

Date: 20.8.20

Email: regan.delf@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

Home to School Transport – special arrangements for September 2020

With the beginning of the autumn term approaching, I am writing to update you on the special arrangements we've put in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people on Home to School Transport (HTST).

We realise this continues to be an anxious time for families.

However, we want to assure you that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people on transport is extremely important to us and we have taken care with special arrangements for the autumn term.

Please bring any problems or issues to the attention of the Home to School Transport Service.

Also, please get in touch if you would like help with this letter and we will go through what it says with you on the phone.

You can ring us on 01273 293501 or email at Hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk

September Arrangements

The latest guidance covering Home to School Transport was issued by the government on 11 August. Here is a link to it:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020/transport-to-school-and-other-places-of-education-autumn-term-2020>

We have considered all national guidance carefully in constructing the following advice to you about arrangements for the autumn term.

If your child or someone in your household has COVID-19 symptoms

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

If your child or young person, or a member of your household has these symptoms, **you must not send your child on Home to School Transport or to school.**

Our transport staff must not be asked to take your child or young person if they have symptoms. This is because it risks spreading the virus to other children and staff. In these circumstances, your child or young person must stay at home and be tested. Please follow the guidance in the link below:

[Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection.](#)

If your child or young person develops COVID-19 symptoms while at school, **we cannot allow the transport team to take them home.** To avoid potential transmission of the virus, we will ask you to collect your child and take him or her home. If that causes difficulties for you, you can ring us to discuss – but we have to protect the safety of all children and our transport staff.

Social Distancing on Transport

The government has said that the rules for public transport on social distancing do not apply to ‘dedicated’ or Home to School Transport.

The risk is deemed to be lower on Home to School Transport, as pupils do not mix with the general public on those journeys and the same groups travel together every day.

However, the government encourages arrangements that leave more space between passengers wherever possible.

Brighton & Hove is reducing the numbers of children and young people on vehicles this autumn term to allow for greater distance between them.

This has meant we have had to commission more vehicles and staff crews than we would normally over the pandemic period. This means there is less spare capacity in the city in the event of staff illness or absence.

However, the council has recruited a small team of Vehicle Passenger Assistants (VPAs), to provide extra cover if needed.

The principles we've used are:

- Distancing within vehicles where possible / reduced numbers on vehicles
- Maintaining consistency for children and young people / familiar firms / crews
- Ensuring everyone gets safely to school in an efficient and timely manner

In most cases, there will be a spare seat between each child or young person. Where this has been difficult to achieve, we have added one extra child in to enable everyone to get to school in a timely and efficient manner.

We are asking firms not to seat children opposite each other if at all possible.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed with families, the HTST team and the transport provider, we are not permitting children to sit in the front of vehicles.

We are also asking our firms to make sure vehicles are well-ventilated, with open windows where possible, and that surfaces are cleaned thoroughly between passengers.

Transport staff will not be permitted to enter your homes. Please make sure you bring your child to and from the transport vehicle. School staff will meet transport staff at the school entrance.

All routes for September have been planned and all new transport teams should have introduced themselves to you and your child by now. Please let us know if this has not happened and we will chase this up.

Face coverings

The government are recommending that children and young people over 11 years old wear face coverings on Home to School Transport, as on public transport.

However, our children and young people on HTST are excluded from this recommendation under the following circumstances:

- if they have a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means they cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering;
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause them severe distress.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>

If your child or young person cannot manage to fix and remove the face covering or mask safely on their own, it is not safe for them to wear them.

If your child or young person is over 11 years old and can manage to fix and remove a face covering safely and independently, we would recommend that they do wear one. However, this is at your discretion.

Other safety measures

Please make sure your child or young person has washed their hands thoroughly before joining transport in the morning.

Please make sure you take your child to the vehicle in the mornings and collect from the vehicle in the afternoon.

It can help if your child travels with tissues.

If you would prefer to transport your child yourself over the continuing pandemic period, please contact us in relation to a mileage allowance or personal travel budget.

We are keen to support parents and carers who are able to do this. This does not in any way affect your entitlement to free transport and you can end any such arrangement at any time.

PPE for Transport Staff

Government guidance does not require staff on Home to School Transport to wear PPE or face coverings.

However, it is recognised that masks or face coverings and sometimes other forms of PPE may be a sensible precaution where social distancing is not possible. This will depend on the risk assessments carried out by our transport providers of their own situations.

Your child or young person should be prepared for staff wearing PPE when they return to school. I have re-attached a 'social story' we put together that may be a help to you in preparing your child for what to expect in September.

Emotional and Behavioural Needs

We understand that many of our children and young people are highly anxious, and that the pandemic can make this worse.

We know that anxiety and distress can lead to challenging behaviours for some young people. Our VPAs, if there is one on the route, will help them and reassure them to the best of their ability.

Our new training programme will support transport staff in meeting children's needs.

However, drivers must be allowed to pay full attention to the road and cannot be expected to manage children and young people's behaviour.

For the safety of all children and young people and transport staff, we may have to make special arrangements if staff are struggling with unsafe behaviours over the pandemic period.

In these circumstances we may ask you to travel with your child, although you do not have to do so.

Cleaning of vehicles

We have set out expectations for all transport providers about thorough cleaning of vehicle surfaces between journeys.

We will be carrying out spot checks at school sites to check that cleaning and safety precautions are being complied with.

Training for Transport Staff

Please be assured that all staff on transport have the required DBS checks.

Our transport providers have been given all the information in this letter.

We are also introducing online training for all staff and require all transport staff to have completed introductory and safeguarding modules before the start of term.

Over the course of the autumn term, all staff will have to complete online modules on Equalities and a broad range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Our training has been produced by specialist staff at the council with input from transport operators and PaCC representatives.

Traffic

We are aware that with planned roadworks and other changes to the traffic systems across the city, there could be some temporary hold-ups. We are hoping that journeys won't be adversely affected, and we will monitor the situation in the autumn and check on arrival times at school or college.

And finally...

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or queries about the above or any other aspect of your child or young person's transport:

- phone 01273 293501
- or email hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

We are here to help if we can and you will receive a warm welcome from us.

Your child or young person's safety and wellbeing is very important to us and we want to be sure you are comfortable and confident in the arrangements made for the autumn term.

The pandemic is a challenge for all of us and we cannot guarantee that everything will be perfect straight away as we all come to terms with the 'new normal'.

I hope you can bear with us if there are any unforeseen challenges. However, we have planned to the best of our ability and – working together with PaCC and our families in partnership – we will do our very best to ensure a smooth transition back to school for everyone.

Best wishes,

Regan

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