



# SOLIHULL

## Use of Minibus Policy and Driver's Handbook

**Owner:** Assistant Bursar (Facilities, Compliance and Transport)  
**Reviewer:** Health and Safety Officer  
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Version 2

Legislation places a duty on Solihull School to provide a safe working environment, which also extends to driving on business. This handbook is applicable to all persons who drive a school vehicle including minibuses, vans and 4x4s, whether employees or volunteers who drive School vehicles.

Driving is one of the most dangerous activities that we do. Every year, over 20,000 people are seriously injured, and every day, 5 people die in road traffic incidents.

Driving for work is riskier than driving for private reasons. Up to a third of all road traffic accidents involve somebody who was using the road for work purposes.

Knowing and applying the rules contained in this handbook and The Highway Code could significantly reduce road incidents, and the injuries and casualties that result. Cutting the number of deaths and injuries that occur on our roads every day is a responsibility we all share.

### **Driving Responsibilities and Standards**

When driving on School business, you are an ambassador for the school. As such, you are expected to drive responsibly, showing courtesy to passengers, other road users and pedestrians at all times.

Whenever driving a school vehicle or your own vehicle on School business, ultimate responsibility will remain with you the driver. Any offence committed may result in a fine and/or an endorsement of your driver's licence.

Any offence or endorsement may also affect personal driving insurance and premiums. In addition, prosecutions may be brought against you as an individual.

### **Highway Code**

All drivers are expected to drive safely and take no unnecessary risks. You must never contravene the Highway Code when driving during the course of business, the school will not put you in a position where this would be necessary.

### **Approved Drivers**

The school maintain an approved drivers list for staff and volunteers who are approved to drive School vehicles. Only staff and volunteers included within the approved drivers list are permitted to drive School vehicles for School business. School vehicles are not permitted to be used for private use.

You will not be considered for a position of approved driver unless you:

- Are at least 21 years of age.
- Have at least two year's driving experience on a full licence
- Have an appropriate driving licence category e.g., D1 licence if driving minibuses.
- N.B. Employees not approved by the school are not permitted to drive School vehicles – even if they have a valid licence.

## **Driving Licence Checks**

The school are required to establish a simple regime for the receipt, recording and retention of copies of the driving licences of approved drivers who drive School vehicles. The school is required to check your driving licence before you can be registered as an approved driver to ensure that your licence includes the relevant categories e.g., D1 for driving minibuses and D1 and E for driving a minibus towing a trailer.

Once you are confirmed as an approved driver you will be asked to agree to an electronic check of your driving licence during periodic audits – failure to do so will result in the removal of your details from the approved drivers list and consequently the suspension of your driving privileges.

NB. Any driving convictions you incur must be reported to your manager as soon as possible. This includes gaining points on your licence. Please also see later section entitled “Disqualification from Driving”.

The use of a school vehicle requires the driver to have a full, valid UK licence for the category of vehicle to be driven (or a relevant international licence that is recognised by the UK).

## **Driving in Europe after Brexit**

There may be occasions when driving is required outside of the UK, for example School Trips.

Anyone driving in an EU Country, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Serbia or Andorra after 11pm on 31.12.2020 will require a Green Card. This applies even if your current motor insurance certificate has European cover noted on it, as this will be void following Brexit.

A Green Card is an international certificate of insurance which guarantees that the motorist has the necessary third-party insurance cover. These certificates prove that drivers are suitably insured to drive in Europe.

Staff members are advised to speak to the Bursary before driving on School Business outside of the UK.

## **Insurance**

Where an approved driver is authorised to drive a school vehicle, they and the vehicles they drive are insured for liabilities to any third parties by the school insurance. Any accidental damage incurred to our vehicles or other third-party property may ultimately be paid for by the school.

Incidents involving our vehicles will be investigated by the school and possibly by our insurance agents. Please ensure that you drive and manoeuvre with appropriate care and treat the vehicle like it is your own.

NB. The School insurance does not permit anyone to use a school vehicle for private use.

## **Use of Minibuses and Hired Vehicles**

School minibuses and hired vehicles are both provided with permits under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985, the permits enable the minibuses to be used for not-for-profit hire. The permit for each minibus is fixed on display within the minibus.

