

Guidelines for Ensuring Safety of Students on Student Service Vehicles - For Drivers to Observe

- (1) Each passenger should be allocated a seat. A passenger shall not be permitted to travel in the vehicle unless seated in a properly constructed seat secured to the bodywork of the vehicle. Drivers should ensure that their vehicles do not carry passengers in excess of the number specified in the registration documents of that vehicles and every passenger shall be counted. If any person driving a vehicle on a road carries in the vehicle passengers in excess of the number specified in the registration document of that vehicle, the driver commits an offence and is liable on first conviction to a fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for 3 months and on second or subsequent conviction to a fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment for 6 months.
- (2) To meet the demand for student transport services as far as possible and to better utilise existing fleet resources, although Regulation 53(1) of the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G) allows that a child under the age of 3 years shall not be counted, and 3 children aged 3 years or above but each not exceeding 1.3 metres in height shall be counted as 2 persons for the purpose of counting the number of persons that may be carried in a vehicle, it is also stipulated in Regulation 53(2) of the same Regulations that drivers shall ensure that each passenger must be seated in a properly constructed seat secured to the bodywork of the vehicle. Drivers are reminded *to accord priority to student safety on board and obtain prior consent from schools and parents/guardians before exercising flexibility given by law in counting the number of persons that may be carried in a vehicle*. For more information, please contact 1823 or 2804 2600.
- (3) As a licensing condition in the Passenger Service Licence, every school bus or school private light bus carrying primary and kindergarten students should provide an escort while in operation.
- (4) The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) stipulates that in every student service vehicle registered on or after 1 May 2009, the vehicle will be required to be fitted with “safer seats”. For details, please refer to “Requirements for Passenger Seats in Student Service Vehicles” at Annex.

(5) All passenger seats on student service vehicles **first registered** on or after 25 January 2026 must be fitted with seat belts. Seat belts on passenger seats must observe the requirements in Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F). Operators of student service vehicles may select and install suitable and approved seat belts (i.e. body restraining seat belt or lap belt) according to their operation need. In addition, all student service vehicles must equip seat belts and safer seats on all passenger seats before 31 December 2028. From that day onwards, vehicles failing to meet such requirement will no longer be permitted to provide student services.

(6) Drivers should –

- (i) check that their vehicles, especially braking, steering systems and all tyres are in serviceable condition before moving off;
- (ii) drive carefully and safely;
- (iii) ensure that students board and alight from their vehicles safely and that the vehicles have come to a standstill before students are allowed to board or alight;
- (iv) make full use of the parking facilities or lay-by available in the schools to set down students;
- (v) co-operate with the escorts;
- (vi) not reverse unless it can be done in safety. Before reversing, drivers should make sure that there are no pedestrians - particularly children and elderly people - behind the vehicle. Drivers should pay particularly attention to the 'blind spots' behind the vehicle - that is, the parts of the road which cannot be seen from the driving seat. If there is any doubt, drivers should get out to make sure;
- (vii) get someone to guide when reversing if drivers cannot see clearly behind . Drivers must not reverse for an unreasonable distance or time. Drivers should never reverse from a side road on to a main road;
- (viii) be polite to students and parents;
- (ix) keep the vehicles clean at all time;
- (x) avoid bad language;
- (xi) allow no students on the vehicles during their absence;
- (xii) avoid parking on steep roads and should look for a level parking space. If drivers need to park on steep roads due to practical circumstance, drivers should stop vehicle as close as he or she can to the nearside kerb and leave steering wheel turned to the right (parking uphill) or the left (parking downhill). Drivers should

engage the vehicle in first/reverse gear (manual) or park mode (automatic). Before leaving vehicle drivers should switch off the engine, make sure the handbrake is on firmly and lock vehicle.

- (xiii) be punctual – if the vehicle arrives early at a pickup point, it should not leave earlier than the scheduled time unless all students concerned have been on board; if it is late for a pickup point, the driver should still be patient to pickup all students properly;
- (xiv) ensure that the alighted students are safe before moving off the vehicles;
- (xv) Starting from 25 January 2026, passengers must wear seat belts if fitted. Drivers should ensure that yourself as well as all passengers (including students and escorts) have worn seat belts, if fitted, before moving off the vehicles. Escorts should assist students to wear seat belts. The seat belt must be worn properly. It should securely fasten the wearer to the seat. Two or more persons should not share a seat belt at the same time. Drivers may consider refusing to move off the vehicle if a passenger refuses to wear a seat belt installed on the vehicle. If students are found not wearing seat belts during the journey, escorts could remind students first. If the students still refuse to or are unable to wear the seat belts, drivers could stop at appropriate places and escorts could then assist the students to wear seat belts;
- (xvi) ensure that all necessary warning devices for the emergency exits and any power-operated doors are in good working order;
- (xvii) ensure that the gangway and emergency exits are not obstructed;
- (xviii) do not use hand-held mobile phones or other hand-held telecommunications equipment while driving. If there is a need to use these equipment, either stop in a safe place or ask a passenger (e.g. escort) for assistance. If hands-free device is used, keep the conversation short;
- (xix) ensure that the “**CAUTION CHILDREN 小心學童**” sign board is displayed at the rear of the school bus while student service is in operation;
- (xx) ensure that the “**STUDENT SERVICE 學生服務**” sign board is displayed on the windscreen of the school bus while student service is in operation. The signboard shall not be displayed when the service is not in operation;
- (xxi) ensure that valid Restricted Zone permit(s), Prohibited Zone permit (s) and Bus-lane permit(s) issued by TD, if any, are displayed on the windscreen of the school bus;

