



Code of Conduct for Midlothian travel - ASN

Midlothian Council is committed to ensuring the safe, respectful, and efficient use of school transport services for all passengers.

This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for passengers and their parents, guardians or carers to maintain a positive and safe travel environment. Adherence to these guidelines is essential for the smooth operation of the transport service and the well-being of all involved.

The term 'passengers' is used as a broad descriptor to encompass children, young persons, and, where applicable, recipients of social care services.

We recognise that some aspects of this Code of Conduct may be challenging for certain pupils due to the vehicle type or individual support needs. Adults will provide support and adapt expectations where necessary. Individual risk assessments will be completed by school staff and parents, where necessary, to mitigate any risks.

If a pupil's behaviour becomes unsafe or difficult to manage, the escort or transport operator will inform the school. Repeated incidents, including any risk of injury to staff, will require a meeting with parents/carers, the school and the operator to discuss strategies and assess whether continued transport support is feasible.

Ensuring the safety and comfort of all passengers is paramount. Adults will guide pupils to follow the rules as closely as possible, while maintaining a positive and secure journey for everyone.

General conduct expected from passengers

Pupils using school transport are expected to behave responsibly, safely and show consideration for others.

Poor behaviour can disrupt other pupils or compromise safety. Where this happens, the council will take appropriate action under this procedure to protect passengers and staff to maintain a safe environment.

Transport providers may also take independent action in cases of criminal damage or violence towards staff. Such incidents may be reported directly to the police.

School transport is provided to help passengers travel to school safely. Please follow these guidelines to keep everyone safe, and to make the journey enjoyable for all:

- ✓ **Be gentle and kind** – speak politely to others, use hands safely, and avoid any form of physical or verbal aggression.
- ✓ **Listen to adults** – follow instructions from drivers, attendants, and other authorised adults promptly.
- ✓ **Stay in your seat** – remain seated throughout the journey and wear seatbelts where provided. Adults will assist pupils who need support to fasten or adjust seatbelts.
- ✓ **Keep belongings tidy** – store all bags, coats, and equipment safely and securely to prevent items from falling, obstructing aisles, or creating hazards.
- ✓ **Prioritise safety** – do not stand, move around, or engage in unsafe behaviour while the vehicle is in motion.
- ✓ **Ask for help** – speak to an adult if you are worried, feel unwell, or require assistance.
- ✓ **Take turns and share space** – allow others to sit comfortably and move safely. Respecting personal space helps everyone have a calm and safe journey.
- ✓ **Look after the vehicle** – treat all vehicles with care, avoiding damage to seats, windows, doors, or other equipment.
- ✓ **Follow rules consistently** – behaviour on transport should reflect the standards expected at school, showing respect for both adults and peers.
- ✓ **Be patient** – adults may need to assist multiple pupils. Remaining calm and patient ensures a safe environment for everyone.
- ✓ **Food and drinks** – do not eat or drink on the vehicle to maintain hygiene and prevent accidents, allergies or choking hazards.

Consequences for disruptive behaviour

The council takes breaches of these rules seriously. Consequences for poor conduct may include:

1. **Verbal warning** – Pupils may receive guidance from transport staff or school staff regarding expected behaviour.
2. **Parent/carer contact** – Repeated or serious incidents will be communicated to parents or carers.
3. **Temporary suspension from transport** – Pupils who pose a risk to others may be temporarily excluded from using the service.
4. **Long-term exclusion or alternative arrangements** – In cases of persistent or severe misconduct, pupils may be removed from school transport, and parents will need to arrange alternative travel.

Responsibilities of parents, guardians and carers

Parents, guardians, and carers play a key role in ensuring pupils travel safely and behave responsibly on school transport. They are expected to support the council, schools, transport operators, and their staff in maintaining safe, respectful, and orderly behaviour. Communication of any change in the needs of your child is essential.

When a child does not qualify for free transport, it is the responsibility of the parent, guardian or carer to ensure the child arrives to and from school safely.

Parents, guardians or carers remain responsible for their child's journey to and from school or, where the authority is providing school transport (either through a dedicated service or local bus service), between home and the designated pick-up/drop-off point. Taxi drivers are there to transport your child to school only.

