**Home to School Transport Update**

The current Covid-19 situation has had a significant impact on the way we deliver our transport to schools particularly with regard to social distancing measures alongside ensuring that the health and safety of both the children we transport, their families and the staff is met.

We are continuing to work in partnership with our schools to ensure safe transport is put in place for September and that any measures are co-ordinated with those being implemented by the school. This will help minimise the risk of transmission and will provide some level of consistency for children which is very important at this time.

Specific home to school transport guidance from Government has been delayed and should have been published by 24th July. This has now been published (Tuesday 11th August) and the guidance broadly follows that which was issued to all schools for reopening in early July. In accordance with this guidance we have adopted the following principles when planning transport for September:

1. Year group bubbles and minimum distancing between bubbles of 1m to apply to all mass transport. This includes bus, coach and vehicles with capacity in excess of 16 passenger seats. This will mean that we will be able to utilise between 70-80% of the vehicle’s capacity.
2. For all other vehicles which include taxis and minibuses up to 16 passenger seats, transport will be planned without bubbles and without social distancing. The students assigned to these routes will remain constant and **we will not mix students** from other schools on the same route.
3. Where parents or guardians wish to continue to transport their children themselves then the alternative option of a mileage allowance will be available. This will be at the standard HMRC rate of 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles.
4. Face coverings will be encouraged for all students (scarf/face mask or similar) however this will not be compulsory and does not apply to those who are exempt.
5. Allocated seating/area for each social bubble will be displayed on the vehicle.
6. Active Travel is important for health, wellbeing and increasing independence, and students are encouraged to walk and cycle where this is feasible.

The Local Authority will be writing to parents notifying of the transport arrangements during week commencing 24th August. This will include all parents of SEN students who are allocated transport and all new intake students attending mainstream schools.

We will shortly be updating our Code of Conduct for students which will include advice regarding social distancing when waiting at the designated pick up points, along with expected behaviours whilst on transport. In addition to this we will be instructing our operators to ensure they have robust cleaning regimes in place such that frequently touched surfaces are regularly cleansed, and that vehicles are thoroughly cleaned at the end of the day.

Due to the current situation, we are unfortunately not able to consider any late Post 16 and non-entitled applications that were received after the deadline which was the 3rd Friday in May. We will seek to consider these applications as soon as possible and this may mean that in some cases applications may not be processed until the October half term. We will of course process these late applications in order of the date they were submitted however in the meantime we are advising parents to put in place alternative arrangements until such time as we can confirm transport is available.

The demand on our service is significant and we therefore ask parents to be mindful of this and appreciate that we may not always be able to respond in our normal timescales and that there may be occasions when our telephone lines will be overwhelmed. If you need to contact us about any queries regarding transport, these should be directed to either of the following:

SEN Transport:

sentransport@northamptonshire.gov.uk.

Mainstream Transport:

schooltransport@northamptonshire.gov.uk

I hope this information is helpful and we would like to reassure parents that we are working hard to put in suitable transport arrangements to support the return of all students to school in September.