

RUGBY HIGH SCHOOL

Policy for the Safe Use of the School Minibus

Introduction

Driving a minibus requires additional skills in order to be able to handle the vehicle safely. It is not simply like driving a large car. The weight and the size of the vehicle are greater. In addition, the driver takes on the responsibility for the safety of passengers. Although rare, serious, sometimes fatal accidents have occurred when minibuses are used by educational establishments. It is in order to minimise the risk of such accident occurring that this Code of Practice has been written.

Application

This Code of Practice applies to any use of minibuses owned by Rugby High School or borrowed on behalf of the school and any minibus hired for teaching and other school activities.

The Code applies only to minibuses which are defined as “vehicles with forward facing seats constructed or adapted to carry more than eight, but not more than sixteen passengers in addition to the driver with a maximum weight not more than 3.5 tonnes”.

Roadworthiness of the Vehicle

The minibuses owned by the school must be regularly maintained and kept in a roadworthy condition. The driver must always check the school minibus or a hired or borrowed vehicle very carefully on delivery or collection using the policy checklist below.

Before taking over responsibility for any vehicle all drivers must carry out the pre-journey check list that follows or satisfy themselves that such checks have already been carried out prior to use on at least a daily basis while the vehicle is in use:

- brakes and steering operate correctly
- lighting systems are operating correctly
- mirrors should be clean, adjusted for a clear view and in good condition
- there is an adequate supply of water in the windscreen reservoir and that windscreen wash and wipers function correctly
- there are correct fluids in hydraulic systems, particularly the braking system and the engine oil level is correct
- seatbelts are present and operating correctly
- there is an adequately stocked first aid kit – any items used from the kit should be replaced without delay – first aid supplies can be obtained from Reception
- there is a vehicle fire extinguisher mounted in an easily accessible position
- all windows are clean in order to ensure good all round visibility

- tyres are inflated to the correct pressure and are free of dangerous cuts or cracks – tread depth is at least 1.6mm and wheel nuts are tight
- a spare is carried and is also in good condition and correctly inflated
- any faults should be recorded in the vehicle log book.

Provision and use of Seat Belts

All minibuses used for school related activities whether purchased, borrowed or hired must have seat belts fitted to all seats. These should, as far as possible, be lap and diagonal belts but where this is not feasible lap belts should be fitted. Any minibuses used must not have any sideways facing seats.

Seat belts must be worn at all times. The most senior member of staff present or the driver must ensure that they are worn by everyone in the vehicle without exception.

Mobile Phones

All drivers of any minibuses owned by the school or borrowed or hired on behalf of the school are absolutely forbidden to use mobile phones even if a hands-free device is connected, unless the vehicle is safely parked and the engine switched off.

Fines

Drivers are liable for any fines and will not be compensated by the school.

Loading of Minibuses (Driver Responsibility)

The number of people and the weight of luggage carried must not exceed the maximum limits specified by the manufacturer of the vehicle. If a large amount of luggage is to be carried it may be necessary to reduce the number of passengers in order to remain within the maximum loading limits. All luggage that may shift due to the movement of the vehicle must be safely secured.

Drivers are liable for any fines and will not be compensated by the school.

Towing of Trailers

Trailers must not be used unless the driver has a PVC or DI licence.

If a trailer is being towed no passengers may be carried behind the front row of seats unless there is a side door which is easily accessible to passengers.

Before towing a trailer the following checks must be carried out.

Ensure that:

- that the vehicle being used is appropriate for this use
- that the gross weight of the vehicle plus the trailer is within the vehicle gross weight limit
- that the kerbside weight of the towing vehicle is clearly marked on the front nearside of the vehicle
- that the downward force from the loaded trailer on the towing ball is within the limits imposed by the towing vehicle manufacturer
- that the axle loads of the towing vehicle are not exceeded
- that a breakaway chain is in use which will activate the handbrake should the coupling break – advice on this matter should be sought from the trailer manufacturer or approved dealer
- that the unladen weight of the trailer and trailer tyre pressures are clearly marked on the trailer
- that the total gross weight (trailer weight plus maximum load to be carried) is clearly marked on the front of the trailer
- that the trailer handbrake/overrun brake functions properly
- that the trailer lights and indicators work
- that the load is securely lashed to the trailer body or frame
- that there is suitable marking of any rear overhang greater than one meter by using a “Long Vehicle” sign or other approved method (eg warning tape) or an approved light in hours of darkness or bad weather.

When towing a trailer drivers must be very cautious about the vehicle speed. Vehicle/trailer combinations can become unstable at speeds below the legal maximum, particularly when being passed by fast moving large vehicles, in windy conditions or when manoeuvring. On long journeys the trailer and vehicle should be checked at least once every two hours of travel. Use of boat trailers are strongly advised to refer to the Amateur Rowing Association’s booklet “Towing of Boat Trailers”.

Competence of Drivers and the Provision of Information and Training

The skill and care exercised by the driver is undoubtedly the most important aspect of minibus safety. Driving a minibus, especially a fully laden 17 seater over long distances, is much more demanding than driving a private car.

All drivers must be approved by the Business Manager to drive minibuses. Approval may only be given providing the following requirements are met:

- the driver is over 21 years of age
- the driver has held a valid full driving licence for 2 years or more which is free of serious endorsements ie drink/drugs (see Appendix 1 for detailed guidance on what constitutes a valid licence)
- the driver has been assessed as competent
- the driver has completed the approval form shown in Appendix 3 – the completed form must be kept by the Business Manager.

