

Minibus Policy

Introduction

A minibus is defined as a vehicle with between 9 and 16 seats, excluding the driver.

Under current KCC guidelines:

- Drivers, who held a full car licence before 1st January 1997 and have a category D1 entitlement, are to be able to drive school minibuses of up to 16 Passenger Seats;
- A driver who passed their test after 1st January 1997 to obtain a category B entitlement will not be allowed to drive a vehicle with more than eight Passenger Seats, without taking a separate D1 PVC driving
- A driver who passed their test after 1st January 1997 to obtain a category B entitlement will be allowed to drive a vehicle with more than eight Passenger Seats, without taking a separate D1 PVC driving test if the vehicle is adapted to carry disabled passengers fitted with a lift/ramp and does not exceed 4250kg MAM. They must also be over 21 and have 2 years driving experience. test.

Responsibilities

Headteacher and governor responsibilities:

- Ensure all staff, volunteers and students are safeguarded when using school vehicles;
- Ensure this policy is reviewed annually and updated as legislation requires;
- Ensure that all vehicles owned, leased or hired by the schools conform to the requirements of the KCC code of practice;
- Ensure systems are in place and sufficient responsibilities are delegated to ensure these points are met.

Estate Manager should:

- Refer to the KCC minibus code of practice as well as this policy to understand their role, that of others, KCC, legislation and other requirements;
- Ensure those responsible for a minibus or for anyone using it are aware of this code;
- Ensure that standards are met;
- Ensure driver' licences are checked annually or more frequently if required, and a record is kept;
- Ensure that all drivers receive adequate and timely training to meet KCC's required standards, including refreshers and initiating driver-training reassessment if necessary, following an incident;
- Maintain a record of all those trained and authorised to drive a minibus; act as an escort or act as a supervisor.
- Maintain driver records i.e. driver's details, licence, training, etc.
- Ensure risk assessments are undertaken to identify and reduce the risks associated with running a minibus. This process must be recorded to demonstrate that reasonable care has been taken. All risk assessments should be retained, periodically reviewed and amended as necessary.

Drivers should:

Before using the minibus with passengers on board, drivers must assure themselves that the vehicle is in good condition and that the daily and weekly checks have been carried out.

Drivers are asked to refuel the vehicle when the fuel gauge shows a quarter full.

Any deficiencies/defects should be reported on the log sheet; serious defects should be reported to the Site Manager for rectification before use.

- The driver has overall responsibility for the safety of the minibus and its passengers:
 - Only a fully trained authorised operator may use any passenger lifts provided;
 - They must hold a current KCC Assessment Card or MiDAS (will be replaced once expired with a KCC Assessment)
 - The driver is responsible for liaising with the training department before their certificate expires.

Drivers should also:

- Ensure that a correct and valid driving licence and permit to drive is held.
- Report any notice of actual or intended prosecution arising from any traffic offence, whether incurred on KCC business or not, as soon as possible to the manager or designated person.
- Not to drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including prescribed medication, which might impair driving ability. Drivers should be aware of the time it takes for alcohol levels to reduce in the body and the possible impact on early morning driving.
- Report any involvement in a road-traffic accident whilst driving a minibus. Drivers must complete an HS157 Accident/Incident Report Form and return it to the school office within 24 hours of the incident, or as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Not to use a mobile phone whilst the vehicle is moving, it is best if drivers turn their phone off whilst they are in the bus.
- Co-operate with the manager in the safe use of minibuses.
- Ensure they have carried out all checks as covered by the daily log sheet, which is kept in the vehicle, that the log is filled in before and after all journeys, including reporting any defects.
- Only transport students seated in their wheelchairs, if the wheelchair is designed for this purpose and the vehicle has been specifically adapted for this purpose and appropriate safety equipment to secure the wheelchair and occupant is used. It must only be used by those who are trained to use it.
- Ensure that all seats are secure in their tracking.
- Ensure familiarity with breakdown and emergency evacuation procedures.
- Follow any guidelines, training, risk assessments and method statements issued for the safe use of the vehicle, lift, ramps or hoist.
- Ensure that luggage and equipment is securely stowed and evenly distributed throughout the vehicle; aisles and exit routes are kept clear; a clear route must be maintained to all doors of at least 300mm wide.

