

# **Liberty Woodland School Minibus Policy**

## **1. Purpose**

The Liberty Woodland School minibus service is provided to support safe and efficient travel to and from school. This policy sets clear expectations for families and pupils to ensure the service runs safely, calmly and on time.

## **2. Service Operating Times**

- The minibus operates every school day during term time only.
- The service does not operate during school holidays, INSET days, or on bank holidays, unless explicitly stated by the school.

## **3. Parent/Carer Responsibilities at Pick-Up and Drop-Off**

### **3.1 Saying Goodbye at the Door**

To ensure safety and efficiency:

- Parents/carers must say goodbye to their child at the minibus door.
- Parents/carers must not enter the minibus.
- This supports safe supervision, smooth boarding, and timely departure.

### **3.2 Arriving on Time**

To allow time for safe boarding and seatbelts:

- Parents/carers should arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before the scheduled departure time, to allow for a calm boarding experience.
- The minibus will aim to then depart at the scheduled time, once children are seated, seatbelted, and doors are closed.
- If a family is running slightly late (e.g. a couple of minutes), and they wish for the bus to wait beyond the scheduled departure time, it is their responsibility to send a message to the designated bus WhatsApp group to inform the staff. To clarify, it is not the responsibility of the staff on the bus to send messages to check in the event of not being at the bus stop.
- Where a message has not been received, the bus will depart as scheduled.

### **3.3 Handover Expectations**

- A parent/carer must remain at the bus stop until the minibus arrives.
- Pupils should not be left unattended at any bus stop unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with the school in advance.
- At drop-off, a parent/carer must be present to collect the child unless otherwise agreed in writing.
- If a parent/carer is late for collection, the school will follow the procedures set out in the Late Collection Policy.

## **4. Collection by an Alternative Adult (Password System)**

For safeguarding reasons, children will only be released at the bus stop to a known parent/carer or a named adult authorised by parents.

If someone other than the regular parent/carer is collecting a child:

- Parents/carers should notify the school in advance, where possible, with the name of the person collecting.

- The collecting adult must provide the agreed password that the parent/carer has previously given to the school.
- If the password cannot be provided, the child will not be released from the minibus, and the school will contact the parent/carer immediately to confirm arrangements.

Liberty Woodland School reserves the right to delay handover if there is any uncertainty about the identity of the collecting adult or the safety of the child.

## **5. Seatbelts, Coats and Safe Seating**

### **5.1 Seatbelts are Mandatory**

- All pupils must wear a seatbelt at all times while the minibus is moving.
- The minibus will not set off until all pupils are properly seated and seatbelted.

### **5.2 No Coats on the Minibus**

To ensure seatbelts fit correctly and work effectively:

- Pupils must not wear coats while seated and belted in.
- This improves seatbelt fit and safety in the event of sudden braking or collision.

## 6. Behaviour and Conduct Expectations

Bus driver:

- Will focus on ensuring the journey is safe and smooth at all times
- Will pass any concerns or policy reminders needed to LWS leadership team to conduct
- To effectively communicate with parents at bus stops.

Bus assistant:

- Where room allows, will sit in the rear of the bus to support positive behaviour
- Will manage the bus Whatsapp group during the journeys, including the live update service
- Will follow the LWS behaviour policy when supporting children on the bus
- To effectively communicate with parents at bus stops.

Pupils will:

- Follow instructions from the bus assistant or driver immediately
- Speak respectfully and keep noise at a reasonable level
- Stay seated facing forward when the minibus is moving
- Keep hands and belongings to themselves
- Avoid distracting the driver

Parents will:

- Endeavour to be punctual at bus stops
- Ensure they message the bus staff on the Whatsapp group if they are requesting it to wait a short time due to unexpected delays
- Pass any concerns that have not been resolved directly back to school, via email or phone call

### 6.1 Food and Drink

- No eating is permitted on the minibus.
- Water only may be brought on the minibus.

- Water may be drunk only when the minibus is stationary.

## **7. Safety and Items on the Minibus**

- Pupils must keep bags and belongings tidy and out of aisles where possible.
- Pupils are responsible for their own belongings. The school cannot guarantee the return of lost items.

## **8. Driver Availability and Service Continuity**

### **8.1 Annual Leave During Term Time**

To maintain reliability of the service:

- Minibus drivers cannot take annual leave during term time.

### **8.2 Driver Illness or Emergency**

In the event of medical circumstances or a family emergency where a driver cannot drive during term time:

- Liberty Woodland School will endeavour to source a replacement driver.
- If a replacement cannot be found, the minibus will not operate that day.
- The school will always do its best to give as much notice as possible.

## **9. Cancellations, Delays and Communication**

- If the service is cancelled or delayed, families will be informed as quickly as possible via the school's usual communication channels.
- Families remain responsible for arranging alternative transport if the service cannot operate.

## **10. Notice Period for Stopping the Minibus Service**

To help the school plan staffing, routes and costs fairly, parents/carers must give half a term's notice if they wish to stop using the minibus service.

- Notice must be provided in writing (by email to the school office).
- The half-term notice period begins from the date the school receives written confirmation. If half a term's notice is not given, the school may need to charge for the remainder of the notice period, as the minibus place and route allocation will have been reserved.
- Should parents wish to add ad-hoc journeys (such as bringing additional students home on the bus for playdates), this must be requested in writing to the office, who will check availability and issue an ad hoc payment invoice if availability permits. Only children with parental consent for use of the minibus will be permitted to use this service.

## **11. Breaches of Policy**

Minibus use is a privilege and relies on safe, respectful behaviour.

If a pupil does not meet behaviour or safety expectations:

- The school may issue a warning and contact parents/carers
- The pupil may be temporarily or permanently removed from the minibus service in serious or repeated cases
- The school's behaviour policy also applies where appropriate

## **12. Safeguarding and Inclusion**

Liberty Woodland School is committed to ensuring all children are safe and supported while travelling. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where needed, in line with the school's safeguarding approach and relevant policies.