In accordance with the above Act each minibus carries:

- A water or foam fire extinguisher conforming to BS5423
- A first aid kit
- A copy of the insurance certificate
- A pre-use check list
- A logbook to record mileage.
- Defect report sheets
- A satellite navigation system
- Instructions on how to contact the breakdown service.
- School minibuses are to be booked out using the School's Online Booking system, which is overseen by the Fleet Manager.

### **Seating Capacity and Seat Belts**

Drivers of minibuses must ensure that the official seating capacity for the minibus they are driving is not exceeded.

All School vehicles are provided with seat belts for drivers and passengers. These must be worn on every journey; drivers of minibuses are responsible for ensuring that passengers wear seat belts.

### **Own Vehicle Use**

Employees using their own vehicles for School business are considered to be driving whilst at work. To this end all staff using their own vehicles for School business must ensure they have business insurance, a current MOT or relevant vehicle test certificate, and must maintain the vehicle in a roadworthy condition at all times.

Drivers must provide details of their vehicles to the school on request.

### **Disqualification from Driving**

Approved drivers who drive School owned or leased vehicles are duty bound to inform the Assistant Bursar (Facilities, Compliance and Transport) immediately upon any disqualification from driving on the public highway. That person will be relieved of all driving duties with immediate effect and in consultation with the individual employee the most appropriate course of action determined. Each case will be dealt with on its own merits.

### **Offences and Fines**

Responsibility for parking offences and other road traffic offences remain the responsibility of the driver.

### **Fitness to Drive**

The driver of a motor vehicle is the most important component. The driver decides which way to turn, when to use the accelerator and when to use the brakes. Drivers need to see and react to changing conditions very quickly. Drivers need to be alert and in control of the vehicle at all times. Drivers need to be **FIT TO DRIVE**.

Approved drivers must declare to the school any medical condition which adversely affects their ability to drive safely (all information provided will be treated as confidential). Staff will

also be asked this during their annual PDR and are required to undertake an annual health assessment.

NB. You must also inform the school if a declared medical condition becomes worse. Do not wait until the annual PDR review.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fit to drive when taking a vehicle onto the public highway.

### **Fitness to Drive – Eyesight**

You must be able to satisfy the requirements of local traffic laws when driving. Be aware that eyesight standards are different for differing categories of vehicle and can be checked on the DVLA website.

You must wear glasses or contact lenses every time you drive if you need them to meet the 'standards of vision for driving'.

### **Fitness to Drive - Drugs / Alcohol**

Drivers must not drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol (including prescription drugs which may affect your ability to drive).

You must also be aware of the morning-after effects associated with alcohol consumption.

You have a responsibility to inform your manager if you are unfit to drive for the stated reasons. Driving on School business while under the influence of alcohol or drugs will lead to disciplinary action.

If taking prescription medicines or drugs, check with your doctor regarding possible side effects.

### **Fitness to Drive - Medical Conditions**

Some medical conditions may make you unfit to drive. If this applies to you, you must inform the Fleet Manager and, in many causes, you will also need to tell the Drivers' Medical Unit at DVLA Swansea.

If you have a medical condition that may affect your ability to drive, then you should obtain medical advice; do not place your own safety or that of others at risk. Example of medical conditions for which the above applies, include but are not restricted to:

- Epilepsy/fits or blackouts
- Diabetes controlled by insulin or tablets.
- Parkinson's disease
- Narcolepsy or sleep apnoea syndrome
- Persistent alcohol/drug misuse or dependency
- Any chronic neurological condition
- A serious problem with memory
- Serious psychiatric illness or mental ill-health
- Any persistent limb problem for which your driving must be restricted to certain types of vehicles or those with adapted controls.

## **Pre-use of Vehicles**

### **Route Planning**

Planning your journey in advance will make it safer and less stressful, especially where the drive is long or on unfamiliar routes. Before driving, ask whether the journey is necessary – can the outcome be achieved via telephone or video conferencing? Or can the journey reasonably be made via public transport?