Seat belts and restraints

The safety of passengers is paramount so the correct use of restraints, clamps, belts etc. is essential. All vehicles which are required to carry wheelchairs must have suitable tracking correctly fitted to the floor of the vehicle.

Use of belts

Seatbelts must be worn by the driver and passengers at all times (unless a medical reason is given and confirmed in writing from a GP or specialist. This will prompt a review of the service user's transportation needs).

Belt fitment and maintenance

A seat belt must be properly secured to anchorage points provided for it.

All parts of the belt and anchorage points, must be free from any obvious defects e.g. fraying of the webbing.

Wheelchairs / seat belts and clamping

All vehicle occupants must wear suitable seatbelts while the vehicle is moving, where wheelchairs are carried, appropriate diagonal or harness type over the shoulder seatbelts must be used.

NB: A wheelchair's lap-belt on its own does not provide sufficient protection in the event of an accident.

Staff, both escorts and drivers including volunteers must be properly trained before they use the wheelchair restraint systems.

Wheelchairs must not be facing sideways, but always frontwards. Electric wheelchairs must be switched off. There must be appropriate and safe stowage for restraint systems when not in use. Stowage must take into account the potential for restraint equipment to act as projectiles in the event of a collision.

Only one person to one seat/restraint is permitted.

Oxygen cylinders

Oxygen cylinders can be transported, providing the following steps are taken:

- Always display a warning sticker in the back (offside rear) window when cylinders are being carried and remove it when they are not;
- The oxygen cylinders are safely secured;
- Do not use oxygen cylinders in a fuel station.

Further advice is available from the KCC H&S Advisers and from Air Products Homecare Helpline 0800 373580.

Escort or Group Leader should:

- Ensure that the off-site activity form and trip form have been completed, as per the schools requirements (see off-site visit policy)

- Ensure that all journeys are sensibly planned taking into account the prevailing conditions in terms of distance, roads, weather and that the chosen route provides adequate stops for comfort breaks at regular intervals.
- Ensure passenger safety is maintained and that there are sufficient appropriate adults on board as supervisors or escorts.
- Ensure all passengers remain seated and in a seat belt or harness at all times the vehicle is moving.
- Follow any guidelines, training, risk assessments and method statements issued for the safe use of the lift, ramps or hoist.

N.B. Smoking is not permitted in vehicles.

Sources of advice and training

- The Beacon operates under the Community Transport Association & KCC policy.
- Drivers must undergo a training course before they can drive school vehicles and undertake a refresher course every three years.
- Advice on all minibus issues can be addressed to The Beacon Estates Manager.
- Further Advice on passenger safety, wheelchairs, managing occupational road risk etc is available from KCC Road Safety, Kent Fleet, Transport Training and KCC Health and Safety Advisers.

Advice on insurance is available from the Estates Manager or KCC Insurance.

The Beacon will ensure:

- All vehicles used for KCC business, whether owned, hired or donated are insured and comply with the Road Vehicles (Construction & Use) regulations 1986 and all subsequent amendments.
- All vehicles are maintained correctly and are not used in a dangerous condition.
- Daily, weekly and three-monthly safety checks are carried out.
- A record is kept of safety checks, defects, repairs and service history
- There are clear and published procedures for reporting defects, arrangements for repair and subsequent inspection by a competent person.
- After any crash/accident or incident the vehicle must be inspected before further use.
- A Standard Permit is obtained, kept up to date and displayed in the vehicle.
- Passenger lifts comply with the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment (LOLER) Regulations 1998. The lift must be inspected, by a competent person, at six-monthly intervals and have a weight test and service at twelve-monthly intervals.
- Regular visual inspections of tail lifts should also be carried out.

Who can drive a School vehicle?

- Drivers should have held a full and current UK driving licence for at least 12 months.
 - Driver's licence is examined when they are first permitted to drive and then at least annually thereafter and a record of the check kept.
- Driver's licence does not:
 - Contain more than six points;

- Have any drink/drive endorsements;
- Have a ban within the last five years;
- Have more than two current speeding endorsements.
- Drivers of vehicles with up to 16 passenger seats must have:
 - Passed their test before 1st January 1997 and have a category D1 or Cat B (Light Weight Bus) entitlement;
 - Have undergone a school training course and KCC assessment, with refresher every three years.
- Drivers of vehicles with up to eight passenger seats must have:
 - A category B entitlement;
 - Undergone a KCC driving Assessment training course.

