

Guidelines for Ensuring Safety of Students on Student Service Vehicles – For Schools to Observe

(1) Each student should be allocated a seat. A student shall not be permitted to travel in the vehicle unless seated in a properly constructed seat secured to the bodywork of the vehicle. Operators 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.

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. Operators 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.

(2) Schools should teach students to behave well when travelling on the vehicles, e.g.

- (i) they must remain seated unless boarding or alighting;
- (ii) they must not talk to the driver or shout;
- (iii) they must refrain playing;
- (iv) they should not eat or drink for the sake of keeping the vehicle clean;
- (v) they must not put their heads, hands or any part of bodies out of the windows of the vehicles;
- (vi) they must not board or alight from the vehicle until the vehicle has come to a standstill;
- (vii) they must not play with the emergency exits; and
- (viii) they must not play with the seat belts or unfasten the seat belts during the journey.

- (3) Schools should teach students to avoid bringing bulky belongings with them in the vehicles.
- (4) Schools should teach students the proper way to board and alight from the vehicles, including boarding or alighting only after the vehicles have come to a standstill.
- (5) Starting from 25 January 2026, passengers must wear seat belts if fitted. Schools should teach students to properly wear seat belts, if fitted, before the vehicles are moving off and during the journey. The seat belt 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.
- (6) Parking facilities or lay-by available in schools should be fully utilized to set down students. For pick-up / set-down points outside schools, schools should remind operators to identify safe and convenient locations, e.g. general loading/unloading area or podium deck with less traffic within the residential estates or along a road section with less traffic; and which will not cause any blockage of the other vehicular traffic.
- (7) Arrangement should be made for an adult or a teacher, other than the driver, who knows students well, to escort them during the journey. As a licensing condition in the Passenger Service Licence (PSL), every non-franchised bus and school private light bus carrying primary and kindergarten students should provide an escort while in operation.

In recent years, various kinds of extra-curricular activities have been organized by schools keeping the students at school after normal school time. As a result, students would be on their way home at irregular time slots and student service vehicles need to pick up students various times which causes difficulties in deploying escort for every trip. In this light, schools and parent-teacher associations should work in collaboration with operators to agree on several fixed time slots for picking up students. This would not only facilitate operators to comply with the PSL conditions on provision of escort, but also ensure student safety while riding on student service vehicles.

- (8) A name-list of students travelling on each vehicle should be prepared and maintained for checking purposes, to ensure that no student is missing or riding on the wrong vehicle.
- (9) To avoid confusion, students travelling on different vehicles should wear labels of distinct identification.
- (10) Parents/guardians should be informed of the details of the routes, including the pick-up points and times of arrival at these points.
- (11) Care should be taken to ensure that students reach schools safely and are collected by their parents/guardians on their homeward journey.
- (12) School supervisors/heads should note that it is stipulated in existing legislation and licensing conditions applicable to non-franchised buses and private light buses providing student service that, student service vehicles shall be marked plainly on the bodywork of the vehicle with the number of passengers for whom seats are provided. Details are summarized as follows:

Every **bus** shall be marked plainly and correctly in English and Chinese writing of uniform size, not less than 10 millimetres in height **inside the compartment and outside the bus at the rear or on the near side**, with the number of passengers for whom seats are provided [Regulation 48 of the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A)]; and

Every **school private light bus** shall be plainly and correctly marked in English and Chinese writing of uniform size not less than 100 millimeters in height, **on the outside of the vehicle on both the near and off sides**, with the number of passengers for whom seats are provided [Regulation 49 of the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A)].

- (13) To ensure that students are provided with proper and safe school bus services, school supervisors/heads should confirm that the vehicles have obtained the required service endorsement as below:
 - (i) non-franchised public bus operators have valid PSLs and their public buses have valid PSL Certificates (PSLCs) with endorsements for student; and/or

- (ii) school private light bus operators have valid PSL and their school private light buses have valid PSLCs with endorsements for school private light bus service; and/or
- (iii) schools which are registered as private bus operators with valid PSLs and their private buses with valid PSLCs with endorsements for student service.

In case the selected school bus service operators have no such service endorsement, please provide them with all the necessary and required supporting documents to facilitate their applications to TD.

- (14) School supervisors/heads should remind all parties concerned to observe the respective guidelines. Schools may also include additional guidelines to suit their individual needs.
- (15) 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**.
- (16) 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 services 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. When approving the operators of student service vehicles for 2028/29 academic year and beyond, schools should pay attention to whether the operators could comply with the aforementioned legislative requirements.

(17) TD encourages the schools to consider preferably selecting the operators which can provide student service vehicles fitted with “safer seats” and seat belts for enhancing the protection to students.

Transport Department

January 2026

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

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 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.

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 PSL or student service endorsement to those vehicles which are not in compliance with the legislative requirement 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**