If the journey is necessary, the following guidance applies:

- Plan your route before you set out - Estimate how long the journey will take, and schedule intended rest stops where needed. Leave plenty of time for the journey.
- Check weather forecasts and traffic reports before you set off - Be aware of potential adverse weather conditions during the journey and consider the actual need to make the journey, e.g. in difficult winter conditions (see the 'Driving in poor weather' section in this booklet)
- Avoid the most dangerous times - Avoid where possible driving at night, especially after a long shift, or after drinking alcohol or taking medicine that makes you drowsy.
- Make sure you are well rested - Avoid driving when you would normally be asleep, and make sure you get plenty of sleep before a long drive. Keep meals light during or immediately before you drive. Heavy meals can make you drowsy.

### **Care and Condition of Vehicle**

The driver is responsible to ensure the vehicle is kept clean and presentable both inside and out.

### **Comfort Whilst Driving**

Before setting off, take the time to position yourself correctly in the vehicle. Make sure the seat provides support for the small of your back. Adjust the fore and after movement of the seat so that you can reach pedals and steering wheel without stretching. The knees should be slightly bent, and the thighs supported by the seat cushion. Ensure the seat belt goes comfortably across your body. Keep your hands a comfortable distance apart on the steering wheel and your arms slightly bent. Check the interior and exterior mirrors every time you enter the vehicle to provide the best possible backward views.

### **Roadworthiness of the Vehicle**

The Road Traffic Act states that the driver is responsible for the roadworthiness of any vehicle, the load being carried and the wearing of seat belts by passengers, whilst travelling on the public highway.

The school will ensure that owned or leased vehicles used by approved drivers, are properly serviced, and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and legal guidance. The School's Fleet Manager is responsible for the maintenance of School minibuses, any concerns regarding the condition of School minibuses must be reported to the Fleet Manager.

The law still holds the driver responsible for making sure that the vehicle, they are driving, is roadworthy. Approved drivers are required to undertake appropriate pre-use driver checks before taking the vehicle on the road.

### **Recommended Pre-use Vehicle Checks**

Approved drivers must complete the pre-use checklist contained within the vehicle; drivers must not use a school vehicle if they have any doubts concerning the safety of the vehicle. Any School vehicles deemed to be unsafe **must not be used** and defects must be reported immediately. A clear warning must be placed on the vehicle to prevent its use.

Owner drivers are recommended to carry out the following checks to their vehicles before using them for School business:

- Tyres are undamaged (no cuts or bulges), are at the correct pressure and have enough tread depth.
- There are no signs of vehicle damage.
- Oil, coolant and windscreen wash levels are correct.
- (Check when cold)
- Brakes are working.
- Lights and indicators are working.
- Windscreen and windows are not damage - Washers and wipers are working.
- Mirrors are correctly positioned.

Approved drivers and drivers of own vehicles are recommended to share the driving for distances of over two hours travelling time.

All drivers must ensure that baggage is stowed safely and securely. Gangways and doors should never be obstructed. Roof racks must be securely fitted and with the luge loaded properly and secured down.

The rear doors of minibuses are for emergency exit and should be kept clear at all times.

### **WHILST DRIVING**

Try to ensure you are in a calm, good mood before driving. Plan time into journeys in case you are delayed by traffic; this can help to relieve the pressure you feel when running late. Be tolerant towards others – shouting at another driver after their mistake or poor driving will not change anything, but anger will affect your judgement for some time after. Accept that drivers (including you) make honest mistakes and have lapses in concentration. Be courteous and thank others for their courtesy.

### **Speed Limits and Speed Limiters**

Make sure you know the speed limit of the roads you are using and always stay within this limit (including variable limits and temporary limits at roadworks) even if you think the limit is too low.

Speed limits will vary depending on the type of vehicle you are driving and whether you are towing a trailer. For example, minibus speed limits are lower than cars and are normally 10mph below the speed limit for cars. The speed limits can be found online at <https://www.gov.uk/speed-limits> and are shown below.