Parents, guardians and carers are also responsible for ensuring that a child may return to another suitable location should transport fail to arrive at the stop in the morning for any reason.

To help keep school transport safe and smooth, please follow these tips:

- ✓ **Be ready for handover** – ASN transport collects children directly from home addresses. Parents, guardians or carers must be present at pick-up in the morning and drop-off in the afternoon. Drivers are only permitted to transport children from the address provided by the Travel Team. This ensures safety and prevents confusion or delays.
- ✓ **Arrive on time** – Drivers will wait up to 5 minutes for a child to be ready. If the child is not prepared within this time, the vehicle will continue to maintain the schedule for all passengers. Parents, guardians or carers should plan ahead to ensure punctuality and avoid missed journeys.
- ✓ **Complete travel passports** – Parents, guardians or carers must ensure that all required travel documents or passports are completed accurately before transport begins. These forms provide essential information about your child's needs, emergency contacts, and authorisation, helping staff provide safe, efficient transport. Please ensure any new needs or changes to behaviour are added to the travel passport.
- ✓ **Prepare your child** – Ensure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather, has any necessary equipment, and is ready for the day. This includes wearing suitable footwear, carrying any medication if required, and having school bags or personal belongings packed safely.
- ✓ **Encourage good behaviour** – Where appropriate, parents, guardians or carers should remind their children to stay seated, wear seatbelts, and act safely throughout the journey. Emphasise the importance of treating drivers, passenger assistants, and fellow passengers with respect, following the same standards expected at school.

- ✓ **Be aware of consequences** – Serious or repeated misbehaviour may lead to suspension of free or concessionary transport. In these cases, parents, guardians or carers will be responsible for arranging alternative travel. Early communication with the School Transport Team can help prevent escalations.
- ✓ **Support safe routines** – Where appropriate, talk to your child about the journey, the route, and any instructions from the driver or passenger assistant. Reinforcing routines at home helps children understand expectations and promotes calm, safe behaviour on the vehicle.
- ✓ **Communicate changes** – Notify the School Transport Team promptly of any changes to pick-up or drop-off arrangements, or if your child will not require transport on a particular day. Accurate communication ensures drivers and staff can plan routes efficiently and safely.
- ✓ **Work with staff** – Cooperate with drivers, passenger assistants, and the council to maintain a safe and comfortable journey for all children. If issues arise, work together with transport and school or provision staff to resolve them promptly, supporting a positive environment for everyone.

Policy for drop off

Midlothian Council Integrated Transport Policy's guidance for drivers if a parent, guardian or carer is not at home at the time of drop-off:

1. **Wait for up to 5 minutes** – The driver or passenger assistant will wait at the designated pick-up or drop-off point for a maximum of 5 minutes to allow time for the parent, guardian or carer to arrive. This helps ensure the schedule is maintained for other pupils while providing a short grace period for delays.
2. **Attempt to contact the parent, guardian or carer** – If the child is not collected within 5 minutes, staff will attempt to contact the parent, guardian or carer, or any designated emergency contact provided on the travel documentation. This helps determine whether there is a delay or if alternative arrangements are needed.
3. **Contact the school** – If contact with the parent, guardian or carer cannot be made, the driver or transport staff will contact the school to confirm that no responsible adult is present. The school will then advise whether it is possible for the child to be returned to the school premises.
4. **Return the child to school if feasible** – Where it is safe and practical, the child will be transported back to the school. This ensures the child is in a safe, supervised environment until the parent, guardian or carer can be reached.
5. **Referral to Children's Services if return is not possible** – If returning the child to school is not feasible, the school will make a referral to Children's Services. The referral will include all relevant information about the child, including medical needs, allergies, or other considerations, to ensure appropriate care can be provided.
6. **Children's Services ensure safety** – Once referred, and if no other alternative care is agreed in the interim the driver will bring the child to the Children's Services building who will assume responsibility for the child's welfare and supervised until a parent, guardian, carer, or other authorised adult is able to collect them.