



**St Columba's College
Coach Policy Protocols and Guidance**

Responsible person:
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Section 1 Introduction

St Columba's College draws students from such areas as North London, Hertfordshire, and Bedfordshire. Clearly, in order to continue this relationship, it is necessary for a Coach Service to operate which collects and deliver students from specific coach stops, Monday to Friday, morning and afternoon. It is in the interests both of St Columba's parents and the College that this service functions in as safe, effective, and regular manner as is reasonably possible. What follows is an attempt to clarify, on behalf of St Columba's, the extent and the limits of responsibility based upon a duty of care and good practice.

Section 2 Parents' Risk

1. The coaches are provided by independent transport operators and parents understand that the coach service for the transportation of their children is at their own risk. St Columba's does not provide adult supervision of these journeys and it is the coach driver and the coach company who have legal responsibility for the safety of passengers whilst travelling on the coaches.
2. Parents are asked to appreciate that from time to time, incidents breaching good order on the coaches may occur. Without prejudice to paragraph 1 above, St Columba's will investigate such incidents and may take action when considered appropriate.

Everyone concerned will benefit from the assistance and support of parents in formulating responses, but also from their patience and understanding of the difficulties involved. Although it may prove impossible to form a totally clear picture of what has occurred if we have to rely solely on the hearsay evidence of students, disciplinary decisions may have to be made on the basis of the weight of evidence.

Moreover, in the interests of the safety of each child, it may in certain situations be necessary to suspend coach journeys pending the completion of an investigation and indeed impose periodic or permanent bans from the coach dependent upon circumstances. In such cases, the College will not be able to provide a refund against loss of service leaving responsibility for transporting your child or children to school with the parent/guardian. Parents will also be liable to pay for any cost of repairs/replacement of property damage as a result of their child's actions.

3. Parents may, if they wish, communicate operational concerns to the College. They should not contact the coach company directly on any matters, unless relating to the non-arrival of a coach. No informal arrangements regarding coach practice should be made with the coach companies. All scheduled pickups and set downs are at recognised, risk assessed stops only and coach drivers are expressly prohibited from deviating from this schedule.
4. Matters of student discipline should be referred either to the Deputy Head at the College (who will refer matters to the appropriate Head of House), or the Deputy Head in the Prep.

Section 3 Students' Responsibility

Students are reminded that they must behave on the coaches in a way that does not undermine their own safety nor that of fellow travellers, nor distract the driver, nor breach College rules, nor be perceived as a threat to good order during the journey.

To this end:

- a. Only students with booked spaces are permitted to use the coach service. Students found using the service who have not pre-booked will be charged the daily rate of ad hoc use.
- b. Students are not allowed to wander around the coach at any time. Nor can they change seats when others become vacated as a consequence of someone alighting the coach. Seat belts must be worn **at all times**.



- c. No student may leave the coach before his or her approved final destination in the evening and the College in the morning. The only exception to this may be when a temporary change has been agreed with the coach company and College as a result of some unforeseen circumstances.
- d. Students must obey the instructions of the driver in all matters relating to the safety and good order of the coach. They are expected to deal with coach drivers and representatives of the Coach Company with respect and with good manners.

Students may not transfer from one coach to another to affect a journey home. They must not travel on a coach for which they have no allocated place. Should a student need to travel on a different route home, then permission must be sought 24 hours ahead of the journey by emailing bursarpa@stcolumbascollege.org

- e. Non-coach users may purchase an ad hoc coach pass via School Gateway if space permits.
- f. Students must act in accordance with all College rules, not least those relating to eating, smoking, bullying, littering and the use of unacceptable language, orderly behaviour, and the wearing of uniform.
- g. Students must make their way to the College immediately on arrival at Westminster Lodge by the pathway. They are not to loiter, use the adjacent facilities or wait for others but move straight away to the school playground.

- h. At the end of the school day students in the Prep will be walked to the Coach park by a member of staff. In the Senior School, a staff member manages transfer from the playground and students are expected to make their way to the coaches in good time and not delay departures.
- i. At all times students should be conscious of their own reputation and that of St Columba's College.
- j. All students who travel on the coaches must share the aims of this policy document and must be willing to assist the investigation of unacceptable behaviour, in any way they can.
- k. All Prep pupils who travel by coach are required to carry a mobile phone with the College's number accessible.
- l. Should a student be late arriving to the afternoon departure point and miss the coach, it is the responsibility of the parent to collect their child or if this is not feasible, then the taxi charge will be invoiced to the parent.