Type of vehicle	Built-up areas mph (km/h)	Single carriageways mph (km/h)	Dual carriageways mph (km/h)	Motorways mph (km/h)
Cars, motorcycles, car-derived vans and dual-purpose vehicles	30 (48)	60 (96)	70 (112)	70 (112)
Cars, motorcycles, car-derived vans and dual-purpose vehicles when towing caravans or trailers	30 (48)	50 (80)	60 (96)	60 (96)
Motorhomes or motor caravans (not more than 3.05 tonnes maximum unladen weight)	30 (48)	60 (96)	70 (112)	70 (112)
Motorhomes or motor caravans (more than 3.05 tonnes maximum unladen weight)	30 (48)	50 (80)	60 (96)	70 (112)
Buses, coaches and minibuses (not more than 12 metres overall length)	30 (48)	50 (80)	60 (96)	70 (112)
Buses, coaches and minibuses (more than 12 metres overall length)	30 (48)	50 (80)	60 (96)	60 (96)

School minibuses are fitted with speed limiters to limit the speed of minibuses. It is therefore illegal to use a School minibus in the outside lane of a motorway.

### Smoking

Smoking is prohibited within School vehicles at all times. This is illegal and a disciplinary offence.

### Mobile Phones

You must never use a mobile phone whilst driving unless you have a fully legally compliant hands-free unit and are an experienced driver used to handling such equipment. Even in such cases you should never initiate calls whilst driving. The law also applies to other devices such as laptops and PDA's.

Unless you have a hands-free unit, your phone should be switched off, with all calls diverted to voicemail. Check messages and return calls when your vehicle is stationary. Never make calls, dial numbers or text while driving, even with a hands-free unit.

Drivers may be stopped by the Police and be fined or prosecuted for breaking this legislation. The School is not liable for your actions in neither this regard nor any subsequent fine. You

should also be aware that if you have an accident whilst driving you may be prosecuted for driving without due care and attention.

## **Reversing**

Whenever you are reversing take extreme care. Drivers of minibuses and vehicles towing trailers should consider the use of a reversing assistant to guide you through the maneuver.

There is no shame in getting help but plenty if you hit something or someone, you will have to live with the consequences.

Safe reversing/reversing assistant training (banksman training) is available to all drivers of School vehicles via Safety Cloud and should form part of your training and development following a suitable risk assessment by the Fleet Manager.

## **Driving Hours Limits**

Working long hours, which includes long distance driving, can increase the possibility of accidents. This is especially so in poor driving conditions such as those caused by adverse weather conditions. For commercial vehicle drivers this is recognised in the law that restricts and controls drivers' working hours. It is School policy that similar standards should also apply to the use of cars and minibuses used on School business.

The working day, including driving, should not normally exceed 10 hours; and during the day you must not drive for more than 9 hours. If you are planning a long drive you should consider the 9 hour limit and plan this into your journey e.g. consider an overnight break.

The fatigue section below details how regularly breaks should be taken, you should note the Driver's Hours Regulations place specific legal requirements on drivers driving long distances for work. You must therefore adhere to the following:

- Never drive more than 9 hours per day.
- Take a break regularly, the minimum requirements are 45 minutes after every 4 1/2 hours of driving but you should follow the guidance in the 'Recognising Fatigue' section below.

## **Lane Restrictions**

School minibuses and any vehicle towing a trailer must not be used in the outside lane of a motorway unless they are required to overtake an oversized vehicle or take emergency action to avoid injury or danger to a person or inconvenience to other traffic.

## **Recognising Fatigue**

Falling asleep at the wheel is most likely to occur:

- On long journeys on monotonous roads for example motorways.
- Between 2am and 6am.
- Between 2pm and 4pm (especially after eating).
- Having less sleep than normal.
- After drinking alcohol.
- If taking medicines that cause drowsiness.
- On long journeys home after night shifts.

It is important to plan your journey suitably and ensure you get adequate sleep before starting to drive.

It is important you recognise signs of fatigue. These include:

- Constant yawning;
- Drifting over lanes;
- Sore eyes;
- Trouble keeping your head upright;
- Delayed reactions;
- Daydreaming
- Difficulty remembering driving the last few miles;
- Variations in driving speed

If you feel tired, pull over into the next available services and have a powernap, otherwise you may experience microsleeps which are dangerous while driving. Once you are fatigued the only cure is to stop and take a break.

### **Microsleeps**

Microsleeps are unintended periods of light sleep that last a few seconds or several minutes. You may just lose attention and stare blankly or even close your eyes and your head might snap up.

Microsleeps are dangerous when driving. During a 4 second microsleep a car travelling at 65 mph will travel 111m while completely out of the driver's control.