- (xxii) Observe speed limit for road and vehicle class, and adjust speed to suit traffic flow, road and weather conditions, and driving ability;
- (xxiii) Keep a safe distance with the vehicle in front. The higher the speed of vehicle, the longer safe distance is required. On rainy days or wet roads, the safe distance shall be longer than normal;
- (xxiv) Always pay attention to the surrounding road conditions, and beware of vehicles (e.g. motorcycles and cycles) and pedestrians that may enter the 'blind spots' (including the area in front of vehicles) and cause dangers;
- (xxv) Give way to pedestrians crossing or waiting to cross the road and wait for them patiently. Drive carefully when pedestrians are around. Look out for pedestrians entering the road suddenly, from before or behind parked or stopped vehicles; and
- (xxvi) Use headlamps/fog lamps and rear lamps during the day whenever visibility is poor because of heavy rain, smoke, mist or fog or any similar condition. Dip the headlamps and adjust suitably the headlamps to dip downwards where there are street lights or in the face of approaching traffic, so as not to dazzle other road users.

(7) Drivers should ensure that no illicit fuel is used in their vehicles. Use of illicit fuel would not only constitute an offence of revenue fraud but also easily create fire hazard.

(8) Drivers should know where the fire extinguisher(s) are located, and how to operate them. Drivers should also regularly check that the content gauge of the fire extinguisher(s) is above the minimum level and to ensure that the extinguisher is not yet expired.

(9) In case of emergency or accident, drivers should think first of his or her own, the escort's and students' safety, stop and switch on hazard warning lights immediately. If the accident only involves slight damage to the vehicles or property without causing personal injury, move the vehicle to a nearby safe place (e.g. lay-by or hard shoulder), if possible.

(10) In case of emergency or accident, drivers together with escorts should help students to keep calm to avoid unnecessary panic. Drivers, escorts and students should evacuate from the vehicle only if drivers are sure that all people can safely get clear of the carriageway and get to a safe place (e.g. behind crash barriers) waiting for arrival of the emergency services. Do not stay at carriageway, in front or behind the vehicle, and never forget

the danger of passing traffic. If in doubt, drivers, escorts and students should wear seat belts, if fitted, and remain in vehicle until the emergency services arrive. If any person gets injury on board, the driver should report the accident to the police as soon as reasonably practicable, and inform schools and parents/guardians of the accident in the earliest convenience.

Transport Department
January 2026

(English Translation)

Requirements for Passenger Seats in Student Service Vehicles
(Generally known as “Safer Seats”)

According to the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A), every student service vehicle registered ***on or after 1 May 2009*** shall be required to be fitted with “safer seats”. In addition, all passenger seats on student service vehicles first registered ***on or after 25 January 2026*** must be fitted with seat belts. Seat belts on passenger seats must observe the requirements in Schedule 2 of Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F). Operators of student service vehicles may select and install suitable and approved seat belts (i.e. body restraining seat belt or lap belt) according to their operation need. In addition, all student service vehicles must equip seat belts and safer seats on all passenger seats before 31 December 2028. From that day onwards, vehicles failing to meet such requirement will no longer be permitted to provide student services.

Safer seats are strong and closely spaced, with high and energy-absorbing backs, which can reduce the risk of students being thrown out of their seats and reduce the degree of injury in case of collisions. Overseas research proves that the use of safer seats is effective in protecting students on student service vehicles. Compared with seat belts, safer seats offer protection to passengers without requiring any action, thus they are suitable to be used on student service vehicles.

Definition of Student Service Vehicles

- (1) a public bus authorized for providing student service (**A03**) as specified in s.4(3)(d) of the Public Bus Ordinance (Cap. 230);
- (2) a private bus authorized for providing student service (**B01**) as specified in s.27(5)(a) of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374); and
- (3) a school private light bus.

Standards of the Passenger Seats

- seats, barriers and their anchorage shall conform to the requirements of any specification or standard specified in the legislation;
- seat backs, barriers and controlled surface shall be made of impact energy absorption material that conforms to the requirements of any specification or standards specified in the legislation;
- no folding table or folding table or folding accessories shall be installed on any controlled surface;
- seats and restraining barriers shall be made of fire resistant material that conforms to the requirements of any specification or standard specified in the legislation;
- every seat shall be forward-facing; and
- space of the passenger seat and the height of seat back should meet the requirement specified in the legislation.

Notes to Applicants for Provision of Student Service

- Any student service vehicle which is registered on or after 1 May 2009 shall be fitted with passenger seats of the standards as stipulated in the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A).
- Any student service vehicle first registered on or after 25 January 2026 must be fitted with seat belts for all passenger seats as required under the legislation.
- Approval will NOT be given for issuance of Passenger Service Licence or student service endorsement to those vehicles which are not in compliance with the legislative requirements on passenger seats and/or seat belts.

Enquiries

For requirements of passenger seats details, please contact Vehicle Safety and Standards Sub-Division of TD by phone:

Bus Technology Division

For examination of buses - Tel. no.: **3961 0307**

Vehicle Safety and Standard Division (Vehicle Examination Centre)

For examination of school private light buses - Tel. no.: **2759 7573**

For application details, please contact Public Vehicles Unit of TD by phone or fax:

Public Vehicles Unit

Non-franchised Public Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2574**

Private Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2450**

School Private Light Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2263**

Fax. no. - **2865 1227**