



## **Operation of Post-Primary School Transport Scheme Services for the 2020/2021 School Year**

*(If you have children who use Primary or Special Educational Needs School Transport Scheme Services please read the separate guidance that has issued in regard to those services)*

Dear Parent/Guardian,

You will be aware from our previous communications that, based on the public health advice published in early July, we have been planning for Post-Primary School Transport Scheme services for the 2020/2021 school year to fully operate as normal, but with additional measures and hygiene requirements in place. As you may be aware updated health advice has been received from the HPSC (received on the 7<sup>th</sup> August) and NPHE (received on the 18<sup>th</sup> August), the latter of which impacts on the operation of post-primary school transport services for the 2020/2021 school year.

**On 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020** the HPSC confirmed that all recommendations published in the public health advice at the beginning of July still applied in all schools, with the exception of the recommendations on face coverings. This was updated to reflect the latest research and expertise and it was recommended that teachers and secondary school students wear face coverings, when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

**On 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020** NPHE advised that, for secondary school students on school transport, social distancing should be ensured in line with that on public transport, along with the wearing of face coverings.

Following the most recent NPHE advice, it has been decided by Government that the operation of post-primary school transport services will commence operation when schools re-open pending the development of additional measures to support physical distancing on the post primary buses. The Department is engaging with Bus Éireann to implement these measures on a rolling basis to support this physical distancing as required.

Given the timing of this most recent advice from NPHE so close to the start of the new term, the Department is not withdrawing post-primary transport services as we understand that to do so would cause difficulty for many families in getting their children to school. Rather, and as set out above, we are engaging with Bus Éireann to implement measures so that any services that can operate from the start of the school year at 50% capacity will do so and over the coming period all other post-primary transport services will be re-organised and additional services will be provided as required to allow for physical distancing.

We understand that for some parents and children this latest updated advice may mean that you do not wish to use post-primary school transport and that you may wish to bring your own child or children to school for the 2020/2021 school year. **If this is your choice we ask that you inform us at [schooltransportrefunds2020@education.gov.ie](mailto:schooltransportrefunds2020@education.gov.ie) by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September and a refund on the cost of your ticket will be arranged.** For those children who are eligible for transport under the terms of the school transport scheme



and whose parents decide not to use transport for the 2020/2021 school year the Department will provide a grant to support you with the cost of transport arrangements. Grants will be paid at the end of the school year following receipt of documentation confirming the number of days your child has attended school in the 2020/2021 school year.

If you choose to use school transport from the start of the school year, please be advised that we are making every effort to ensure that these services are safe but that not all services will operate with 50% physical distancing at the start as this will take time to plan, organise and implement. If you choose to use school transport on this understanding we ask that you please ensure that your children know about the following guidelines, and that they are expected to comply with these when using the school transport service.

- Do not use school transport if they are displaying obvious symptoms.
- Maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport.
- Always sit in their pre-assigned seating which will be next to a sibling or a child from their class group where possible (this should be the same child at all times).
- Use hand sanitiser prior to or on boarding the bus.
- Observe respiratory etiquette at all times – cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of it properly, or by coughing or sneezing into their elbow while waiting for and on-board transport services.
- Disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion.
- All children on post-primary transport services are required to wear facemasks while waiting for and on-board services (with the exception of children who for medical or special educational needs reasons are not in a position to wear a facemask or face covering).

**Please read the attached guidance carefully. Please talk to your child or children about how they should use school transport services for the coming school year so that they know what to expect and what will be different from previous years.**

**We all have a role to play in keeping the school community safe. Please make sure your child knows of these guidelines and knows that they need to adhere to these and play their part, so as ensure the safety of their friends, classmates, transport and school staff, and the wider school community, to the greatest extent possible.**

Further information on the Roadmap for Re-opening our schools can be found at [gov.ie/backtoschool](https://gov.ie/backtoschool).

**School Transport Section  
21 August 2020**



## **Guidance for Parents and Children the Operation of Post Primary School Transport Scheme Services for the 2020/2021 School Year**

### **1. Be aware of the symptoms – please stay at home and do not use school transport if your child has symptoms**

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms.