Microsleeps usually occur at times when you would normally be asleep or when you are tired and trying to stay awake.

### **How do I avoid fatigue?**

Get enough quality sleep before you begin driving. Be sure to have 7 to 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep before your trip.

Avoid driving at night. The chances of crashing are much higher late at night and early morning. The worst time to begin your trip is after work you will be tired already even though you do not realise it.

Take regular 15-minute breaks at least every two hours. Get out of the car, get some fresh air and some exercise. **Never** drive for more than 4½ hours without taking a 45-minute break and never drive more than 9 hours on any day.

Eat well balanced meals at your usual meal times. Avoid fatty foods which can make you feel drowsy.

Avoid alcohol and medicines that can cause drowsiness.

### **Will coffee cure fatigue?**

In the short-term coffee may be of some benefit but its effects wear off and you are likely to suffer from sleep rebound putting you at risk of crashing. The only cure for fatigue is sleep.

## **Will fresh air and loud music stop me from feeling fatigued?**

Playing music will only have a short-term benefit in keeping you alert. Fresh air will also only have short-term benefits in keeping you alert. The only cure for fatigue is sleep.

## **Travelling Alone**

When travelling alone on School business it is recommended that you should:

- Always try to travel on main or well used roads.
- If travelling after dark make sure someone knows your destination, estimated time of arrival and your planned route.
- Keep doors locked in towns. Unlock on open roads as in the event of an accident it is easier for a rescuer to get into the vehicle.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Never put possessions on the passenger seat when travelling in town. They may be snatched at traffic lights.
- Always lock your vehicle.
- If your vehicle develops a fault, stop in a well-lit or well used area.
- Ensure that you have charged your mobile phone before setting off and carry it on all journeys.

## **Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's)**

Drivers of School owned or leased vehicles involved in any form of road traffic collision **must stop** at the scene or as close as is safe to determine the extent of any injuries to individuals involved and damage to both vehicles and should:

- When circumstances dictate, escort passengers to a distance away from the vehicle unless injury precludes this.
- Under no circumstances apologise, admit blame, or accept liability.
- Write down the details of other vehicle(s) (vehicle registration no, make and model)
- Write down the name, address and contact details of other driver(s)
- Write down the name and address of any witnesses
- Write down the name of other parties' insurer and their policy number
- Write down a description of incident (location, speed, weather conditions, visibility, causative factors if known, etc.)
- If you have a camera or mobile phone capable of taking (time dated) pictures of the accident scene do so before any of the vehicles are moved from the roadway.
- Take pictures of the damage to your vehicle from all angles, damage to other vehicles, pictures of the intersection, roadway, road signs, in general take pictures of all aspects of the accident and the surrounding scene.
- Contact your destination to warn of any delay.
- Undertake another pre-use check before moving the vehicle.

## **RTC's Not Involving Injury**

If the vehicle is in a safe condition, proceed with the journey. On return, notify the Bursary who will ensure the Insurance Company is informed.

If the vehicle is **not** in a safe condition, do **not** drive - contact the breakdown recovery (details provided in the minibus) and inform the School at the first opportunity. Cover is provided to get the party home through the breakdown recovery. Details of this are shown in the minibus.

## **RTC's Involving Injury**

If injury is noted where appropriate administer first aid and contact the emergency services including the Police.

Contact the School and ensure that the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team is notified.

Notify the School Nursing Team of any incident and complete the form provided detailing the details of any injuries.

## **Theft of Vehicle and or Contents**

If a School vehicle is broken into, stolen or vandalised the circumstances must be immediately reported to the Police. A Vehicle Damage Report and a Crime number must be forwarded to the responsible person.

Whenever a School vehicle is left unattended it must be locked and all alarms, immobilisers and anti-theft devices must be fully used. Under the terms of the insurance policy, private items may not be covered whether on or in the vehicle.

Valuable items including mobile telephones, computers, briefcases, handbags, jackets etc. must not be left on display whilst the vehicle is unattended. Where possible they should be removed from the vehicle or placed in the boot.

Detachable radios and control panels shall be removed when the vehicle is parked unattended for extended periods.

