



Cornerstone Academy Trust

Transport and Minibus Policy

Trust-wide policy for all Cornerstone Academy Trust schools, vehicles, drivers, staff, pupils and authorised passengers

Policy owner	Head of Finance and Head of Operations, Executive Headteacher
Approval body	Facilities Committee
Updated	October 2026
Review cycle	Annual, or earlier following a change in law or guidance
Next review	Autumn Term 2027 or earlier if legislation, statutory guidance or technology materially changes
Applies to	All schools and operations of Cornerstone Academy Trust

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1. Purpose

Cornerstone Academy Trust is committed to providing safe, effective, inclusive and appropriately managed transport for pupils and staff.

This policy establishes the framework for:

- Trust-owned, leased or hired vehicles;
- minibuses used for home-to-school transport;
- educational visits, sporting activities, swimming and other school activities;
- staff authorised to drive on behalf of the Trust;
- the safe transport, supervision and handover of pupils;
- pupils with additional, medical or accessibility needs; and
- charging for the Trust's discretionary minibus service.

The Trust will comply with applicable road traffic, passenger transport, health and safety, safeguarding, equality, consumer and data-protection requirements.

2. Legal and regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared with regard to the following legislation and guidance, as amended from time to time:

- Road Traffic Act 1988;
- Transport Act 1985, including Section 19 permit arrangements;
- Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986;
- Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations 1999;
- applicable vehicle lighting and school-bus signage requirements;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018;
- Consumer Rights Act 2015;
- current Department for Transport and Department for Education guidance on school minibuses; and
- current government guidance on seat belts and child restraints.

Where legal or official guidance changes, the Trust will review its procedures and amend this policy where necessary.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Trust minibuses and cars used to transport pupils;
- vehicles hired or leased by the Trust;
- authorised staff driving on Trust business;
- regular home-to-school minibus services;
- educational visits, swimming, sporting fixtures, curriculum activities and enrichment activities.

Staff e-bikes are outside the scope of this policy and must be governed through a separate Staff E-bike Use Procedure. Private vehicles used on Trust business are subject to the Trust's business-use insurance and mileage requirements.

4. Principles

- Safety takes priority over convenience, cost and adherence to timetable.
- No person may drive a Trust vehicle unless legally entitled and formally authorised.
- No vehicle may be used if a defect makes it unsafe or unroadworthy.
- Transport arrangements must be proportionate to pupils' ages, needs and the journey risk.
- The Trust will consider reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.
- Drivers must be able to concentrate on driving and must not be relied upon to manage complex passenger needs while the vehicle is moving.
- Parent-facing terms, charges and refund arrangements are fair, clear and transparent.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees approves this policy and oversees the adequacy of the Trust's transport governance and assurance arrangements.

5.2 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer has overall executive responsibility for ensuring that effective arrangements are established for safe Trust transport.

5.3 Trust Business Manager

The Trust Business Manager, or nominated responsible officer, will oversee:

- vehicle insurance, MOT, taxation, servicing and maintenance;
- Section 19 permits or other required operating authority;
- driver authorisation, licence checks, assessment and training records;
- vehicle, defect, accident and incident records;
- transport risk-management procedures;
- charging, booking and refund arrangements; and
- periodic compliance monitoring.

5.4 Headteachers and trip or activity leaders

Headteachers and activity leaders must ensure that transport is properly planned, passenger information is accurate, pupil needs are considered and any enhanced risks are addressed before the journey.

5.5 Drivers

Drivers are responsible for complying with the law, this policy and Trust procedures. They must complete required checks, use the vehicle safely, ensure pupils are seated and restrained, report defects and incidents, and complete a final sweep after every pupil journey.

Authorisation

Possession of a driving licence does not in itself authorise a person to drive a Trust vehicle. Formal Trust authorisation is required.

6. Operating authority and Section 19 permits

Before operating a passenger service, the Trust will determine and document the correct legal basis for the service.

Where a Section 19 permit is required:

- an appropriate valid permit must be held and displayed where required;
- the service must operate within the permit conditions;
- passengers must fall within the permitted class;
- the service must not be operated with a view to profit;
- the vehicle and driver arrangements must satisfy the applicable requirements; and
- permit details, validity and renewal dates must be held on the central compliance register.

The Trust will not operate a service for hire or reward unless the necessary permit or other appropriate operating authority is in place.