Section 4 Coach Monitors' Role

In order to reinforce the supervisory role, the College will aim to appoint Coach Monitors on each coach. Wherever possible these will be members of the 6th Form. Sometimes it will be necessary to appoint the most senior student who may be younger, for certain parts of the journey or at certain times of the year, for instance when public examinations take place and study leave operates in 5th Form, Lower 6th and Upper 6th.

The principal responsibility of these Coach Monitors will be to inform the Deputy Head and, through her, the Deputy Head of the Prep of any aspect of behaviour on the coach, which is a breach of safety regulations, the rules of the College, or is in any other way a cause for concern.

The Coach Monitor **does not take** responsibility for the good order of the coach, each individual has responsibility for his or her own behaviour and will be held accountable should this fall short of the expected standards. The Coach Monitors are not to compromise their own health and safety in attempting to provide advice or direction.

On journeys, the monitors will be observant, remind students of College expectations where necessary and refer any serious disruption to the driver (or other responsible adult).

Where an incident does take place, it is reported to the Deputy Head. The Deputy Head of the College will liaise with the Deputy Head of the Prep. Coach Monitors may be called upon to give fuller evidence in any subsequent investigation, should such seem necessary.

Section 5 Lateness of Coaches or Failure to Arrive

It may be the case, because of circumstances beyond the control of the coach operators, that coaches may be delayed. It is very rare indeed that they do not arrive at all.

When a coach is **15 minutes late in arriving - this is the time frame that must be permitted** - the **most senior student at the coach stop** irrespective of year group is to telephone the College (01727 855185) to be given instructions to follow.

These instructions will depend upon the information to hand at the time.

- a. It may be that parents could provide shared lifts, despite the obvious inconvenience;
- b. students may be instructed to return home;
- c. or they may be instructed by the College Staff to take a taxi. Taxis must be of maximum occupancy where possible.

However, no student is to travel alone in a taxi unless he/she is a singleton at the coach stop concerned.

Payment for the taxi will be organised on arrival at the College. The strategy adopted would be assessed to suit the circumstances.

If a coach fails to arrive for the afternoon pick-up, taxis will be ordered to return students' home.

Section 6 The Involvement of the College

When it is deemed necessary the Deputy Head will pass the responsibility for the investigation of an incident to the Head of House/s or the Deputy Head in the Preparatory School in the case of Prep pupils.

Those named above will liaise with parents, the drivers, Coach Monitors, and all those travelling on the coaches. If it can be established that there has been a breach of discipline and culprits identified, appropriate action will be taken. Such misbehaviour may be judged a single occurrence or part of a pattern of misconduct (and responded to accordingly).

Parents, and students are assured that where problems do exist and *are reported* they will be investigated fully.

The nature of the investigation and the resolution of an incident may be complex and therefore time consuming. It is hoped that this is appreciated and understood by all concerned. Contact with parents will be made as promptly as is feasible and the Head of House /s or the Deputy Head in the Preparatory School feels confident that the whole picture has emerged and can be correctly acted upon

Possible sanctions for coach problems include:

- a. invoking the College's system of sanctions as recorded in the Code of Conduct;
- b. temporary withdrawal of the Coach place followed by written undertakings from students concerning **future** conduct;
- c. an invitation to parents to come to College to discuss the problem;
- d. in serious cases, where all else has failed, the permanent withdrawal of the Coach place, even if this results in the student being unable to attend the College.
- e. It should also be noted that the Headmaster and the Head of the Preparatory School reserve the right to invoke the sanctions of Suspension and Exclusion in response to serious misbehaviour of any kind.

Section 7 Parental Responsibility and Reporting of Incidents

Parents must follow the formal procedures for complaint by contacting the appropriate College authorities. They must not attempt to redress concerns themselves by confronting any student or any parent whom they believe to be at fault. Likewise, they are not to confront the Coach Monitors. Physical or verbal abuse of students or coach drivers will not be tolerated.

Early contact with the College over issues or developing problems allows them to be dealt with quickly and researched thoroughly.

Section 8 The Coach Company and their Drivers

The Coach Companies operate these services on the basis of annual renewable contracts. In return they undertake to operate, in a reliable and safe manner, services on routes as defined by the College. All coach drivers hold a current DBS check.