



Minibus Policy

Policy Preface

Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust is a Christian learning environment at the heart of its communities. We promote care and respect, and expect high standards in all aspects of our Trust life.

As a Church of England Academy Trust, we aim to build communities clearly based on the Christian values of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, integrity and the unique value of each individual. We aim to build self-esteem, model conflict resolution, protect the weak and are committed to justice and compassion. Mutual respect and trust are central within the Academy Trust.

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, is based on these key principles.

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Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust

Minibus Policy

Introduction

The use of minibuses owned by Northumberland Church of England Academy trust is regulated in order to maintain a high standard of safety for staff, students and other users. The following conditions will apply to the use of these minibuses and must be adhered to.

1. Procedure for using a Trust minibus

1. Book the minibus using the online booking form in the 'staff apps' section of the website. Only drivers who have taken the MIDAS training are able to book the buses.
2. Keys and mileage form are to be collected from JBS reception and signed out (only MIDAS trained drivers are authorised to sign these things out).
3. Complete the driver checklist and logbook.
4. Ensure that all your passengers are safely wearing their seatbelts.
5. Ensure that the bus is clear of rubbish and debris when returned.
6. Sign in the keys and pack back into reception (do not simply pass on the keys/pack to another driver as you will be held responsible for the minibus until you have signed the keys/pack back in to reception).

2. Authority to Drive

Only authorised staff who hold a current MIDAS training certificate may drive a Trust minibus. No person shall drive a vehicle owned by the Trust without first having obtained permission to undertake the journey from the person having charge of the vehicle and having produced a valid authorisation permit. Any person driving a vehicle without having first obtained permission will be deemed to be driving without the consent of the owner, and may be liable to prosecution under the Road Traffic Acts for such an offence.

3. Hours of Driving

Driving hours as laid down in the Road Transport Act 1968 and regulations made thereafter must be complied with. Drivers should consider the number of hours required to complete the journey and also how many hours may have already been worked – e.g. a full day's teaching. Driver should plan their journey to include plenty of breaks. Think of distance, breaks or stopping points, arrival and departure times.

The Trust recommends that staff members should carry out no more than three hours continuous driving after which the accumulated length of break from driving should be at least 45 minutes

During a normal working day drivers should not drive for more than six hours in total. Drivers should not be required to supervise students during their breaks, as this would not be a break for the driver. With each additional driving period, the break time should be extended. Drivers should **NEVER** be expected to do full days work or be awake for full day and then drive for several hours in the evening. Staff should re-arrange their work schedule if this is the case.

4. Seating Capacity

The number of passengers including the driver must not exceed the number of seats provided. In all cases the driver must ensure that all passengers use their seatbelts. It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that the appropriate ratios for each age range of the children is adhered to.

5. Responsibilities of the Driver

The driver will be responsible for the collection and return of the minibus they must sign out the keys and minibus pack and conduct the following tasks before commencement of the journey:-

a) Each driver is not only responsible for the safe driving of the vehicle, but also for ensuring that its operation is legal in all respects. The vehicle should be checked in order that it complies with being roadworthy, taxed, insured, and hold a current MOT certificate.

b) The driver should check over the vehicle as per checklist Appendix 1 and, should any listed mechanical defect be found the vehicle **MUST NOT BE DRIVEN**.

c) A check of the vehicle to make sure it is not overloaded

d) Ensure that all doors are securely fastened

e) Ensure that the vehicle is carrying a fully stocked first aid kit, fire extinguisher and current instructions in the event of a breakdown, **breakdown recovery card** and a mobile phone for emergencies (personal or Trust as appropriate). **NB. Please follow the code of practice for the use of mobile phones (issued with phone)**

f) Drivers should also refer to the guidance notes on Appendix 2. The following tasks will be completed by the driver at the end of the journey:-

- Completion of the logbook
- The reporting of any defects which occurred during the journey (if applicable)
- Return of keys to reception

6. Trailing

As the use of trailers is restricted under the minibus Act 1977, any trailer use must only be made by a driver competent to do so. This also applies to the use of roof racks.

7. Excisable Liquor

No excisable liquor will be carried on the vehicle.

8. Road Accidents/Breakdown

The driver of the vehicle must stop, and if so required by any person having reasonable cause to so demand, give his/her name and the name of the Company insuring the vehicle. **Under NO circumstances must a driver, if involved in a motor accident, admit liability for the accident.**

Details of breakdown numbers are held in each vehicle. Insurance details are held by the Finance department with a copy in the minibuses. Please see Appendices 1 & 2 for further detailed information.

9. Responsibility of the Trust

The Trust will be responsible for licensing and insuring the vehicles, and all servicing and repairs. Fuel must also be obtained from the garages where the Trust fuel card is accepted and receipts retained.