7. Vehicle standards, records and maintenance

Every vehicle used by the Trust will, as applicable:

- be appropriately registered, taxed, insured and MOT-tested;
- be maintained in a safe and roadworthy condition;
- have appropriate seating and restraint systems;
- comply with relevant permit, construction and use requirements;
- carry required emergency and first-aid equipment; and
- have unobstructed and functional emergency exits.

The Trust will maintain records of registration, insurance, MOT, permits, servicing, safety inspections, defects, remedial work, accidents, incidents and recalls. No vehicle with a safety-critical defect may be used until the defect has been rectified and the vehicle released back into service by an authorised person.

Prescribed school-bus signs will be displayed where required for the vehicle and service being operated. Required equipment must be suitable, securely stored, inspected and serviced.

8. Driver eligibility and authorisation

Before authorising a driver, the Trust will be satisfied that the person:

- holds the appropriate driving licence entitlement for the vehicle and journey;
- meets any restrictions applying to the driver, vehicle weight, use and payment arrangements;
- satisfies the Trust's insurer;
- is medically fit to drive;
- has completed the required familiarisation, practical assessment or training; and
- understands the Trust's transport, emergency and safeguarding procedures.

The Trust will maintain an authorised-driver register. Driving licence entitlement and endorsements will be checked at least annually and whenever the Trust becomes aware of information that may affect authorisation.

Drivers must immediately report any disqualification, relevant endorsement, restriction, loss or suspension of licence, relevant medical condition, medication materially affecting driving, or other matter that may affect fitness or legal entitlement. The Trust may suspend authorisation pending assessment.

9. Fitness to drive

Drivers must not drive where their ability may be impaired by alcohol, illegal drugs, medication, illness, injury, fatigue or any other condition affecting safe driving. Journey plans must allow sufficient time and appropriate rest breaks. A driver must not continue merely to meet a timetable where safety would be compromised.

10. Vehicle checks and defect reporting

The driver must complete the Trust's pre-drive check before use. The check must include, as applicable:

- tyres, wheels and visible bodywork;
- lights, indicators, mirrors, windscreen and wipers;
- doors, emergency exits and warning systems;
- seat belts and passenger seating;
- fuel or battery charge;
- warning lights and visible fluid leaks; and
- first-aid and other required emergency equipment.

Any significant defect must be reported promptly. The vehicle must be taken out of service where continued use could present a safety risk. Defects and remedial action must be recorded.

11. Mobile phones and in-vehicle technology

Drivers must not hold or interact with a handheld telephone or other device while driving. Navigation must be programmed before moving off. An accompanying adult should manage communications where practicable. Otherwise, the driver must stop and park safely before using a device. Hands-free calls should be limited because conversation may still distract the driver.

12. Journey and route risk assessment

Transport must be covered by a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. A generic or route-specific assessment may be used for established routine journeys where it remains appropriate and is periodically reviewed.

An individual or enhanced assessment is required where there are additional factors, including:

- an unfamiliar, unusual or non-routine journey;
- significant medical, SEND, mobility or behavioural needs;
- very young passengers;
- adverse weather, darkness or unusual traffic conditions;
- new or changed stops and handover arrangements;
- a long or late journey; or
- the driver would otherwise be the only adult accompanying pupils.

The driver must not automatically be counted as an adult available for supervision. Any reliance on the driver within the staffing arrangement must be expressly considered and justified in the enhanced risk assessment.

13. Passenger assistants and supervision

The Trust will determine whether an additional adult or passenger assistant is required, considering the pupils' ages, number of passengers, SEND, medical needs, behaviour, length and nature of the journey, boarding and handover arrangements and emergency needs.

The driver must be able to concentrate on driving and must not simultaneously be expected to manage significant pupil behaviour, provide complex care or administer treatment while the vehicle is moving.

14. Passenger registers and information

A current passenger register must be available for every pupil journey. The system used must enable the Trust to establish:

- who is expected to travel;

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- who has boarded and, where relevant, left the vehicle;
 - the designated stop or destination;
 - essential medical or emergency information needed for the journey;
 - whether a child has been handed over or released under an approved arrangement; and
 - whether the final vehicle sweep has been completed.

Changes to the expected passenger list must be communicated through the authorised process. Drivers must not rely solely on informal messages from pupils.

