



WESTFIELD SCHOOL

Minibus Policy

Original Author	Emma Jenkins
Updated	February 2023
Review Due	February 2025 – Zoe Burge

The Driver's Responsibilities

Westfield School has overall responsibility for ensuring a safe transport is provided for learners attending off-site activities as part of their curriculum. However, every driver is personally responsible for ensuring that their vehicle is roadworthy before they take it out onto the road. Indeed, it is the driver's licence that will suffer if the vehicle is found to be defective. It is also the driver's responsibility to ensure the safety (including the use of seat belts) and welfare of all passengers.

Before any journey, and every time a minibus is used, the driver must:

- Plan the journey so that it can be completed safely and comfortably in accordance with the passengers' needs
- Ensure the minibus is suitable for the passengers being carried
- Conduct a pre-drive vehicle safety check (see Appendix A)
- The driver should complete a log sheet, provided by the Administrator, to show that they have conducted the necessary checks.

Wheelchairs

Where possible, it is preferable for pupils who use wheelchairs to transfer to a fixed seat, and for the wheelchair to be securely stored during the journey. However, this is not appropriate for all wheelchair users. Pupils may remain in their wheelchairs during the journey, provided that the wheelchair is secured in a forward or rearward-facing position (never sideways), and it is securely and symmetrically fixed to the vehicle with webbing restraints.

Wheelchairs must not obstruct a door or gangway. Some wheelchairs, such as those designed for sports use, are unsuitable for travelling.

In addition:

- The wheelchair user must be secured with seatbelts (three-point belts or harness) attached to the vehicle tracking
- The wheelchair handbrake must be applied
- The power on electric wheelchairs should be switched off and the batteries firmly attached to the wheelchair.
- Tracking for the wheelchair and occupant restraint systems should be kept clean, and free from grit, etc. at all times.

Drivers and supporting staff should be trained in the care (boarding and assistance) of pupils who travel in their wheelchairs. Training is available from the Health and Safety Advisors of the Local Authority transport team.

Fitness and entitlement to drive

All Westfield staff must take responsibility for their fitness to drive as part of their work duties. If a staff member believes they are unfit to drive a motor vehicle, either because of illness or the effects of alcohol or drugs they must inform their Line Manager or the Administrator, and not drive the Westfield vehicles.

Any changes in entitlement to drive the Westfield vehicles i.e. Interim disqualifications, disqualifications must be reported to the School business manager/head teacher

First Aid

Each bus is equipped with a first aid kit, regular checks of the content should be made and any replacement items requested from the Administration team..

Fire Evacuation and Fire Extinguishers

In the event of a fire occurring, a controlled evacuation of pupils must commence and the Fire Service called. The fire should only be tackled if safe to do so and if by doing so it will protect the means of escape for the pupils.

Fire extinguishers are provided for accessible minibuses and:

- comply with BS 5432 (or an equivalent, e.g. BSEN 3),
- have a minimum test rating of 8A or 21B, and contain either powder or foam

Extinguishers should be examined regularly to ensure they are fully charged and accessible for immediate use and will be subjected to an annual service

Breakdown Procedures

Any vehicle breakdown must be reported to the Administration team immediately who will coordinate the response, from within Herefordshire a local engineer, out of County an engineer will be sourced.

Emergency Evacuation

- All loose articles including jackets, books, kits, etc. must be left on the bus.
- Pupils will remain seated until it is their turn to unload.
- When unloading using the front door, Pupils will unload from the front, beginning with the seat behind the driver, then the front seat across the aisle, moving back to second, third, etc.
- When unloading using the back door, Pupils will unload from the last seat on the driver's side, then the last seat across the aisle, and thus alternating up the aisle to the front of the bus.
- When using both front and rear doors, both of the above procedures will apply.
- Pupils will need to be supervised at a safe distance from the emergency scene, away from the traffic.
- They must remain in this fashion until further directions are given by either the driver or other supporting staff.

Evacuation of wheelchair passengers

- If the vehicle, following an accident or breakdown, is not in a safe place, or if there is a risk of fire, evacuation may need to be done speedily; and if carrying pupils in wheelchairs, evacuate all able-bodied pupils first, or let others, who are able to do so, do this while you taking those who are disabled out from the rear of the vehicle.
- In order to evacuate as speedily as possible, the lift may be positioned halfway between road and floor level and used as a step if time allows, with another person helping to lift wheelchairs down if at all possible, or else carrying the pupil from the wheelchair to safety outside the vehicle.

