to the driver.

It is the responsibility of the school bursar to ensure that the minibus is insured and tax paid.

The passengers being carried in the minibus are the responsibility of the driver and their safety is of paramount importance.

Training and driver assessment must be undertaken by any member of staff who intends to drive a minibus to ensure they can handle the vehicle confidently and safely.

Staff who do not drive a minibus frequently should re-familiarise themselves with the controls and undertake a brief drive before commencing a journey with passengers on board.

Drivers should preferably be at least 25 years of age and have held a full license for a minimum of 3 consecutive years, having passed the driving test prior to 1997. (If the driver has held a full licence for a minimum of 5 years and is over the age of 21 it may also be possible to take the training and test.) drivers must possess a full current driving licence allowing them to drive this class of vehicle (category A or D1 on licence). Vehicles with disabled access may be exempt from this so please check with the Principal or bursar.

However, as a result of schools being affected by a shortage of minibus drivers due to the 1997 rule, Solihull have now passed a rule that will allow drivers to drive the minibus even if your driving licence does not allow (i.e. does not have category A or D1), on condition that the minibus being driven belongs to the school in which the driver is employed. The schools vehicles with disabled access are also exempt from D1 licence requirement.

After taking the test to allow you to drive a minibus and acquiring a minibus permit drivers should be aware that the permit last for 3 years only. After this time the test will need to be taken again. It is the responsibility of the driver to make sure your permit is still valid. If it is due to expire you should inform the school bursar who can arrange to book a retest.

Driver's health and driving records must render them suitable to drive the vehicle.

Drivers should always carry a suitable form of identification, e.g. minibus driver permit or driving license.

The school bursar is responsible for ensuring that the minibus is taxed, insured and where necessary has a current MOT certificate to comply with the Road Traffic Acts and Regulations.

Drivers must ensure that when they are carrying passengers under 16 years of age, the prescribed signs

are clearly displayed to the front and rear of the minibus. When the signs are in use hazard warning lights should be used when the minibus is stationary and the passengers are boarding or alighting.

The maintenance of minibuses should be undertaken at three levels:

1. Driver checks prior to using the vehicle.
2. Planned safety inspections carried out by a qualified mechanic.
3. Serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Drivers should always check the condition of the vehicle before and after each journey. If concerned about the condition **DO NOT** use the vehicle. Remember if there is a fault the driver could be liable.

If a fault is discovered it should be reported to the person responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle, at the earliest opportunity.

Minibuses must carry first aid kits as required for PCV vehicle. These should be clearly marked, regularly inspected and kept in good order.

Minibuses must carry suitable fire extinguishers, which are readily accessible for use. These should be clearly marked with the appropriate British Standards Institute specification number and maintained in good efficient working order. Drivers should be trained in their use.

Suitable maps, details of breakdown cover if applicable, spare wheel, jack and wheel brace should also be carried on the vehicle.

In the event of a breakdown, stop the vehicle as close to the nearside of the road or hard shoulder as possible. If available use lay-bys. All passengers should alight from the nearside and take up a suitably safe position on the grass verge as far away from the minibus and other traffic as possible. Passengers should not be allowed to re-enter the vehicle until it is safe to do so. If the driver, following a dynamic risk assessment, decides to keep pupils on the bus the AA and school should be informed.

All staff must be familiar with the procedure of summoning help from the emergency services and have a record of any telephone numbers that may be required, e.g. school, parents.

Passengers must not be allowed to push vehicles for any reason.

The Highway Code must be observed at all times.

The Highway Code prohibits the use of hand-held mobile phones when driving and warns that even a hands-free system can distract attention from the road. Do not use a mobile phone when driving.

There should be an escort on all journeys involving young passengers to make sure that they are safe and that the driver is not distracted. The escort should be seated in the back next to the side exit door.

On journeys of more than 30 miles each way there must be another member of staff present in addition to the driver, who is capable of driving the vehicle in the event of the driver becoming tired or incapacitated.

Plan your route well in advance with regular breaks. It is good practice to have a break of at least 15-30 minutes after every two hours of driving. Fatigue is a known factor in over 15% of all fatal

accidents.

Details of the journey, timings, route etc. must be given to the Principal and EVC with the trip/visit information prior to the visit.

Driving after long periods of being awake or earlier disturbed sleep should be avoided. Stimulants must never be used to overcome tiredness.

None of the minibus exits should be blocked by equipment or in any other way and the vehicle must not be overloaded. Ensure that loads, pendants, stickers etc. do not obstruct vision.

Drivers must be experienced in towing if any trailer is to be attached to the vehicle.

Passengers must be seated and seatbelts worn by every passenger on the minibus. **Passengers must never be allowed to share a seatbelt.**

It is the driver's duty to check that all passengers are correctly seated, with their seatbelts on and all doors properly shut before driving off. Adjust seating position for drivers to be as upright as possible and ensure that head restraints are at the correct height, i.e. central to head or booster seats are used where needed.

As a result of laws of 18th September 2006 it is now compulsory for children to use booster seats when sitting in any vehicle if they are under the age of 12 years or less than 135 cm. tall. It is the responsibility of the driver of the minibus to ensure that this is complied with and to make sure you have booster seats. Both schools have a number of booster seats available for use in cars or minibuses.

NB Breaking this new law could lead to an on the spot fine of £30 for the driver or a maximum fine of £500 if convicted in court.

Smoking by drivers or passengers is not permitted on board the minibus. Smoking can lead to drowsiness when driving due to carbon monoxide displacing oxygen in the vehicle and increasing carbon monoxide in the blood.

On no account should any driver have any alcohol in their bloodstream. Staff must remember that drinking the night before may mean that they could be over the legal limit if tested the following morning.

Caution should be used when taking medicines that may cause drowsiness.

There should be no eating or drinking by either driver or passengers in the minibus. Please leave the minibus as you found it and with all seatbelts refastened.

The driver and escort should work together as a team. Both driver and escort should be fully conversant with any mechanical device on the vehicle to assist access and egress.

Be aware of any disability the passenger has and any difficulty they may have as a result.

Where a passenger has to use a special harness, wheelchair or booster seat the driver must know how to deal with these correctly in accordance with any instructions or training that has been given.

The Principal must be informed of any pupil who endangers the safety of the driver and passengers. Their parents will be informed and the pupil dealt with accordingly, by the Principal.

If the safety of driver or passengers is endangered by a pupil the driver must take the correct action, which may involve returning to school to bring the pupil back or stopping the minibus and requesting assistance from school to remove the pupil before continuing the journey.

Drivers must remember that the maximum speed limit in the minibus is **50mph/ on A road, 60mph on dual carriage way & 70 mph on motorways**. When towing a trailer the maximum speed limit is still **50mph/ 60mph on motorway**. On no account should this limit be exceeded. Journey times need a contingency element to allow for delays or weather conditions.

The final decision as to who can or cannot drive the minibus is made by the Principal. .

Remember that the passengers you are carrying have special needs and their welfare and safety are paramount.

NB It is of vital importance that at the start of every journey the driver follows the maintenance checklist to ensure the vehicle is road worthy.

After a recent audit it was discovered that not all journeys and mileage were being entered into the log book. The log book can be found on the dash board of the minibus and must be completed after every journey.