15. Boarding and leaving the vehicle

Children must be appropriately supervised when boarding and leaving. The vehicle must be stationary, safely parked and secured before doors are opened. Wherever reasonably practicable, pupils must board and leave from the pavement or another traffic-free area.

Before moving away, the driver must ensure that passengers are seated, required restraints are in use, doors are closed and passengers and accompanying adults are clear of the vehicle. Stops used for regular routes must be agreed and risk assessed.

16. Seat belts and child restraints

Every pupil must occupy an appropriate passenger seat. Seat belts must be worn whenever fitted and must be used correctly. Pupils must not share a seat or seat belt.

The Trust will apply the different legal requirements governing cars, minibuses, coaches and taxis. For minibuses, children aged three or over must use an appropriate child restraint where one is available, or the adult seat belt where a child restraint is not fitted or is unsuitable. Separate consideration is required for children under three and for specialist restraints.

The Trust's operational standard is that each pupil travelling in a Trust minibus will have an individual seat with a usable seat belt. Restraints must be suitable, correctly fitted, maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

17. SEND, accessibility and reasonable adjustments

Transport arrangements must take account of the Equality Act 2010 and the individual circumstances of disabled pupils. The Trust will consider reasonable adjustments, which may include appropriate seating, specialist restraints, mobility equipment, additional supervision, alternative boarding arrangements, a passenger assistant or an individual transport plan.

A pupil must not be excluded from a transport arrangement solely because of disability without consideration of reasonable adjustments, available evidence and individual risk.

18. Medical needs and emergency medication

Where a pupil has a medical condition that may affect transport, suitable arrangements must be agreed before travel and linked to the pupil's individual healthcare plan where appropriate.

- Required medication must remain appropriately accessible throughout the journey.
- Medication transferred between school, driver and parent or carer must follow a recorded handover process.
- Staff responsible for emergency medication must receive appropriate information and training.
- Temperature, storage and security requirements must be followed.
- Medication use or a medical incident must be recorded and reported.

In a medical emergency, the driver must stop safely where necessary, contact the emergency services where required, follow the pupil's healthcare arrangements, notify the Trust and parent or carer as appropriate, and record the incident.

19. Safeguarding

The Trust's safeguarding and child-protection requirements apply throughout Trust-organised transport. Drivers and passenger assistants must know the procedure where:

- a pupil expected to travel is missing;
- an unexpected pupil attempts to board;
- a pupil boards or leaves at the wrong stop;
- an unauthorised person attempts collection;
- the expected adult is absent;
- a pupil makes a disclosure or reports a concern;
- an allegation is made against a driver or passenger assistant; or
- the vehicle is significantly delayed or breaks down.

Any safeguarding concern must be reported promptly in accordance with the Trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Professional boundaries apply at all times.

20. End-of-journey vehicle sweep

After every pupil journey, the driver must physically check the entire passenger compartment before the vehicle is parked or locked. The check must confirm that no pupil remains on board, exits are clear, no hazardous property has been left behind and any damage, defect or incident has been identified and reported.

21. Collection from the minibus

Except where an approved independent-release arrangement applies under section 22, primary-aged pupils using the Trust's home-to-school minibus service must be handed over in accordance with the collection arrangements agreed with their parent or carer.

Parents and carers must identify authorised collectors. If the expected collector is not present, the pupil must not be left at the stop. The driver or passenger assistant must follow the Trust's non-collection procedure and contact the designated Trust contact. A pupil may be released to an alternative collector only where the Trust is satisfied that the change has been properly authorised.

22. Independent release from the bus

The Trust may permit a pupil in Year 5 or Year 6 to leave the minibus at the designated stop without collection by an adult. This is not automatic and requires prior written parental consent and Trust approval.

The Trust will consider the pupil's age and individual circumstances, SEND or medical needs, the stop location, traffic, distance from home, expected arrival time, lighting, seasonal conditions and any safeguarding concern. Consent must identify the pupil, route, stop and applicable days.

The Trust may refuse, suspend or withdraw permission where it reasonably considers the arrangement unsafe. Parents and carers remain responsible for arrangements following approved release. Drivers must have an up-to-date authorisation list; where there is uncertainty, the pupil must not be left unaccompanied.

23. Pupil behaviour

Pupils must remain seated as required, wear the required restraint, follow reasonable instructions, avoid distracting the driver, treat others appropriately and not interfere with doors, safety equipment or vehicle controls.