Use of Mobile Phone Whilst Driving

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving. The offence can be committed by the driver and also by any person causing or permitting it.

Even when using hands-free phones driver should:

- Limit outgoing calls to emergency use and when it is safe to do so
- Use voice activation when making outgoing calls
- Tell all incoming callers that he/she is driving and to keep the call short.

Accident Reporting Procedures

Usually when traffic accidents occur it is clear which party is to blame. However, in some cases it is not as obvious and as a result the procedures that follow may be complicated. This includes dealing with insurance companies and Emergency Services such as the Police and Fire Service.

Generally speaking, if you drive into the back of a vehicle, you will be held responsible for the collision, even if the driver in front stopped abruptly in response to another vehicle.

What to do next?

If you are involved in an accident you must always stop, even if you believe you are not to blame. You must stay where you are when you are in an accident involving another vehicle, person, animal or someone else's property. This allows you and/or the other person involved to take down all the relevant details, which are required when processing your claim(s) and police report. Details required are:

- Driver's name
- Driver's address (wherever the Driving Licence shows) + Westfield for admin contact
- Driver's telephone number
- Driver's minibus registration number

This can be recorded on the motor accident report form provided by the Insurers.

If you do not give these details to the other party involved or police at the time of the accident you must do so at the police station within 24 hours. If someone has been injured in the accident, the responsible driver must provide a valid motor insurance certificate at the time of the accident. This has to be shown to the other party and to a police officer. The responsible driver must report the accident at a police station within 24 hours of the accident if they failed to produce this document at the scene of the accident. If the responsible driver has no proof of insurance at this time they have seven days to bring the insurance document to the nominated police station.

If no physical damage has been done to anyone, the party suffering damage can ask the driver for insurance details so that they can make a claim against them. In the same manner the person responsible for the accident must contact their own insurance company also to amend their insurance claim.

Getting Witnesses

Whenever an accident occurs it is essential to gather as much evidence as possible. This evidence should consist of impartial testimony from independent witnesses who saw exactly what happened. Witnesses should write down all the information they can remember and keep the account just in case there are court proceedings. The people involved in the accident should have their own documented account also. In cases where a witness refuses to give their account of the accident the police may ask them to provide a witness statement. As a result, the witness may be called into Court if necessary.

Driving safely in adverse weather conditions is about preparation

Before commencing any journey where there is likely to be a risk of adverse weather conditions drivers are requested to consider the following:

Before setting off...

- Driving in hazardous conditions is not considered to be part of an employee's contract, regardless of the importance of the journey
- The most important consideration is to ask yourself is; whether your journey is absolutely necessary.
- Liaise closely with your Head teacher and the School Business Manager before making any journeys in poor driving conditions.
- If you do need to travel check the weather forecast before setting off.
- If possible contact some in the area to where you are travelling to get an accurate local view of the weather.
- The Driver **MUST** be able to see, so clear all snow and ice from all your windows
- The Driver **MUST** ensure that lights are clean and number plates are clearly visible and legible
- Make sure the mirrors are clear and the windows are demisted thoroughly
- Remove all snow that might fall off into the path of other road users

If you must travel...

- Do not ignore police warnings about closed roads or advice not to travel on specific routes.
- Consider starting your journey sooner to maximise the daylight.
- Plan your journey around busier roads, as they are more likely to have been gritted.
- Avoid using short cuts on minor roads – they are less likely to be cleared or treated with salt, especially country lanes
- Drive with care, even if the roads have been treated
- Keep well back from the road user in front as stopping distances can be ten times greater than on dry roads. Take care when overtaking vehicles spreading salt or other de-icer.
- Watch out for snow ploughs which may throw out snow on either side. Do not overtake them unless the lane you intend to use has been cleared
- Be prepared for the road conditions to change over relatively short distances

Useful Contact Numbers		
Name	Role	Contact
Zoe Burge	School Business Manager	01568 613147 07941701969
Nicki Gilbert	Head Teacher	01568 613147 07964 401815