All fuel obtained must be signed for. Should fuel be obtained from any other garage other than those used by the Trust, payment should be made by the driver. Receipts showing VAT number should be obtained and forwarded to the finance department together with completed expenses claim form for reimbursement. The Trust cannot reimburse expenses without a receipt.

10. The Trust will not:-

- Pay fines for parking, speeding or any other motoring offences.
- Provide legal support for staff charges with any of the above.

Note that the minibuses do not have authority to use bus lanes, as they do not meet the criteria laid down on local authority guidelines. Bus lanes should therefore not be used.

11. Withdrawal of Permission

Any misuse of the vehicle whether through failure to comply with regulation laid down by the Trust or misconduct of the passengers will mean withdrawal of the privilege of use for a specific period of time. Further instances will result in complete withdrawal of privilege of use.

12. Insurance

All Passengers traveling in the minibus are covered by Trust insurance. The minibus driver however must have permission to drive or their insurance cover may be void.

Drivers should ensure that the number of passengers carried should NOT exceed the number of seats otherwise the insurance cover will be void.

13. Speed Limits

Drivers are asked to note the following speed limits and MUST adhere to them at all times:

MOTORWAYS	70 MPH
DUAL CARRIAGEWAYS	60 MPH
ALL OTHER ROADS	50 MPH
BUILT UP AREAS	30 MPH

14. Travelling Abroad

The Trust minibuses are not to be taken abroad under any circumstances.

15. Passengers

It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that the staff/pupil ratios are adhered to in line with the EV form and risk assessment for each journey. It is recommended, where practical, that a second member of staff is present. **The adult/staff ratio should not exceed guidelines except under exceptional circumstances and agreed with the EVC.** If you have any doubts please speak with your EV Co-ordinator **before** the trip.

Consideration should always be given to the safety of the passengers waiting for the minibus to arrive and during the time they are boarding and leaving the minibus at pick-up and drop-off places. Always identify a safe pick-up point.

Passenger comfort is important. The minibus must not be too hot, cold or stuffy. The driver must be aware that driving too fast, especially when this may involve vehicle swing and sway, is likely to induce travel sickness. There must also be regular and appropriate rest stops.

Passengers must be made aware of what type of behaviour is expected of them.

16. Drinking and Driving

Alcohol takes a long time to disperse through the body; therefore, persons intending to drive a Trust minibus should not do so if alcohol has been consumed within 24 hours prior to driving. Drivers under medication such as painkillers should also be extra-cautious as some narcotics can cause drowsiness and reduce the ability to react quickly.

17. Obtaining Training

Members of staff who require MIDAS training to drive a Trust minibus must in the first instance contact the Facilities Team, who will keep a record of all staff trained to drive the minibuses. Note that some licences do not permit the owner to drive larger vehicles and this should be checked before asking to undertake the training. The Trust retains the right to refuse permission to any member of staff with an unsatisfactory amount of penalty points or unsuitable endorsement on his/her current driving license. All new endorsements must be notified to the Facilities Team.

18. Adverse Weather Conditions

Where there is adverse weather conditions forecast the driver is advised not to plan or undertake a journey unless absolutely necessary.

In periods of ice and snow the driver must use their discretion to decide whether a road is passable or not, and where possible choose a safer alternative. When the air temperature is below –12C diesel fuel will stop flowing due to wax build up in the pipeline. Drivers are advised not to attempt journeys in such low temperature conditions.

At their discretion drivers may abandon a journey and take students back to the Academy (or other safe environment).

In the event that the transport becomes stuck because of blocked roads, students should be instructed to stay in the bus until help arrives.

19. Mobile Phones

Mobile Phones are not provided on Trust minibuses; each driver should ensure they have access to a mobile phone in case of emergencies. Their line manager should have access to that number. The Trust has in place a “Code of Practice” for the use of mobile phones. Please see Appendix 3.

Staff are reminded that the use of hand held mobile phones whilst driving is a CRIMINAL OFFENCE.

Appendix 1: Advice for Minibus Drivers

The items below should be divided between the driver and the escort, with the driver concentrating on those tasks which directly relate to driving the vehicle.

Before Setting Off

- Allow sufficient time for the journey, avoid long spells of driving and plan breaks
- Never allow passengers to board until the vehicle is at a complete standstill, and safely parked by an adjacent pavement or other traffic free area
- Plan which passengers will sit in the front seats and next to doors
- DO NOT overload the capacity of the minibus and ensure that all passengers are wearing seatbelts
- Always ensure that the ambulant disabled passengers are seated safely and comfortable. If applicable, wheelchairs not in use must also be securely stored.
- Make sure there is a complete list of the passengers being carried with a note of any special medical or other needs.

