

## Procuring Safe School Transport

Private and Academy schools are under increased pressure to demonstrate a clear concise procurement policy for their out of school travel needs. This extends to the hire of coaches and minibuses from third party suppliers.



With the inception of the Corporate Manslaughter Act 2007 schools with a clearly defined management structure can be considered liable if there are clear breaches in duty of care under health and safety [Please see attached NUT briefing]

Some schools place all their travel requirements with one single provider to ensure constant compliance, alternatively schools also tender their requirements out either on an 'as and when' basis or termly to 3 or more operators.

For either system a clear procurement policy should be in place to ensure that suppliers to the school demonstrate compliance. This ensures annual records are kept up to date and in the event of a Health & Safety related issue, the school can demonstrate why a supplier was used and that they passed the procurement standards.

***"I am not a specialist in transport, where do I start?"***

Please find below suggested items / questions to be considered by schools to include or add to a '**School Transport Procurement Policy**' along with a brief description of their importance.

- **Operators OCRS rating:** Coach and minibus operators are governed and regulated by VOSA a government authority. Each operator is constantly scored by VOSA as to their risk of compliance in road safety. It is made up of a colour and number system. Any operator can apply for a current copy to demonstrate their level of safety. This rating is constantly live and changes over time, relating to road side checks and MOT passes.

*This is a school's easiest means of evaluating a transport supplier at a glance.*

- **MOT pass rate:** the current national average for Coach MOT passes is 81.5%. An Operator can provide this information
- from VOSA's on-line system. A PRS is the abbreviation for Pass after Rectification at Station e.g. headlight aim.

[Grey's of Ely's test information: 27 tests, 24 straight passes, 2 PRS's, 1 Fail = pass rate of 88.89%]

- Current **Copy of Operators Vehicle, Public Liability and Employers Liability Insurance**
- **Operator Incursion report:** VOSA produce this report, which is accessible to all operators and shows the number of times their vehicle has been stopped in a year and what faults if any where found, this will provide a keen insight into the standards an operator works to.
- **Copy Coach Operators License:** all coach and minibus operators have to apply and be granted a license by VOSA to operate a coach company. The License form will show how many vehicles they are authorized to have on the road and also whether they are just for UK 'National license' (blue disc displayed in vehicles window) or European 'International' (green disc displayed in vehicles window) use. Failures in financial standing, good repute or vehicle maintenance can result in this number being curtailed or disqualified at any time. Licenses are generally for 5 year periods.
- Question to ask? **Have you been called to a Public Enquiry in the past 5 years, if so for what reason and what was the resultant out come?** A Public Enquiry is held by the Traffic Commissioner to determine and non compliance or wrong doing by an operator.
- Written confirmation from the Operator that all staff to be used in engagement with the school are **CRB / DBS cleared**
- Coach Operators **Health and Safety Risk Assessment for School transport or travel.**



- A School or College should have a clear 'Seat-Belt Policy', this sets out to students, staff and parents, the expectations of wearing a seat-belt when on school trips, who will check them and at what points during the journey i.e. not just when setting off.

- Guidance on staff seating position within a coach, safe practice should be to place a member of staff at each emergency exit, to assist in an evacuation and to ensure that students do not try to tamper with the doors whilst the vehicle is in motion.



Additional useful information:

- Independent audit by external body e.g. CoachMarque, Guild of British Coach Operators, ROSCO, FTA.
- Independent accreditation e.g. CPT School Transport, CoachMarque, Guild of British Coach Operators [these bodies are set up to promote safe school travel, quality and safety].

If you have any questions, would like any help in compiling information or assistance in writing a procurement policy to suit your needs please contact:

Richard Grey  
Tel: 01353 662300  
Email: Richard@greysofely.co.uk