

**Dorset Travel**

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Dear Parent or Carer,

We want to reassure you that we are following the advice from the Department for Education (DfE) for your child's school transport.

For your information, this letter outlines our current approach for delivering safe and 'COVID-19 aware' school transport from this September.

Social distancing on school transport

We will not enforce social distancing on school transport routes where all passengers have the same destination.

We will:

- make sure our school vehicles serve only one location per journey, for example we will have 2 separate vehicles that go to Beaminster School and Mountjoy School
- use a consistent driver on all vehicles where possible
- clean all school vehicles thoroughly at the start and end of each journey
- leave the windows on all school vehicles open wherever possible
- make sure our routes are not open to the public
- provide bins on our vehicles so that students can throw away any tissues, wipes or masks

We cannot guarantee that school transport will operate around staggered start or finish times. This decision has been discussed with schools, who will be making alternative arrangements where necessary.

If you have further questions about staggered start or finish times, please contact your school for more information.

Students should:

- wear face coverings where appropriate
- use the same seats and stay within their year group as much as possible
- avoid sitting face to face with each other
- carry their own hand sanitiser or wipes on our vehicles
- cooperate with the new restrictions

Students should not:

- stand up or move around on the vehicle
- use our school transport if they have any symptoms or live with someone who has symptoms

Face coverings

Face coverings were made mandatory on all public transport routes from Monday 15 June 2020.

All pupils over the age of 11 should wear face coverings and stay in the same seat on the vehicle. Although this is not mandatory on non-public transport routes, we strongly recommend it.

Guidance for drivers and passenger assistants

We ask all our drivers and passenger assistants to wear face coverings. We have provided them with child friendly face visors.

Following government advice, we strongly recommend that non-Dorset Council drivers wear a face covering but we cannot enforce this.

Exceptions to wearing face coverings on school transport

Passengers who are of primary school age (under the age of 11) or children with medical conditions who may have difficulty wearing a face covering do not have to wear one

Drivers do not need to wear a face covering where there is a plastic screen in place between the driver and passengers.

For safeguarding reasons we have asked our school transport operators not to leave anyone behind if they're not wearing a face covering.

Do you want to take your child to school instead of using school transport?

We know that some of you may wish to make your own travel arrangements from this September due to concerns about COVID-19. If this applies to you, please email us at: dtseptember2020@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk so that we can discuss your transport arrangements further.

Taking your child to school yourself will not mean you lose your school transport place. If at any point you decide that you would like to start using our school transport again, please contact us so that we can make arrangements. Please provide us with as much notice as possible, as this may take time to arrange.

Future information about transport

Due to the amount of change we are all experiencing during this pandemic, we are not sure the approach outlined in this letter will remain the same over for the whole academic year.

To make it easy for you to find the latest information on COVID-19 school transport, we have created a web page which we will update when any new guidance is released which may affect your child's school transport.

For ongoing updates and information on school transport during COVID-19, please visit our website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/covid-19-school-transport-updates

Yours sincerely,
Dorset Travel