During the Journey

- DO NOT allow any horseplay
- DO NOT allow passengers to operate the doors
- DO NOT leave pupils unaccompanied in the minibus
- If you have to stop for an emergency or breakdown whilst on a motorway, only stop on the hard shoulder and as far away from moving traffic as possible

At the End of the Journey

- Never allow passengers to disembark until the vehicle is at a complete standstill and safely parked
- Always park so that passenger step onto the footway and not onto the road
- Report any problems or incidents that occurred during the trip to the Trust
- Return minibus pack to reception

Appendix 2: Driver Guidance on Emergencies

1. Accident/Incident - If a breakdown/accident or incident occurs

Care of the Group

- Ensure the safety of the group from further danger
- Arrange search, rescue, medical care or hospitalisation as necessary
- Ensure welfare of all concerned

Next Steps

- Inform the Central Services Director or Head of School as soon as possible
- Inform the **Breakdown Service Provider** as soon as possible (a **Breakdown Recovery card** listing all numbers to be used in the event of a breakdown is in the minibus)
- **All Trust minibuses are covered by Breakdown Recovery Service for roadside assistance and relay.**
- The person you will contact will need to know what has happened and the current situation.
- Try to give a telephone number/destination where you can be contacted.
- In case of a serious incident, notify the police.
- Do not interfere with any equipment etc, which could be relevant to the subsequent investigation.

A SERIOUS ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT is described as:

- An accident leading to a fatality, serious or multiple fractures, amputation or other serious Injury
- Serious illness
- Circumstances in which one or more party members might be at serious risk
- Any situation in which the presence or possible involvement of the press or media could have significant implications

WARNINGS AND ADVICE

- Without the approval of the Executive Head Teacher or appointed authority, politely decline to comment to the media
- Avoid making any statement admitting liability
- Those involved in an accident need not communicate with anyone other than those in an official capacity
- Be compassionate with anyone involved
- Keep a written record of all relevant facts and preserve any vital evidence.

2. Breakdowns

If the minibus breaks down:

- Get the vehicle off the carriageway, if possible.
- Use hazard warning lights and other lights as necessary.
- Do not spend very long trying to find the problem.
- Call for assistance, without leaving the vehicle, if possible. Use a mobile phone. If you have to leave passengers in the vehicle in order to summon assistance, always instruct them to stay in or with the vehicle until you return. **DO NOT LEAVE PUPILS ON THEIR OWN, IN THE VEHICLE.**

Minibus Breakdown on the Motorway

- If practicable leave the motorway at the next exit and seek assistance.
- Otherwise pull safely off the carriageway onto the hard shoulder. Park as far to the near side of the hard shoulder as possible.
- Try to stop near an emergency phone, which is a mile apart, or use your mobile phone when stationary. Red and white posts positioned every 100 meters have an arrow indicating the direction of the nearest telephone. The emergency phones are free and connect you directly with the Motorway Police Control Room. They will arrange any help you need. The emergency phones are coded so your exact location is known.

- Switch on the vehicle's hazard warning lights and at night switch on all other lights except headlights including saloon lights.
- If possible get all the passengers out of the vehicle using near side exits. Then keep passengers well away from the carriageway, preferably on the embankment. In the case of passengers in wheelchairs, it may not be practicable or safe to do so.
- **NEVER CROSS THE CARRIAGEWAY**
- If your vehicle carries an emergency triangle, position it on the hard shoulder 150 meters behind the vehicle.

4. Fire

- Stop and switch off the engine
- Leave the gear lever in neutral in case the engine re-starts due to an electrical short circuit.
- **GET THE PASSENGERS OUT OF THE VEHICLE** and away from it. Always evacuate the vehicle if possible **BEFORE** tackling the fire.
- **CALL THE EMERGENCY SERVICES**
- Tackle the fire, **ONLY IF IT IS SAFE** to do so. If you suspect an engine fire, release the bonnet catch from the inside of the minibus if possible. **DO NOT OPEN THE BONNET.**
- Use the fire extinguisher through the aperture between bonnet and grill.
- When the emergency services arrive, inform them if all passengers are out of the vehicle, and if there are any hazardous containers on board, i.e. gas cylinders.

5. If a Passenger is Taken Ill

- Stop in a safe place.
- Administer first aid if you feel able to do so.
- Call for an ambulance if required by mobile phone. If near a hospital or Health Centre it may be appropriate to drive there directly.
- Contact the Trust with details of the circumstances.
- Offer reassurance to the other passengers.

