

St Brendans BNS

Artane, Dublin 5



Learning for all, Respect for all



SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

This policy document has been drawn up by St Brendans BNS to provide clarity to all stakeholders of the school community regarding how School Transport operates for the pupils of the Autism Classes in St Brendans BNS.

CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL

The School Ethos of inclusion and appreciation of diversity permeates the content of all school policies in St Brendans BNS. In the case of the School Transport Policy, it is the intention that this policy will provide a structure and guidelines to ensure that pupils in our Autism (AS) classes will have safe access to school transport.

AIMS

- To ensure the safety of all on the bus.
- To ensure that the Board of Management maintains its duty of care to all pupils
- To ensure that the School Ethos is maintained through an inclusive approach to the running of School Transport
- To create and maintain an atmosphere of respect, calmness and order for all.
- To ensure that each individual is aware of their responsibilities.
- To provide open and transparent procedures for the whole school community in relation to the operation of School Transport in St Brendans BNS
- To provide procedures for Parents and Bus Escorts relating to the day to day running of School Transport

PROVISION OF SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Bus Escorts are employed by the Board of Management and funded from a Department of Education and Skills grant to assist and supervise pupils using school transport. School transport itself is also funded by the Department of Education and Skills and it is Bus Eireann who are the providers of buses and drivers. Therefore, the Board of Management is involved only in the provision of Bus Escorts and plays no role in the provision of transport.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEW AND EXISTING PUPILS

Following formal acceptance of an offer of enrolment by letter from Parent/Guardians, the Principal applies for transport via the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO). This application is then processed by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and forwarded for further sanction by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Therefore, the sanction of School Transport for each applicant is solely the decision of the SENO and the DES and the school has no role in this process.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are advised that their child's Psychologist's report must have a recommendation for their child to attend a Special Class to be eligible for School Transport.

Parents of new pupils are also advised that a period of transition will apply to School Transport for their child at the start of their first school year in St Brendans BNS. Further details of this will be provided in the Transition Pack issued to all new Parents of children in the AS classes.

Access to School Transport, once sanctioned by the Department of Education and Skills, continues from year to year. The allocation of routes, however, is decided upon by Bus Éireann on an annual basis, who notify the school in late August regarding the arrangements for the forth-coming year. The Board wishes to advise Parents that the school cannot provide any information in relation to School Transport routes prior to this time.

Once the school receives notification of the routes from Bus Éireann, Bus Escorts are recruited as soon as possible. The school endeavours to have Bus Escorts in place during the first week of the school year, for the duration of the school year and to place the same Bus Escort on the same route, in as far as is practicable.

However, this may not always be possible, and the Board advises Parents that recruitment of new Bus Escorts may take from six to eight weeks. During this time, pupils are required to attend school and Parents must bring and collect their child.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In the event of severe weather, i.e. when a **'Red alert'** is issued by Met Éireann for the area in which the Bus route follows, Bus Éireann will not provide School Transport services.

In such circumstances, St Brendans BNS **may still remain open** and, in the absence of any text notification from the School Principal, Parents should assume that this is the case and may bring their child to and from school.

In the event of an **exceptional school closing** due to severe weather, health and safety issues or other extenuating circumstances relating to St Brendans BNS the following will apply:

The School Principal will contact all Parent(s)/Guardian(s) by text to notify them of an exceptional school closing.

RECRUITMENT OF BUS ESCORTS

ELIGIBILITY FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE ROLE OF BUS ESCORT AND SUBSTITUTE BUS ESCORT

Parents are not permitted to perform the role of Bus Escort on their own child's route for reasons of confidentiality of information relating to pupils other than their own child, who are travelling to and from school on the same bus/route as their child.

In addition, in the event of the reporting of incidents that occur in transit, the role of Bus Escort requires an independent witness account and as a parent is already a member of the school community, a conflict of interest may arise.

Recruitment Process:

Vacancies for the role of Bus Escort will be filled on a competitive basis. Vacancies will be advertised, applications shortlisted and then the most suitable applicants will be invited for interview. Interviews will be held in the school. An interview panel will be put in place consisting of the School Principal and Deputy Principal. Following interview, the successful candidate will be contacted and offered the job of Bus Escort conditional on the following:

- A satisfactory Garda vetting record
- Signing of the Bus Escort contract

Relief/Substitute Bus Escorts:

Every effort is made to ensure that Bus Escort vacancies are filled and travel on each vehicle to assist the pupils and safeguard their individual safety. In general, this system works very satisfactorily, but there are occasions when the escort is not available to travel on the route and it can be difficult or impossible to arrange a substitute escort. This situation is unavoidable and despite our best efforts there are occasions when we simply cannot arrange for a substitute escort. In such a circumstances, parents are required to bring and collect their child from school.