Minibus drivers are legally required to conform to a 'higher fitness standard'. The higher fitness standard means that, for example, people with Insulin Dependent Diabetes will not be able to drive minibuses, nor will people who have or have had any form of seizures. Full details are available from KCC Traffic Office on 0300 123 9000, DVLA or KCC Road Safety Team.

Insurance

Certificate of motor insurance

Due to the large number of vehicles insured by KCC it is not possible to issue a copy of the insurance certificate to every single authorised driver. Confirmation of cover can be obtained from KCC Insurance although copies of the insurance certificate will be placed in the vehicle documents folder.

Production of insurance documents to the police

If the driver is asked by the police to produce insurance documents for the KCC-insured vehicle, they should elect to do so at a Kent Police station. Details of Kent County Council's motor insurance are supplied to Police Headquarters by KCC Insurance each year for distribution to all Kent Police stations, so as to avoid individual drivers having to produce same. Should the driver experience any difficulties, they should ask the police station to contact the General Services Manager at Police Headquarters for clarification.

Insurance cover may be invalidated by:

- A driver admitting liability after an accident;
- Allowing an uninsured or non-KCC approved driver to drive the vehicle;
- Failure to report an accident to KCC Insurance;
- Failure to operate under the conditions of the Section 19 Permit, where appropriate;
- Failure to maintain the minibus properly or using it in an unsafe condition.

Only KCC establishments and affiliated groups may drive minibuses insured by KCC.

Fully comprehensive insurance is only provided for the official business of KCC e.g.

- Organised trips for pupils
- Transportation of pupils

- Staff development days
- Driver training and assessment purposes with an approved trainer

Services and associations affiliated to KCC are permitted to use KCC vehicles on production of satisfactory evidence detailing the extent of the affiliation.

Affiliated services and associations should receive or benefit from some or all of the following:

- Financial assistance from KCC.
- Support of KCC staff.
- Opportunity to participate in training courses provided by KCC.
- Opportunity to work in partnership with KCC in developing specific services.

Non-affiliated groups must provide their own fully comprehensive insurance when using a minibus hired from KCC. Originals of cover notes must be produced at the time of booking the minibus as proof of insurance. Photocopies will not be acceptable. Minibuses cannot be hired to non-affiliated groups where satisfactory evidence of insurance has not been provided.

Minibuses on hire from Kent Fleet are automatically insured by KCC and establishments need not notify KCC Insurance of such vehicles.

Action to be taken in the event of a collision or incident

At the scene of the incident:

- Where possible stop, in a safe place where no further damage is likely to be caused;
- The driver and/or the escort(s) must make the accident scene as safe as possible without putting themselves in danger;
- Use hazard warning lights and any other devices supplied;
- Where the vehicle cannot be moved to a place of safety, if it is safe to evacuate the vehicle, taking in to consideration; the student's needs, likelihood to abscond, area where the incident has occurred and ensure that the passengers are safe;
 - **Do not** move injured passengers unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles, fire or explosion
- Ensure, where possible, one person (driver/escort or nominated person) remains with the passengers;
- Call the emergency services immediately, if necessary. The driver must stay at the scene of the incident until the emergency services (and anyone else with reasonable cause) have taken all the details;
- Exchange drivers' and vehicle owners' names, addresses, insurance details and the registration number of the vehicles involved;
- In the event of injury, the incident **must** be reported to the police as soon as possible.

At no time should any admission of liability, any offer, or promise to pay compensation or view on liability be made or given by, or on behalf of Kent County Council.

After the incident:

- As soon as possible details of the event should be written down and include any helpful diagrams.

Any correspondence received from a third party or their representatives should be unanswered and referred to KCC Insurance immediately.

All accident reporting to Insurance will be handled by the School Admin dept.

- School vehicles involved in an incident that causes damage to the vehicle, injury to any person or damage to a third party's property the incident must be reported by telephone to KCC Insurance as soon as is practicable, no later than five days after the event.
- For all types of minibuses; serious or fatal accidents must be notified to KCC Insurance within 24 hours of the event. KCC Insurance will then issue a Motor Claim Form.
- The Motor Claim Form should provide the fullest details possible about the incident to assist in processing the claim where the circumstances suggest a claim for the cost of repairs can be made against any other vehicle involved, or a claim made against KCC can be defended. All incidents of theft or attempted theft must be reported to the police and a crime reference number obtained.
- It is essential that full details of any other driver (name, address, vehicle registration and insurance details) are obtained and incorporated in the form.
- If the driver of a KCC vehicle is to be prosecuted as a result of an incident which has given rise to a claim against the insurance policy, KCC Insurance must be notified immediately.
- Any incident, including traffic offences, must also be reported to the manager and the driver's own line manager.