Appendix 3: Code of Practice for Mobile Phones

Mobile phones should only be used in emergency situations. It is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone whilst driving

The Law in the Highway Code regarding mobile phones must be complied with by all staff: -

“You MUST exercise proper control of your vehicle at all times. Never use a hand held mobile phone or microphone when driving. Using hands free equipment is also likely to distract your attention from the road. It is far safer not to use any telephone system while you are driving - find a safe place to stop first”.

Guidelines

1. Only use the mobile phone when it is necessary to do so and do not use for longer than is strictly necessary and **never** whilst driving.
2. Leave a gap between the phone and your ear. Do not press it to your ear or the side of your head.
3. Where possible make calls using hands-free equipment in the vehicle. Make sure the vehicle is stationary while doing so.
4. When calling another mobile phone user, always ask whether it is safe to speak.
5. Ensure that the phone is removed from the vehicle when it is unoccupied.
6. Before switching a phone on, consider whether being in touch is so essential that you need to compromise your safety and that of others.
7. When driving, never initiate calls, even in traffic queues and at traffic lights.
8. Only acknowledge incoming calls with a short response indicating that you will call back when it is safe to do so.
9. Never look up numbers or attempt to take notes while driving.
10. Encourage colleagues to consider your safety first and to place non-urgent calls to an answering service or to take messages on your behalf rather than giving your number to a third party.

Hand-held Mobile Phones

- This type of phone should never be used to make or receive calls when driving a vehicle, unless it is stationary, i.e. parked correctly according to road traffic regulations.
- The phone should not be used at traffic light queues or in other situations where the traffic queue is likely to clear within a matter of minutes.
- At all other times, the phone should be turned off and a message answering facility employed.
- When calls are made they should be of as short duration as possible and the phone should always have its aerial extended.
- Users should be encouraged only to make essential calls from the mobile unit, with the majority being made via the landline system.

General Recommendations

- Outgoing calls should only be made from a mobile phone when the vehicle is stationary.
- The person using the mobile phone must always be allowed to be in control of the call, even when speaking to a more senior member of staff, so that they can instantly terminate the call should it prove necessary for reasons of safety.

The Driver

Drivers are legally obliged to have proper control of their vehicle at all times. Examples of existing maximum penalties for unsafe driving offences are:

1. Failure to have proper control - Maximum Fine £2500.
2. Careless and inconsiderate driving - Maximum fine £2500, endorsement of three to nine penalty points and discretionary disqualification.
3. Dangerous driving - Maximum penalty of two years in prison, unlimited fine, minimum one year disqualification and extended re-test.

Appendix 4: Minibus Internal Booking Form

Lead Teacher			
Details of Use			
Address of Destination			
Name of Driver			
Driver License No:		Checked for penalties/points	
Name of Attendant			
Date		Time leaving	Return time
Number of Passengers	This should not exceed 16 passengers and must comply with appropriate ratios for each age range		
EV Form Attached		Risk Assessment Attached	
Lead Teachers Signature		Date	
EV Co-ordinator Signature		Date	

This form must be fully completed and authorised BEFORE the minibus is used for the visit.
A copy of the EV form and Risk Assessment MUST be attached to this form.

Office Use	
Keys Signed out by:	Keys Signed in by:
Comments:	

Appendix 5: Safety checklist

Under the terms of the Road Traffic Act 1972, it is the driver who is held responsible for the road worthiness of the vehicle NOT the owner. Therefore, it is in the personal interest of the driver to ensure that the minibus is roadworthy.

Operator:	Vehicle Reg:	
Location	Time & date	

ITEM	CHECK	Inspected
General inspection & Damage Check	Visual Check – Note any damage, broken components or leakages, Engine Oil, coolant & brake fluid	
Access/Egress	Visual Check- Damage, articles or substances on steps, floor, handrails, walkways or covers.	
Wheels & Tyres	Visual Check_ Tyre damages, tread depth exceeds 1.6mm, check wheel nut indicators (where fitted)	
Check Rating Plate	Check safe loading/ trailer weight/ Max. passengers	
Fuel	Do not allow to drop below ¼ tank. Replenish as required	
Brakes	Check operation	
Steering	Check operation	
Seats & Seat belts	Check operation and security of all fitted	
Reversing Alarm/ Beacon/ Horn	Check operation	
Indicators/ Headlights/Brake lights/Instruments	Check operation	
Windscreen Washers & Wipers	Check operation & levels – replenish as required	

First Aid Kit	Check stock – Any items used from the kit should be replaced without delay	
Fire extinguisher	Check the fire extinguisher is mounted in an easily accessible position.	

Defect Report	Defect
It is the driver's responsibility to report any defect affecting safe operation of a vehicle	Details of defect:
DRIVER'S SIGNATURE	