



Tuesday 08 September 2020

Dear Head Teacher

School bus services during Coronavirus

Bus companies and Nexus are providing extra buses to get pupils to and from schools across Tyne and Wear as the new term starts. The extra buses, supported by Government funding, are on top of normal services and dedicated home-school routes so pupils can travel in line with public health advice on Covid-19.

This has gone well with those schools that have returned so far but there are two specific points we need your help with when communicating with pupils, parents and guardians:

- 1) Pupils should wear face coverings when using any public transport, including all buses dedicated to transport to and from schools, except where there is an exemption on health grounds. Please reinforce this with your pupils. Bus drivers may refuse boarding to passengers without face coverings but we and our industry partners want to avoid that situation. Where you require pupils to wear face covering as part of the school day this could be incorporated into your wider messaging – but even if not, can you stress that pupils using public transport have and use face coverings.
- 2) In many cases bus companies are providing duplicate vehicles immediately behind a normal bus to provide segregation for pupils. In these cases pupils will be directed to board the following vehicles which will have the letter 'S' displayed alongside the route number. Pupils may need to pay on the normal bus then walk round to the duplicate vehicle. This system has worked effectively in those parts of the region where it started last week – but once again your help in communicating this is appreciated,

As the new term gets going, we have the following general advice for travel:

- Families should plan how their children will reach schools and colleges comfortably – walking and cycling where journeys are shorter, using a car for part of the journey but dropping off away from school gates, and identifying which public transport they can use if they need to.
- There will be extra buses on many services going to or near schools, following established routes. These will include buses on busy routes so pupils can travel separately to other passengers.
- Pupils using public transport should use a contactless card or have exact change to make their journey wherever possible - some operators also have mobile phone ticket apps that allow gifting from parents to a child's account; check operator websites for details.

- Anyone using public transport should follow standard public health advice – washing hands thoroughly throughout the day, wearing a face covering if aged over 11 and not exempt, and not travelling if they have symptoms of Covid-19. Ensure you maintaining social distancing, where possible, including at busy entrances, exits, under canopies, bus stops, platforms or outside of stations.

We understand that you may need to ask specific year groups or bubbles either not to attend school, or be sent home, at short notice. We appreciate how challenging this is, but please let us know at schools.liaison@nexus.org.uk should this be the case. Pupils with covid-19 symptoms or suspected/confirmed cases must not travel on buses. Pupils within the wider bubble may do so to return from school if no other transport is available, but we hope this can be kept to a minimum.

You can also use the above email if you have any questions, or need to raise any concerns about public transport with us – either about services provides by Nexus directly for your school, or the wider network.

Yours sincerely



Huw Lewis
Customer Services Director