School Procedures in relation to the running of the school bus in the absence of a Bus Escort:

Bus Escorts must be present on buses for the buses to run. This is to ensure that pupils remain seated and social distancing is maintained, if required.

The level of special needs of pupils attending the school requires a high level of supervision and support.

Medical needs of pupils and, in particular, the emergency medical needs of pupils, may require the administration of emergency medication which requires a Bus Escort to be present on the bus.

The Board of Management also takes very seriously its responsibilities in relation to meeting the requirements of child protection legislation. All schools are legally required to ensure that all adults who are in contact with pupils are satisfactorily Garda vetted by the school and that their safety is protected. However, this is not possible on the school bus in the absence of a Bus Escort.

The Board does not wish to inconvenience Parents unduly by the withdrawing of transport in such circumstances, but the Board takes its duty of care to pupils very seriously and the priority remains the safety, health and well-being of all pupils.

The Board is concerned that in the absence of the Bus Escort, the safety of pupils would be compromised. For this reason, the Board has decided that the school procedure in the absence of a Bus Escort and in instances where it is impossible to secure substitution cover, will be the following:

- Parents are requested to bring and collect their child from school as, in the absence of School Transport, each pupil is still required to attend school. Parents are requested to bring their child to and collect their child from school in a timely manner and the Board reminds Parents that supervision by school staff is not available before 08.40 or after 14.20 hrs.
- If a Bus Escort is unable to perform their duties and a substitute Bus Escort is unavailable, no additional funds are provided to the school by the Department of Education and Skills to refund Parents any costs associated with transporting their child to and from school. However, Parents may submit a funding application for costs to the DES School Transport Section for a transport grant. Further details can be sought from the DES School Transport Section in relation to this provision.

PROCEDURES FOR BUS ESCORTS IN THE EVENT OF THEIR ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL:

(1) Brief Absences

- If the Bus Escort is absent they should contact their designated substitute Bus Escort to request that they provide cover for the Bus.
- They must also notify the Principal by phonecall of their absence and of the substitute arrangements.

The following information should be provided **to the school only**:

- **Your name**
- **Date of any further absences, if known at this time**
- **Date of return to work, if known at this time.**

- **If the sick leave is certified or self-certified, as per DES School Transport Section directive, January 2013.**

- If the designated substitute Bus Escort is unavailable, the regular Bus Escort must notify the Parents of the pupils on their allocated bus of their absence and if there will be substitute cover or not.
- All Bus Escorts must also text the Bus Driver to inform them of their absence.
- All Bus Escorts must update the School, Parents and Bus Driver regarding further absences and/or return to work. A reason for absence should not be provided to the Driver or Parents.
- For further absences, please provide the following information **to the school only**:
 - **Your name**
 - **Date of any further absences, if known at this time**
 - **Date of return to work, if known at this time.**
 - **If the sick leave is certified or self-certified, as per DES School Transport Section directive, January 2013.**
- Absences of three days or more must be covered by a medical certificate.

(2) Applications for Leave

- Absences for any reason other than sick leave are not permitted, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Applications for exceptional leave must be applied for in writing to the Chairperson, Board of Management two weeks prior to the commencement of the leave by emailing the School Principal.
- If absent, as is the case for all staff, Bus Escorts will be requested to completed a staff leave form.

Third parties travelling on board the School Bus:

Parents/Guardians are also advised that for reasons of confidentiality of pupils and, also in compliance with the requirements of Garda vetting requirements contained in DES Circular 0094/2006,

Parents/Guardians or Third Parties are not permitted by the Board of Management to travel on School Transport.

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUS ESCORTS

In addition to the list of duties below, the Bus Escort will undertake other duties pertaining to the role as may be decided/directed by the School Principal and/or the Board of Management and/or as may be dictated by the needs of the Employer/School.