If the vehicle is unoccupied when refueling, ensure that all windows are closed, keys are removed from the ignition and all doors are locked.

## **Winter Driving precautions**

During winter additional driving hazards have to be considered. These include adverse weather (rain, snow, frost, sleet, standing water) and longer hours of darkness. Following the advice given below will help to ensure your safety when driving in these conditions:

- Make sure you have plenty of fuel.
- Allow extra time for the journey and reduce speed.
- Increase the distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front – on ice and snow, stopping distances are ten times larger.
- In reduced visibility such as driving in rain or fog, use dipped headlights and rear fog lights. Use the windscreen wipers to keep the windscreen clear, even in fog.
- Remember to turn fog lights off when no longer required as they can distract other road users in normal visibility.
- Remember snow is visible but ice, especially black ice, is often invisible.
- Avoid sudden braking or harsh acceleration or steering maneuvers.
- Keep all windows and mirrors clean, clear of snow and ice and free of mist. Keep lights and indicators clean.
- Carry a torch, a spade, extra warm clothing, Wellington boots, a blanket, a snack and a hot drink, especially if you are driving through isolated areas.
- If you are planning a long journey advise someone of your destination and approximate expected arrival time. If you have one, carry a mobile phone with you, ensuring it is fully charged. Remember not to use it while driving.

- If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable driving in adverse weather conditions, consider whether your journey is necessary at that time or whether it can be postponed. Consider whether an alternative method of transport would be better.
- If stranded by bad weather, try to ensure that you are not blocking access for emergency vehicles. Remain with the vehicle unless there is shelter nearby. Maintain your circulation by moving your body. If you can, use the engine to keep warm; but do not use the engine if the exhaust cannot vent safely. If you are snowed over, ensure that an airway is maintained.

## **Fuel Cards**

Fuel cards will be issued to all drivers of School owned vehicles and long-term casual hire vehicles for sole use by that vehicle (Vehicle Registration Number on card). The vehicle mileage must be entered onto the dual sales voucher every time fuel is dispensed into the vehicle.

In the event of fuel cards not being available the responsible person shall be contacted to make or agree alternative arrangements for fuel. Emergency fuel cards are available and can be issued for sole use by that driver and vehicle, but all fuel receipts will be retained and returned with the card.

## **Satellite Navigation Equipment**

Drivers may use private satellite navigation equipment but should always programme their satellite navigation equipment before they set off and not input instructions whilst driving.

Drivers can be prosecuted for operating satellite navigation equipment if they are not in proper control of their vehicle while doing so. If settings require adjusting during a journey, drivers should pull over to a convenient safe location. Drivers should check the route the satellite navigation chooses, to make sure it is practical. Planning a journey in advance can reduce the driver's reliance on the satellite navigation at dangerous times and will also prompt drivers to think about issues such as fatigue and the best time to undertake the journey.

Drivers should ensure that satellite navigation equipment is kept updated with new maps, new road layouts and new one-way systems to prevent it from going out of date.

The satellite navigation should be positioned out of the way of airbags, in the line of sight but must not obstruct the driver's vision.

If the satellite navigation unit is detachable, drivers should always take it out when they leave the car. Thieves know that when people remove them, they tend to keep them in the car, so mounts or suction cap marks also attract thieves.

## **Dashcams**

All school owned and leased minibuses are now fitted with Dashcam's, small cameras that record everything that happens on the road. These cameras are for the purpose of both staff and pupil safety and are both visual and audio recording.

## **Transport of Pupils**

Pupils may be transported by staff. The use of private cars for School Business is covered by an 'occasional business use policy'. Full details are available from the Bursar. Individuals not employed by Solihull School are not covered by the business users' policy in any circumstances.

There is no insurance cover for pupils to drive their private car on School business. No pupil should be asked to drive his/her car on School business. In exceptional circumstances, the Executive Headmaster, Head of the Senior School, or the Bursar must approve any arrangement.

### **Clean Air Zones**

The Fleet Manager sends out information to all School Staff termly highlighting which of our school owned minibuses do not meet the emission standards for a clean air zone.

If a member of staff drives through a clean air zone, they must inform the Bursary immediately upon their return so that payment can be made.

Payments need to be made either 6 days before, or 6 days after entering a clean air zone.