All drivers are required to inform the DVLA in Swansea of any physical or mental disability which might affect their fitness to drive any vehicle. Special care must be taken over the use of any medication, prescribed or otherwise, which might affect driving ability.

Journey and Driving Times

The maximum number of hours that a driver may drive in any 24 hour period is six hours, subject to a weekly maximum of 42 hours. Every driver must take a continuous rest period of at least 11 hours in every 24 hour period. A bed or bunk must be available for use during the rest period.

The maximum continuous period of driving should not exceed two hours and should be followed by a minimum break of fifteen minutes out of the vehicle. Time spent crawling in motorway type hold-ups should count as part of the driving period as should any period spent driving to pick up a party.

Consumption of Alcohol or Drugs by any Driver

It is an absolute rule that a driver does not consume any alcohol or drugs during or in the period before any journey. Care should be exercised if consuming alcohol even on the previous day. Alcohol or drugs must not be consumed in the eight hour period immediately prior to driving.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any minibus connected with school activities or when the minibus is used privately.

Speed Limits

All speed limits must be complied with. The relevant limits (in January 2006) are:

	For minibuses not towing a trailer	For minibuses towing a trailer
Motorways	70 mph	60 mph
Dual Carriageways	60 mph	60 mph
Other roads where a lower limit is not signposted	50 mph	50 mph

First Aid and Emergency Procedures

If a vehicle is involved in an accident:

- a) makes sure all passengers are safe and off the road and if necessary summon the emergency services for assistance (the school vehicle has AA breakdown recovery cover)
- b) obtain the registration number(s) and insurance details of any other vehicle(s) involved
- c) take the names, addresses and if appropriate, vehicle registration number of any witnesses and the number and base station of any police officer who attends – do not admit any liability
- d) write down, as soon as possible after the accident, all relevant details in a precise manner
- e) report all the above details to the Business Manager.
- f) When possible a photograph should be taken of the scene.

The legal requirements for providing information after an accident are summarised in Appendix 4.

Documentation

Drivers should carry their driving licences. Details of the school's insurance are stored in the glove compartment of the minibus and must be referred when required to exchange information with third parties.

Overseas Travel

The minibus should not be driven overseas.

APPENDIX 1 - Driving Licence Requirements for Driving a Minibus

The legal requirements relating to driving licences changed on 1 January 1997 and form the basis of the requirements below. A distinction is made between the driving of minibuses for social purposes and the driving of minibuses in the course of employment. Anyone driving a minibus taking students on a school trip would be considered to be acting in the course of their employment.

Driving in the course of employment

For insurance purposes the driver must be aged 21 or over and hold a full United Kingdom driving licence to drive a car and the licence must have been issued before 1 January 1997.

OR

The driver must be aged 21 or over and have held a full driving licence to drive a car (B), issued by a member state of the European Community, for two years. The driver must not be paid specifically to drive the minibus (teachers must be considered to be driving on a voluntary basis).

OR

The driver must hold a full driving licence, issued by the United Kingdom or by another member state of the European Community, to drive Passenger Carrying Vehicles Category D1.

APPENDIX 2 – Training and Assessment of the Competence of Minibus Drivers

The introduction of training of drivers of minibuses and the assessment of their competence cannot be achieved overnight and would be costly for the school to provide training resources. However, informal practice accompanied by an approved minibus driver can be arranged.

All drivers who are legally entitled to drive under the DVLA licensing arrangements are insured.

APPENDIX 3 – Approval of Drivers to Drive Minibuses

This form must be completed before driving any minibus to which this policy applies. On completion it must be signed by the Business Manager.

(Section 1) To be completed by all drivers

- I confirm that I am over 21 years of age
- I confirm that my driving licence is free/is not free* from endorsements
- I understand that any future endorsements/convictions will be reported to the person completing Section 2 below, before driving a minibus again and may result in suspension of my approval to drive a minibus.
- I confirm that I have read and understood the school's policies and procedures on minibuses and will be compliant.

Name _____

Department _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Length of motor car driving experience: _____

Licence Number _____ Category _____

Length of minibus driving experience: _____

Signed _____ Date: _____

(Section 2) Approval by the Business Manager

The above mentioned person is approved to drive a minibus to which this policy applies.

This approval is valid for two years from the date below unless revoked in writing.

Signed _____ Date _____

*delete whichever statement is inapplicable.

The school reserves the right to refuse to approve a driver in certain cases.

APPENDIX 4 – Legal Requirements for Providing Information after an Accident

The information below is taken from The Highway Code.

If you are involved in an accident which causes damage or injury to any other person or other vehicle or any animal not in your vehicle or roadside property

YOU MUST

- Stop
- Give your own and the vehicle owner's name and address and the registration number of the vehicle to anyone having reasonable grounds for requiring them.
- If you do not give your name and address at the time of the accident, report the accident to the police as soon as reasonable practicable and in any case within 24 hours.

If any other person is injured and you do not produce the insurance certificate at the time of the accident, either to the policy or to anyone who with reasonable grounds has requested it, you MUST also:

- report the accident to the police as soon as possible and in any case within 24 hours
- produce your insurance certificate to the police either when reporting the accident or within seven days at any police station you select.