It is expected that the Bus Escort will on his/her own initiative, identify tasks/duties that need to be carried out as part of the role subject to the authorisation of the School Principal/Board of Management as appropriate. The duties listed are not intended to be exhaustive or exclusive. The Bus Escort must:

- To maintain good order and a happy atmosphere on the bus.
- Ensure that s/he is on the school transport at the time of the first pick-up and last set down.
- Opening and closing doors of the bus.
- Assist pupils to board and alight safely from the school bus.
- Ensure that all pupils wear their seat belts.
- Ensure that all pupils are seated with appropriate straps where provided.
- Ensure that wheelchairs are safely secured.
- Ensures that each pupil is received by a responsible person, where necessary, at the set down point. If in doubt, please consult the Principal.
- Is a model of good, respectful behaviour.
- Follows the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Follows the school's Digital Devices and Acceptable Use Policy.
- Is responsible for the safety of children when opening and closing doors prior to "stop" and "move off".
- Ensure that all children are seated with appropriate straps where provided.
- Ensure that each pupil is received by some responsible person at the set down point.
- Supervise the children travelling on the school transport and to and from the school transport into and out of the School/classrooms to ensure adequate hand-over has taken place and that supervision is maintained.
- Maintain a good working relationship with the driver of the school transport.
- Act as liaison between the School Principal, Deputy Principal and/or class teacher and Parents when required i.e. conveyance of messages and letters to Parents.
- Observe confidentiality in all aspects of work.
- Be aware of particular disabilities of children on the school transport and be briefed by the School Principal, Deputy Principal and or/ Class teacher on how to deal with same i.e. epilepsy etc.
- Perform any other duties relevant to the position of escort which may be assigned by the School Principal and/or Deputy Principal from time to time.
- Not leave the school transport unless under exceptional circumstances.
- Ensure that his/her position on the school transport is where maximum control of the children is achieved.
- Report all concerns to the Assistant Principal who is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of school buses.
- Before beginning to work with any new child, familiarise self with medical needs as well as care needs of the child.
- Be aware of particular needs of pupils on the bus and be briefed by the Principal on how to deal with same e.g. some pupils with autism may need to sit on the same seat each day.
- Supervision of all pupils travelling on bus. This means that when there are pupils on the bus the escort should remain at the bus to receive a pupil from parent/staff member. Unless

there are exceptional circumstances the Escort should not move away from the vicinity of the bus while pupils, under their care, remain on board.

- The Escort's position on the bus should be such as to facilitate maximum supervision of all pupils.
- Maintain a good working relationship with the driver of the bus
- Act as liaison between School and parents when requested.
- Where relevant, take responsibility for any medication going from home to school and school to home e.g. give medication to relevant person; ensure that medication is clearly marked with pupil's name. Medication should not be left in bags where it could be accessed by other pupils.
- Act as a liaison as required for conveyance of messages and letters between home and school and vice versa.
- Escort must ensure personal belongings are not misplaced, e.g. in some cases pupils' belongings may need to be handed to school staff.
- Observe confidentiality in all aspects of work.
- Be aware of and use positive behaviour strategies.
- Report any concerns about the bus to the Bus Driver.
- Report all concerns to the Principal.
- Perform any other duties relevant to the position of escort which may be assigned by the Principal from time to time.

STAFF TRAINING

- **NEW STAFF**

All new Bus Escorts will be required to attend certified in-house positive behaviour management training in the school on an annual basis to assist them in their duties in relation to the management of challenging behaviour.

All new Bus Escorts will be required to attend certified first aid and manual handling training in the School at the first available training provision to assist them in their duties in relation to the health and safety of pupils travelling on their allocated bus.

All new Bus Escorts will be required to attend child protection training in the School at the first available training provision to assist them in their duties in relation to ensuring the child protection of the pupils travelling on their allocated bus.

In the event that a pupil has specific medical needs, the school will arrange training for the Bus Escort, as required.

- **EXISTING BUS ESCORTS**

All existing Bus Escorts will be in the future offered certified in-house positive behaviour management training in the school on an annual basis to assist them in their duties in relation to the management of challenging behaviour.

All existing Bus Escorts will be offered certified first aid and manual handling training in the School on a bi-annual basis to assist them in their duties in relation to ensuring the health and safety of the pupils travelling on their allocated bus.

All existing Bus Escorts will be required to attend refresher child protection training to assist them in

their duties in relation ensuring the child protection of the pupils travelling on their allocated bus.

In the event that a pupil has specific medical needs, the school will arrange training for the Bus Escort, as required.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Parents are requested to be aware of the following health and safety precautions relating to School Transport that must be maintained at all times:

- Bus Escorts are responsible for the safety of the children from the time they board the bus until they are met at their destination by the Parent/guardian. Therefore, **Bus Escorts must remain on the bus while Parents/guardians take their children to the bus in the morning and welcome them home in the afternoon.** 1.1 Bus Escorts may use their discretion in this matter.
- **Children should be ready to meet their bus in the morning** in a timely manner as delays and longer periods of waiting can be stressful for the children who are already on the bus. **Bus Eireann policy is to wait no more than 3 to 5 minutes for a pupil and after this time has passed the bus may leave.**
- In the event that you need to contact your child's bus, please use the Bus Escort's telephone number provided to you at the beginning of the year.
- Should your child be unable to travel in the bus for whatever reason, **please notify the Bus Escort by text only** to avoid an unnecessary journey.
- As a matter of consideration, please ensure that these calls are made between the hours of **08.00 and 16.00 ONLY, on Monday to Friday.**
- Please ensure that a Parent/Guardian is present at your home to receive your child from **14.35 onwards. Please note that the Bus Escort is not permitted to allow a pupil to leave the bus unless a parent/guardian is visibly present to receive the child.**
- In the event that your child is unable to travel on the school bus in the afternoon, **please ensure that you or an emergency contact is available to collect your child from school.**
- To this end, **please ensure that you are contactable by the school at all times without exception.**
- For child protection reasons, pupils are not permitted to leave the school bus for any reason, e.g. to use the toilet. Instead, Parents and school staff must ensure that all pupils have used the bathroom prior to leaving home or school.
- Bus Escorts are not permitted to hand over any pupil over to anyone who is under the influence, as per New Court Substance Use Policy.

COLLECTION AND DROPPING OFF PROCEDURES FOR BUS ESCORTS

- The Escort is required to join the bus either at the initial starting point of the bus or from the pick-up point of the first pupil, whichever is the most convenient or alternatively at an agreed point with the bus operator. However, where no extra cost is involved, the escort may

be picked up along the route of the bus, provided that they are on the bus at the pickup point of the first pupil.

- The scheduling and sequencing of bus runs and pick up points are subject to change and consequently any arrangements for picking up and setting down escorts are subject to change as well. Payment starts from the first pick up until arrival at the last school and vice versa.
- School buses must call to collect every pupil every day unless explicitly told not to by parents/school.
- The bus driver and the escort work together at all times. The driver has ultimate responsibility to ensure the safety of all on the bus.
- A list of all pupils with relevant contact numbers should be available on each bus.
- School begins in St Brendans BNS at 8.40 am and finishes at 2.40pm.
- Should there be an urgent need to stop the bus, the escort should advise the driver, who will stop at the nearest safe place.
- Escorts are required to work each day the school is open.
- The Escort is expected to attend training which will be provided from time to time.
- On occasion when the school bus does not operate, the Bus Driver is responsible for contacting the Escort, to make the Escort aware of the situation. Subsequently the Bus Driver should contact the parents. This would also be the situation if there is a long delay en route.
- Where a pupil does not come to school in the morning, the parent should contact the Bus Driver to make them aware of their plans for the evening service.
- A change of address of a child is processed by the SENO and Bus Eireann and typically takes at least 6 weeks advance notice.
- To avoid delays in the morning, children should be ready in good time and waiting to board the bus when it arrives for collection as delays and periods of waiting can be stressful for children who are already on the bus. Bus Eireann also have a policy of waiting only a short time and only on an occasional basis.
- Bus Escorts are responsible for the safety of the children from the time they board the bus in the morning until they are dropped to school or from the time they board the bus in the afternoon until they are met at their home by their parent/guardian.
- Bus Escorts are responsible for all pupils on the bus and to ensure that they can meet this duty of care, they must remain on the bus while Parents/guardians take their children to the bus in the morning and welcome them home in the afternoon.
- All Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be provided with the contact details/telephone numbers for drivers at the start of each school year. In the event that children are not travelling for any reason, Parents must inform the Bus Escort in advance, if possible. Parents are requested to ensure that any such calls/texts are made between the hours of 08.00 and 16.00 only Monday to Friday.

- Parents must provide the school with named persons to whom the children may be handed over in the evenings. It is the responsibility of Parents to ensure that the school receives prior and timely notification of any changes to these names.
- Parents must ensure that a Parent/Guardian or named carer is available at each child's home from 14.50 in the afternoon for pupils.
- Please note that the Bus Escort is not permitted to allow a pupil to leave the bus unless a parent/guardian is visibly present to receive the child.
- Bus Escorts are not permitted to drop pupils off at empty houses or any location other than the pupil's home address as registered in St Brendans BNS.
- For child protection reasons, pupils are not permitted to leave the school bus for any reason, e.g. to use the toilet. Instead, Parents and school staff must ensure that all pupils have used the bathroom prior to leaving home or school.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROCEDURES FOR PUPILS WHO CARRY NON-EMERGENCY PRESCRIBED MEDICATION TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Some of our pupils require medication to be administered in school. For these pupils the following procedures will apply:

- Bus Escorts may bring a supply of medication to school in the first instance.
- However, Bus Escorts must not accept medication from any pupil without prior notification from the school confirming that the pupil is approved by the school to receive medication.
- All non-emergency medication remains at home.
- At no point may a pupil be in possession of medication or be given their medication to bring into school or home.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROCEDURES FOR PUPILS WITH EMERGENCY MEDICAL NEEDS

A small number of our pupils may require emergency medication to be administered when they are travelling on the bus.