Depending on seriousness and individual circumstances, the Trust may use:

1. discussion with the pupil and parent or carer;
2. a written warning and agreed improvement measures;
3. additional supervision or reasonable adjustments;
4. a final warning;
5. a time-limited suspension; or
6. withdrawal of access to the discretionary service.

Serious behaviour presenting an immediate safety risk may result in suspension while an investigation takes place. Where behaviour may be connected to disability or SEND, the Trust will consider reasonable adjustments and individual circumstances before deciding action.

24. Parent and carer conduct

Parents and carers must communicate appropriately with drivers and staff. Threatening, abusive or seriously inappropriate behaviour may lead to immediate protective measures. Any decision affecting the pupil's transport must be reasonable, proportionate and, where possible, distinguish between the conduct of an adult and the needs and welfare of the pupil.

25. Accidents, breakdowns and emergencies

Drivers must follow the Trust procedure for collisions, breakdowns and emergencies. Priority must be given to:

7. protecting passengers from immediate danger;
8. stopping in the safest practicable location;
9. contacting emergency services where necessary;
10. accounting for every passenger;
11. obtaining medical assistance;
12. notifying the Trust and parents or carers as appropriate; and
13. recording and reporting the incident.

Pupils must not be left unsupervised following a breakdown or collision. The Trust will review the relevant risk assessment and procedures after any significant incident.

26. Fire and evacuation

Required emergency equipment must be available, serviceable and securely stored. In the event of fire or suspected fire, the priority is safe evacuation and notification of the emergency services. Staff must not place themselves or pupils at additional risk by attempting to fight a vehicle fire. Emergency exits must remain unobstructed.

27. Adverse weather, delay and disruption

A journey may be delayed, amended or cancelled where snow, ice, flooding, high winds, road closure, breakdown or other circumstances make operation unsafe. Safety takes priority over the timetable. The Trust will communicate significant disruption to parents and carers where reasonably practicable and will maintain appropriate contingency arrangements.

28. Charges, cancellations, credits and refunds

The Trust requests a parental contribution for the home-to-school minibus service of £3.10 per journey dependent on the bus route and multiplied by the number of weeks in the term. The terms are provided and published on the website and clearly explain:

- the amount payable and charging period;
- whether payment reserves a place;
- the cancellation arrangements;
- the circumstances in which credits or refunds may be available;
- what happens if the Trust cannot provide the service; and
- how changes to routes, stops, times or charges will be communicated.

Refunds will not ordinarily be made merely because a pupil chooses not to use a reserved journey, but prolonged medically certified absence and exceptional circumstances may be considered. Any amount retained must be fair and reasonably related to the reserved service and costs incurred. The Trust does not offer refunds for any bus cancellations due to weather or other events outside our control.

29. Data protection and records

The Trust will process transport information in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Trust privacy notices. Only information necessary to operate the service safely will be collected, which may include pupil and parent details, emergency contacts, authorised collector information, relevant medical and SEND information, independent-release consent, passenger registers and driver records.

Information must be stored securely, shared only with those who need it and retained in accordance with the Trust's retention schedule. Where photographs or identity information are used to verify collectors, the purpose, access and retention arrangements must be explained in the applicable privacy notice.

30. Complaints and review of decisions

Concerns should normally be raised with the school or Trust in the first instance. A parent or carer may request review of a decision concerning suspension or termination of a place, refusal of independent release, or a disputed charge or refund. Where practicable, the review will be undertaken by a senior person not directly responsible for the original decision. Formal complaints may be pursued under the Trust's Concerns and Complaints Policy.

31. Monitoring, audit and review

The Trust will maintain appropriate records of vehicles, maintenance, insurance, MOT, permits, authorised drivers, licence checks, assessments, training, risk assessments, passenger registers, checks, defects, accidents, incidents, safeguarding concerns and significant complaints.

The policy owner will monitor compliance and report material risks or incidents through the Trust's governance arrangements. This policy and supporting procedures will be reviewed after a significant incident and whenever a material legal or operational change occurs.

32. Associated documents

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;

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- Educational Visits and Off-site Activities Policy;
 - Collection of Children Policy;
 - Behaviour Policy;
 - Data Protection Policy, retention schedule and privacy notices;
 - Concerns and Complaints Policy;
 - parent minibus service terms;
 - driver authorisation and vehicle-check procedures; and
 - relevant journey, route and individual risk assessments.