



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Sandwick Road, Stornoway. HS1 2BW

Rathad Shannabhaig, Steornabhagh. HS1 2BW

By email

CIRCULAR NO. 2016/05

ALL HEADTEACHERS

**cc: Parent Councils
HOS/SEOs/POs/BSOs**

Telephone	01851 8227280
e-mail	b.chisholm@cne-siar.gov.uk
Writer	Bernard Chisholm
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HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT: DUTIES FOR HEADTEACHERS IN SCHOOL BUS PARKS

The recommendations from a recent Internal Audit Review of the Comhairle's Home to School Transport arrangements requires the Department to make some operational changes. The introduction of the SEEMIS school transport module also requires some additional operational changes.

It is proposed to introduce these changes to Home to School Transport for the 2016/17 academic year starting in August 2016. The main issues with regard to operational management by Head Teachers are detailed below.

Defined duties for Head Teachers in school bus parks:

- **Maintain a presence in the bus park (Head Teacher or nominated representative) every afternoon and make yourself available to any bus driver who has issues they wish to report.**
- **Identify pupils (when pointed out by bus driver) and take names where incidents have occurred and pupils have declined to give names to the bus driver.**
- **Treat occurrences of bad behaviour on Home to School Transport as a school disciplinary matter.**
- **Treat instances where pupils fail to show a bus pass or ticket on Home to School Transport as a school disciplinary matter (regardless of whether they consider themselves to be entitled – only pupils who can present a bus pass are entitled). Pass details of persistent offenders to the Department for further action.**

Summary

The main operational change to come from the Internal Audit recommendations was designed to ensure the Comhairle received the income due from charging non-entitled pupils using the Home to School Transport service. There is now an expectation that the Headteacher (or nominated member of senior management) will liaise with the bus drivers in the school bus park every afternoon to get details of any behaviour issues on the bus in the previous afternoon run and the morning run to school. This meeting with the bus driver is designed to pick up details of any pupil guilty of bad behaviour on the bus and any pupil who has failed to present a bus pass/ticket in the morning. The head teacher or delegated nominee should note the name of any pupil failing to show a bus pass or ticket to the driver in the afternoon and still attempting to access the Home to School Transport service. Where the bus driver does not have the name of a pupil for an incident in the morning or the previous day, the pupil will be pointed out to the Headteacher by the driver.

Bus drivers will be instructed to seek out the head teacher or their nominee each afternoon in the bus park when they have pupils who try and board the bus in the afternoon without a ticket or a pass. They will also be instructed to pass on information about pupils behaving badly on their bus (previous afternoon or morning) or failing to show a pass or ticket (morning) to the Headteacher.

Headteachers should treat incidents where pupils fail to present a bus pass or ticket as a school disciplinary matter and a breach of the code of conduct signed by their parents to allow access to their place on the Home to School Transport service. Verbal warnings should be issued along with letters to parents for repeat offences. Where persistent offenders are identified, the matter (along with dates where a pass/ticket was not presented) should be passed to the Education and Children's Services Department for follow up action. This follow up action may take the form of a charge for journeys undertaken without showing a pass or ticket but hopefully this action will rarely have to be used.

One of the basic characteristics of the SEEMIS school transport module is that it is application based. All pupils have to apply for a place on the home to school transport service before they can be allocated a seat on the bus. This fits in with the current application system for non-entitled pupils and aligns the process for all pupils. Where a pupil has additional support needs and a parent believes that their child requires specialist assistance with transport, there is a box to tick on the application form. This will divert the form to the relevant professional in the Department to assess the level of need and decide whether additional (or a different method) transport should be provided and whether this should be free of charge. Parents of non-entitled pupils may still be required to pay the normal price of a bus pass if they do not qualify for distance based free school transport. The other difference to the administrative process is the inclusion of a code of conduct to be signed by all parents on behalf of the pupil and themselves. The code of conduct requires pupils to behave as if they were in school while on the bus and to show a valid bus pass or ticket every time they use the Home to School Transport Service. The code of conduct also requires parents to ensure their child has a valid bus pass or ticket with them every day they use the Home to School Transport Service and to ensure their child behaves on the bus as if they were in school. Breaches of this code of conduct relating to behaviour and failing to provide a pass or ticket, are to be treated as a school disciplinary matter.

The pupils who have applied for a place on the Home to School Transport Service and are entitled to free transport will be issued with their bus pass in June each year. Pupils who apply for a place on the Home to School Transport Service and are not entitled to free transport will receive their bus passes or tickets in July/August each year after they have paid the relevant fee for their purchase. Non-entitled places on the buses can only be allocated once the entitled pupils who have applied have been allocated their places. Pupils who do not apply for a place on the Home to School Transport service will not be allocated a place on the bus even if they live more than 2 miles from their nearest primary school or 3 miles from their nearest secondary school.

In future year's pupils will normally be required to apply for a place on Home to School Transport only when they enrol in school and when they transition to secondary school. Application forms in addition to this will need to be filled in where the pupil changes school. To get the system up and running for the start of term in August 2016/17 all pupils requiring a place on the Home to School Transport must apply for a place, regardless of whether they were getting a bus pass in previous years. A number of warnings will be issued to parents who do not apply and notifications will be on local media as well over the summer, but ultimately, if a parent does not apply for a place for their child/ren they will not be able to use the Home to School Transport Service in August 2016.

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Bernard Chisholm
Director of Education and Children's Services