- Each pupil with emergency medical needs will have a Care Plan which contains the medical protocol that must be followed when administering this medication.
- Bus Escorts will be informed in advance of any pupil who requires emergency medication and a medical protocol will be supplied to the Bus Escort by the school.
- If a pupil requires emergency medication, the Bus Escort will be trained by the school in how to administer the medication.

MANAGEMENT OF PUPIL BEHAVIOUR WHEN TRAVELLING BY BUS

- Pupil behaviour will be managed using positive behaviour approaches and School Staff will work together to assist pupils in coping with travelling to and from school.
- Any items in the possession of a pupil which may be regarded as a hazard to themselves or others will be removed.
- As per Bus Eireann policy, pupils are not permitted to consume food or drinks while travelling on the bus.
- Pupils are expected to remain seated at all times and to wear the seatbelts provided. In the event that a pupil refuses to wear a seatbelt occurs, Bus Eireann Policy is to wait a short period before leaving. This is also to limit the distress and/or potential harm to the other pupils. In such circumstances, Parents will be required to bring and/or collect their child from School.
- Any concerns should be reported to the Principal who is responsible for day to day running of school buses. **Bus Escorts must complete the School Incident Report Form following any incidents that occur while pupils are under their supervision. All incident reports must be completed within 48 hours of the incident occurring.**
- In the event that a pupil refuses to remain seated and to wear a seatbelt, the Bus Escort is required to report the matter to the Principal. This report must be made by the Bus Escort on their next arrival in school.
- In an instance when a belt clip is not working, the parent/guardian may wish to consider purchasing a harness to ensure that their child remains seated. Such a decision is solely that of the Parent/Guardian. Parents are advised that there may be health and safety implications for their child if he is wearing the harness in the event of a road accident.
- In the event that a child is not willing to wear a seatbelt and all supports to prevent him opening the seatbelt have been tried, then the decision not to permit the child to continue to travel on the school bus rests with the School Principal.
- Persistent disruptive or challenging behaviours, which might potentially affect the safety of others, must be reported and may also result in that pupil's removal from the bus service. This decision also rests with the School Principal.
- Full withdrawal on a temporary basis of School Transport pending application for 1:1 or 2:1 Bus Escort and/or 1:1 School Transport will occur when a pupil absconds from School Transport or engages in a serious physical and/or engages in abusive or disruptive behaviour that causes significant distress and risk of harm to the occupants on the bus.
- The Principal will telephone and/or write to the Parents of the child concerned and inform them as to the reasons behind the decision. Parents who wish to appeal this decision can do so by using the procedures outlined in the Parent School Communication Policy.
- The use of a safety harnesses and belt clips or other equipment involving restrictive practice must have a clinical recommendation, not impinge on the pupil's deprivation of liberty and must have prior approval of the Board of Management.

RESUMPTION OF TRAVELLING ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT FOLLOWING A HIGH-LEVEL CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR INCIDENT

- An application may be made to the NCSE and DES for 1:1 or 2:2 Bus Escort before the child is permitted to resume travelling.
- Please be advised that a professional report is required as part of the application process to the NCSE for all school transport and 1:1 or 2:1 Bus Escorts.
- In the event that the child is not permitted to travel on School Transport, the child is still required to attend school and Parents must bring their child to and from School.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF POLICY

- This policy is available to School Staff on Teams.
- All existing Bus Escorts have been provided with a hard-copy of this policy.
- All new Bus Escorts will receive a copy of this policy on appointment.
- All new Parents will receive a copy in the School Information Pack for New Pupils.
- A hard-copy of this policy is available to existing Parents from the School Office, on request.
- A copy of this policy can also be viewed on the school website.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as deemed necessary by the Board of Management and also in the event of any future DES circulars or legislation.

As part of the annual Transport Policy review, a risk assessment of school transport will be completed as deemed necessary, e.g. in response to the changing needs of pupils or in response to DES requirements or legislation.

DOCUMENT HISTORY:

FIRST VERSION:	Ratified by the Board of Management:	Signed: <i>Helena Healy.</i> Chairperson, Board of Management	Date: 23 rd October 2025
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