

Code of Conduct for Midlothian travel - mainstream

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, adults who are recipients of social care services.

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1. General Expectations for passengers

The following guidelines must be adhered to by all passengers using Midlothian Council transport services.

1.1 Transport Passes and Documentation

- **Carry your pass:** Passengers, where required, must carry their travel pass daily to ensure the driver can confirm permission from Midlothian Council to access designated transport. This also ensures adequate insurance coverage. Failure to carry the pass may result in being refused travel.
- **Show your pass:** Passengers, where required, must show their travel pass when boarding the transport and to any official from the Transport Company, Midlothian Council, Police, or Government Inspectorate upon request.
- **Travel pass usage:** The travel pass is for personal use only and provides authority to travel on the contracted transport service. It must not be lent to others or used on any other route. Misuse may result in the removal of the pass, loss of free school transport, and may be considered fraud.
- **Lost, stolen, or damaged passes:** Report lost, stolen, or damaged passes immediately to school reception staff. A replacement pass must be requested, subject to an admin fee of £10. A temporary pass should be issued by the school while awaiting a permanent replacement.
- **Pass returns:** If school transport is no longer required, the travel pass must be returned immediately to the school, and the Travel Team notified at **travelteam@midlothian.gov.uk**. Failure to return the pass may result in being invoiced for the unexpired portion.

1.2 Safety and Seating

- **Remain seated:** Passengers must remain seated for the duration of the journey. Passengers should not change seats or use the stairs unless the journey has ended.
- **Seatbelt use:** Seatbelts, when provided, must be worn at all times. Only one person per seat is allowed.

1.3 Behavioural Expectations

- **Respect and Courtesy:** Passengers must always treat the driver and fellow passengers with respect and courtesy.
- **No Bullying or Disruptive Behaviour:** Bullying, teasing, or disruptive behaviour that could distract the driver or disturb others is strictly prohibited.

- **No Throwing Objects:** Passengers must not throw objects inside or outside of the vehicle.
- **No Interference with Emergency Equipment:** Passengers must not tamper with emergency doors, bells, or other safety equipment.
- **No Smoking or Dangerous Behaviour:** Smoking, vaping, loud noises, or any dangerous behaviour is not permitted.

1.4 Littering and Vandalism

- **No littering or vandalism:** Passengers must not litter or damage the transport vehicle in any way. Damages caused will be the responsibility of the offending passenger and their parents, guardians or carers, who will be required to pay for repairs.
- **Consequences for misconduct:** Persistent misbehaviour may result in being banned from school transport. Parents, guardians or carers will need to arrange alternative transport in such cases.

1.5 Consequences of misconduct

- **Refusal of service:** Transport providers may refuse service to any passenger whose behaviour poses a safety risk. In such cases, the vehicle will stop, and all passengers are required to follow the driver's instructions. The driver will promptly notify the school, police, and Midlothian Council. Passengers will not be removed from the vehicle mid-journey; however, if repeated safety concerns arise following a report and investigation, transport services may be revoked on health and safety grounds.
- **Disciplinary action:** Misconduct may result in school disciplinary action, including potential exclusion from school.

1.6 Emergency Protocols

- **In case of breakdown or emergency:** Passengers must remain seated and follow the driver's instructions. The driver will notify the transport company, school, and Midlothian Council as needed.

2. Responsibilities of parents, guardians and carers

Parents, guardians, and carers play a key role in ensuring children travel safely and behave responsibly on school transport. Parents, guardians and carers are expected to support the council, schools, transport operators, and their staff in maintaining safe, respectful, and orderly behaviour.

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 and 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.

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 guidelines:

2.1 Transport Readiness

- **Punctuality:** Ensure the passenger arrives at the scheduled pick-up point at least 5 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time as lateness may result in missed transport.
- **Contingency Plans:** Have a contingency plan in place (e.g., using a Young Scot Card for free bus travel <https://young.scot/get-informed/young-persons-free-bus-travel/>) in case the transport does not arrive due to unforeseen circumstances.

2.2 Behavioural Support

- **Promote positive behaviour:** Support and encourage the passenger to adhere to behavioural expectations, including respect for others and following safety instructions.
- **Address behaviours:** Work with the school and council to resolve behavioural issues, attending meetings if necessary.
- **Additional support needs:** Support and work with school staff and council regarding behaviours of passengers with specific additional support needs to reduce risk.
- **Communication:** Parents, guardians and carers must immediately inform Midlothian Council if there are any changes to the passenger's transport

requirements, such as health issues, relocations, or other changes in circumstances.

2.3 Consequences of misconduct

- **Transport Service Suspension:** If passenger behaviour disrupts the transport service, parents/carers must arrange alternative transport. Midlothian Council may suspend or remove access to school transport.
- **Payment for damages:** Parents, guardians or carers are financially responsible for damages caused by the passenger.
- **Persistent, dangerous behaviour:** Despite risk assessments and interventions, if other passengers, travel assistants or the driver's safety is at risk, Midlothian Council may suspend or remove access to school transport.

2.4 Reporting Issues

- **Transport issues:** Report transport problems to travelteam@midlothian.gov.uk, providing as much detail as possible.
- **Behavioural Incidents:** If the passenger witnesses or experiences unacceptable behaviour, report it to the school. Driver-related incidents will be investigated by the Travel Team.

2.5 Safety and Collection

- **Passengers:** Ensure prompt collection of passengers, where necessary, as vehicles are unable to wait. Parents, guardians or carers are responsible for the safety of the passenger between home and the pick-up/drop-off point.

2.6 Support for Independence

- **Support with transitions:** Parents, guardians or carers should collaborate with Midlothian Council to explore alternative transport solutions, such as group pick-up points or personal transport budgets, especially when passengers are transitioning to adult services or more independent travel arrangements.