

Safe travel on school buses

School Bus Passes: Frequently asked questions

Q. Why do students need bus passes to travel on contract buses?

A. The bus pass system ensures that loadings on the bus are regulated so that everybody has a seat. Without this management there is a risk that students, who are entitled to travel and who board at the last pick up point in the morning, would not have a seat on the bus.

The bus pass can also help the driver to identify any child whose behaviour is unacceptable. Experience shows that poor behaviour is encouraged if children feel that they cannot be identified.

Q. What guidelines do bus drivers have?

A. Drivers are instructed to check bus passes on every journey in order to get children into the habit of showing a bus pass. The same driver might not drive the bus every day or in the morning and afternoon. The driver will not necessarily therefore know whether a child is entitled to travel on the bus or not.

Q. Do drivers have to bring students to School in the morning?

A. We recognise that sometimes children will not have their pass with them. Drivers have discretion to allow travel in the morning on the first occasion that a child does not have a bus pass and to advise them to obtain a temporary pass from the school office.

Children and Parents should not expect the driver to allow the child to travel. If a child persistently tries to travel without a pass in the morning after being advised that they must get one, the driver will refuse them travel.

Drivers should not however suddenly refuse to carry children without a bus pass, if pass checks have not been carried out regularly. Parents are advised to discuss with their child what to do if he or she fails to catch the bus for any reason in the morning.

Q. Do drivers have to take students home in the afternoon?

A. In the afternoon, drivers are instructed not to allow students to travel without a bus pass or temporary pass. Students may have the opportunity to get a temporary bus pass from the school during the course of the day and there should therefore be no reason for anybody not to have a pass for the journey home.

If a student tries to board a bus without a pass, the driver is likely to advise them to go to the School Office and obtain a temporary pass. Bus companies operating commercial school bus services may offer a different system such as a 'one more day pass'.

In either case school buses will depart on time so pupils must ensure they have a valid bus pass or approved temporary pass prior to the bus departure time and present this to the driver.

The bus might therefore depart before a student has been able to get a temporary pass. This is more likely to happen where the School Office is some distance from the bus park.

Anyone, who is refused travel, can wait at school in a safe environment until alternative arrangements can be made by the parent or carer (this will not be at the contractor or Council's expense).

Continued use of a temporary pass will result in the pass being withdrawn and transport suspended until a valid bus pass is purchased for the pupil.

Q. Can School staff ask drivers to allow a student to travel without a bus pass?

A. Many drivers will respond positively to a reasonable request by a member of the school staff to allow a student without any pass to travel home in the afternoon. For example, this could be done if a student only becomes aware that he or she has lost the bus pass when boarding the bus and does not have time to go back and get a temporary pass.

However, in the case of commercial school bus services drivers may not be permitted to carry pupils unless a valid pass is produced.

Q. Why do some buses have a strict 'no pass, no travel' rule?

A. strict 'no pass, no travel' rule has to be introduced on some buses, where buses would otherwise be overloaded and therefore unsafe because of the number of students travelling who should not be on the bus. This is more common on commercial school bus services where there is a mixture of entitled and fare paying pupils.

Q. What happens if a student loses a bus pass?

A. A permanent replacement pass should be obtained on application to the School Office, or download the form from

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/replace-school-bus-pass.

If your child travels on a commercial school bus service you should contact the bus operator to enquire how you replace your bus pass. The charge for a replacement pass is usually £10.00. Students must return all temporary passes to school when presented with their duplicate Bus Pass.

**Please note that temporary passes cannot be issued for public bus services, in these cases a fare will need to be paid on the bus until a replacement pass has been obtained.*

Photocopied or scanned copies of passes are not acceptable in any circumstances and if detected are likely to result in suspension of transport.

Q. When can the School issue a temporary bus pass?

A. A temporary pass can be issued for contract bus services and for some commercial school bus services in the following circumstances:

- the permanent pass has been lost, damaged or stolen and the student has applied for a replacement or;
- if a student has temporarily mislaid or forgotten the permanent pass, a temporary pass may be issued to allow them to travel home in the afternoon or;
- the school has confirmed with the Council that a student is entitled to transport, but has not yet received a permanent pass.

Temporary passes should only be issued to students who appear on the latest bus loading list and only for the bus they are currently allocated to.

Q. How long can a temporary pass be issued for?

A. The expiry date for a temporary pass should be no longer than 2 weeks after the issue date. Forging and fraudulent use of temporary passes has become commonplace. Schools should not, therefore, issue temporary passes repeatedly without first checking with the Council and should be vigilant regarding abuse of the system.

Q. Can any exceptions be made?

A. Sometimes children not normally entitled to transport may want to travel on the school bus to a friend's house.

The Council no longer allow the use of school bus services in this way unless there are exceptional circumstances and prior approval has been given by the Council.

Please note that the driver may still refuse to accept such a temporary travel arrangement if he or she believes it would cause the bus to be overloaded.

Q. Can students get a permanent transfer to another bus?

A. Students are normally allocated a place on the nearest available bus to their home address or one which is within reasonable walking distance. Once a permanent bus pass has been issued, it is not normally possible to transfer to another bus to accommodate personal preferences or to travel with friends.

However, if a student wishes to arrange a swap with another student, this can be done by returning both bus passes to the Council, with letters requesting changes from both students' parents / guardians. Students will need to obtain temporary passes for their current buses to continue to travel while waiting for new permanent passes.

Sometimes, transfer requests are received because of bullying. In these cases, the request must be made by the school.

A transfer may be considered but cannot be guaranteed.

Guideline leaflets in this series

This leaflet aims to give advice and information to students, parents, schools, colleges and bus operators who use and deliver transport services provided by Leicestershire County Council.

Other leaflets in this series, available on request, include:

- Anti-social behaviour on school transport
- Guidelines for drivers
- Guidelines for taxi escorts
- Guidelines for school staff
- Guidelines for parents and students on mainstream transport
- Guidelines for parents – Special Educational Needs transport
- Guidelines of safe working practice for the protection of children and staff
- Guidelines for severe weather conditions - Operators
- Guidelines for severe weather conditions – Schools

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the services it relates to, or if you require information contained in this leaflet in an alternative version, e.g. large print, Braille, tape or an alternative language please telephone:

0116 305 0002

or write to:

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Leicestershire County Council,
County Hall, Glenfield, Leicestershire LE3 8SR
Email: customerservices@leics.gov.uk

or visit our website:

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/