They are:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

If your child is displaying any of these symptoms, or if there is someone in the household suspected or known to have COVID-19, your child should stay at home. Please do not allow your child to present for school transport or to attend school - please phone your doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation.

### **2. Pre-assigned designated seating**

We are working with Bus Éireann to develop a seating plan for each bus so that each child will have a pre-assigned seat.

It is intended that seating plans will be rolled out as services recommence in the new school year and that seating plans will be available on school bus services.

Your child should continue in their pre-assigned seat for the 2020/21 school year..

### **3. Hand hygiene**

Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean). Young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel.

We ask that you please ensure your child washes their hands or uses hand sanitiser (under your supervision as required) in the morning before leaving home to travel on the school bus. We ask that you talk to your child about washing or sanitising their hands before leaving school in the evening to travel on the school bus.

Hand sanitiser will be available on school buses for use by children as required, under the supervision of the driver.



#### **4. Sneezing/coughing etiquette**

Please talk to your child about following good respiratory hygiene. This means covering their mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when they cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue into a bin when it is safe to do so.

By following good respiratory hygiene, we protect the people around us from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.

#### **5. Waiting for and boarding the bus**

Your child should maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport, both morning and evening. All post-primary children (with the exception of children who for medical or special educational needs reasons are not in a position to do so) should wear a facemask or face covering while waiting for transport.

A seating plan will be available on the bus when your child returns to school. Your child should sit in the seat that has been assigned to them. This is their seat for both the morning and evening journeys to and from school.

On boarding the bus your child should allow any children in the aisle ahead of them to take their seat before moving down the bus as required to take their own seat.

#### **6. Getting off the bus**

Children should disembark the bus one by one and in an orderly fashion, allowing any children in front or in the aisle ahead of them to move to disembark the bus before they move to disembark the bus themselves.

When children get off the bus following their morning journey they should head straight to their school.

#### **7. Wearing a facemask**

Wearing a cloth face mask or covering helps to reduce onward transmission and the benefit is reliant on wearing the covering appropriately. Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

All children using post-primary transport services are required to wear facemasks while waiting for transport services and on-board transport services for the duration of their journey to and from school (with the exception of children who for medical or special educational needs reasons are not in a position to wear a facemask or face covering).

Your child should keep their facemask in a safe place (such as a plastic zip lock bag) during the school day when not in use and masks should be washed on a daily basis.

Your child will not be refused access to transport if they forget or lose their facemask as no child will be left without a way to or from school in such genuine circumstances. However, repeated non-compliance with wearing of masks may result in a child's travel facilities being reviewed and/or withdrawn. We cannot compromise the safety of



transport staff or children on board our school transport services as this has to remain a key priority at all times.

Therefore, we stress the importance of each child wearing a mask and ask that you talk to your child about ensuring they have their mask with them when they leave for school and keeping it in a safe place during the school day when not in use.

### **8. Wearing a facemask/visor for school transport staff**

School transport staff (the bus driver and the school bus escort in the case of SEN transport services) will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) as required.

Drivers will wear face masks and face visors when children are boarding and alighting or when they are in situations where social distancing may not be possible.

### **9. Additional cleaning of buses/services**

All school transport services will be required to carry out additional cleaning regimes in the 2020/21 school year.

Bus Éireann is working with contractors and drivers, to provide information on the protocols for additional cleaning required (in addition to the normal daily end of day cleaning), including the requirements for touchpoint cleaning, the use of suitable disinfectant and guidance on waste collection and disposal.

### **10. How suspected cases on board transport services will be dealt with**

Before the start of the new school year, school transport staff will receive guidance and training on how to deal with a suspected case of Covid 19 on school transport services.

In circumstances where there is a suspected case on board a transport service, school transport staff will contact parents/guardians immediately to make arrangements to have the child collected.

Measures will be taken where possible to distance the child from other children on board the service and school transport staff will assist the child as required and reassure the child that help is on the way. School transport staff will issue the child with a face mask if the 2 metre distancing is not possible and if they are able to wear a face mask.

Following a suspected case incident, vehicles will be fully cleaned and internally disinfected before being used again.

The HSE will inform anyone who has come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process.