N.B. These procedures are in addition to the statutory requirements of the Highway Code to report an accident.

Fire extinguishers

Vehicle fires can be particularly dangerous as they can develop very quickly and burn with great intensity.

All vehicles must be fitted with at least one fire extinguisher, preferably two, conforming to BS 5432. Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority recommend a Foam Extinguisher (red with a cream or white colour coded panel affixed). Fire extinguishers must be checked and serviced annually by an approved contractor.

Drivers must be trained and familiarise themselves with the extinguisher's location, method of removal from its mounting and operating instructions.

If the extinguisher is missing, damaged or appears to have been used, this must be reported and replaced. If this cannot be rectified immediately the minibus must NOT be used.

In the event of a Fire

- When safely parked, evacuate the passengers to a place of safety, away from the vehicle and off the highway immediately.
- Call the fire and rescue service.
- In circumstances where persons are trapped in the vehicle after an accident and awaiting help from the emergency services, the fire extinguisher should be made ready to extinguish any fire in its early stages.

First aid

There must always be a qualified first aider, either driver or escort, on each journey.

Each minibus carries a first aid kit; any items used must be replaced at the end of the trip.

Guidelines for removable seats

Any removable seating that is positioned in your vehicle must be subjected to the following checks before use:

- All seats fitted must be of the same specification of seating originally designed for that vehicle;
 - The seating capacity must not exceed the amount registered to that vehicle;
 - All removable seating must be checked for any excessive movement;
 - Any seat deemed to have excessive movement that cannot be satisfactorily tightened must be taken out of action and checked by a professional and competent vehicle maintenance company;
 - All seat clamps should be checked and tightened as necessary;
 - All seats fitted should have the seat belt clip nearest to the vehicle aisle in case of evacuation;
 - All seat belts fitted to the seat must function correctly;
 - All passengers must wear the seat belts fitted unless a medical exemption has been given to the individual user by a GP or consultant. A risk assessment must then be completed and an alternative restraint system would be required;
 - The fitment of removable seating should not obstruct any exits including the rear doors;
 - All floor tracking should be kept clean, clear and any dirt removed.
- Journey planning and risk assessment**

The journey should be planned well in advance, and should allow for adequate time to complete the journey and should not be viewed as a rigid schedule. In particular, drivers must never feel under pressure to drive at unsafe speeds in order to meet deadlines. The time allowed should take account of safe driving speeds or any other restrictions and allow for delays. Drivers must never exceed speed limits.

The plan for all journeys will need to allow for any particular needs associated with the students and will determine the level of adult support required for a particular trip.

Regular journeys

(E.g. swimming, horse riding, etc.)

Plans must be clear and contain sufficient detail, such as likely journey times etc. Plans for regular trips, will only need to be prepared once, and reviewed if there is a major change in traffic conditions, roads or other changes likely to affect the journey. The plan must include some degree of flexibility to take into account varying weather or traffic conditions.

Occasional journeys

The plan should define the route to be used, state the expected duration of the journey and if it is likely to involve more than two hours of driving, should include details of break points at prescribed time intervals (which will allow the driver to rest). Consideration must also be given to the needs of

the passengers when planning breaks; it may be that the journey will need to be broken at more frequent intervals if passenger comfort requires this. In all cases, the plan should indicate how the expected risk of the journey would be reduced.

The local police or driving associations will give advice about safer routes, however, some of their general advice is:

- Use motorways for long journeys
- Use arterial routes in built up areas;
- Avoid driving through residential areas wherever possible.

NB: The plan detailing the duration, departure and arrival time, will signed off by the SLT who should always be aware of where the school vehicles are.

Update schedule

Version	Reviewed	Reason for update	Next review date	Agreed by governors
1	July 2017	Transfer/review	July 2018	N/A
2	July 2018	Annual Review	July 2019	N/A
3	Feb 2022	Reviewed	Feb 2022	N/A
4	Nov 2025	Reviewed	Nov 2026	
5	September 2026	Reviewed – No amendments	September 2028	N/A