



# The Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses

Effective March 2026

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# Purpose

**Every day across Queensland, students travel to and from school by bus. All students have the right to a safe and enjoyable bus journey. In the morning, a pleasant trip to school can set the tone for a day of productive learning.**

The *Code of Conduct for School Students Travelling on Buses* (Code) provides guidelines for the safe travel of school students on buses. These guidelines:

- Encourage and support appropriate school student behaviour on buses by:
  - identifying the rights, roles and responsibilities of students, parents/guardians, bus drivers, bus operators, conveyance committees (where applicable), schools and the Department of Transport and Main Roads in contributing to safe and responsible bus travel
  - outlining the process to identify categories of misconduct
  - providing the framework to determine appropriate consequences for incidents of school student misconduct on buses.
- Highlight the importance of collaboration between all stakeholders in managing school student behaviour on buses.
- Assist bus operators to manage school student behaviour in an appropriate and consistent manner.

# Introduction

**The Code applies to all primary and secondary school students in Queensland who travel by bus to and/or from school or for other school-related activities, such as school sports, excursions and camps.**

Most school students behave appropriately when travelling on buses, but from time to time a small number behave inappropriately. This can affect the safety and comfort of other passengers.

The Code clarifies expected standards of school student behaviour and provides a framework for the management of misconduct. The aim of the Code is to ensure safe and responsible school bus travel for all passengers, including bus drivers.

The Code's effectiveness depends on successful partnerships between the stakeholders – students, parents/guardians, bus drivers, bus operators, schools, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and conveyance committees (where applicable). Collaboration is important to reinforce messages about acceptable conduct on the bus and is vital when dealing with misconduct.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads developed the original Code framework in consultation with the Department of Education, the Queensland Police Service, bus industry groups, parent groups, principals' associations, unions and non-state school authorities. Since its introduction the Code has undergone several updates with input from various stakeholders.

## Fare evasion

All students are expected to present a valid bus travel pass or pay the required fare for their journey. Fare evasion includes students:

- Not showing their bus travel pass when requested.
- Not tapping on and off with a valid smart card if the bus is fitted with electronic ticketing.
- Not having sufficient funds on their smart card.
- Not paying a cash fare, including a top-up fare, to the bus driver when required.
- Using another student's bus travel pass.

It is important for the integrity of the Code and public transport services generally that appropriate consequences apply for student fare evasion.

Fare evasion would generally be classified as irresponsible (Category 1) behaviour under the Code. There are clear consequences for this type of behaviour. Repeated instances of fare evasion can result in refused travel for a period.

Parents/guardians should discuss responsible bus travel with their children, including the need to present a valid bus travel pass or pay a fare. They can also talk to their local bus operator about ticketing options as some may offer discounts for weekly, term or semester travel passes.

Government funded assistance may be available to eligible families under the School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS). For more information, visit [translink.com.au](https://translink.com.au).

## Refusal of travel

Bus travel can be refused for students who do not display expected standards of behaviour. The period of refused bus travel can range from one day to permanent refusal. This will be determined by the bus operator following an investigation of the incident. If a student is refused travel, the parent/guardian is responsible for arranging and funding alternative transport for their child to attend school.

Student safety is important to everyone involved in student bus travel. Refusal of travel will only occur after following the procedures outlined in the Code and providing advice to parents/guardians and the school.

## Legislative status of the Code

**The Code has been approved by the Chief Executive, Department of Transport and Main Roads as a Code of Conduct applying in relation to school students travelling on buses, in accordance with section 272 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 2018*.**

The Code and its associated procedures also apply to bus drivers and bus operators. In this Code, 'buses' mean any passenger vehicle as defined in Schedule 9 of the *Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Regulation 2018*. The Department of Transport and Main Roads will support actions taken in line with the procedures outlined in this document. The Code provides guidelines for the safe travel of school students on buses which includes student conduct while waiting to get on the bus, travelling on the bus, getting off the bus and leaving the bus stop area safely.

## Child Safe Organisations

The *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (CSO Act) aims to protect children from harm when they interact with organisations. The CSO Act requires organisations that provide services for children to implement the 10 Child Safe Standards, which aim to create environments that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children. Some organisations will also be required to introduce a Reportable Conduct Scheme, which requires organisations to report and investigate allegations of child abuse or misconduct by their staff and volunteers. For more information, visit the Queensland Family and Child Commission website at [gfcc.qld.gov.au](http://gfcc.qld.gov.au).

In promoting safe and respectful conduct of students during school travel, the Code supports the broad child protection measures under the CSO Act, and particularly the Child Safe Standards, which require organisations to consider how they protect children from harm.

# Roles, rights and responsibilities

**Safe bus travel is a right for all passengers and bus drivers. With that right there are responsibilities. Stakeholders must take ownership of their responsibilities and work collaboratively to encourage and reinforce appropriate student behaviour on buses.**

When stakeholders work together to support acceptable standards of bus conduct, it gives a clear message that unsafe and irresponsible behaviour is not acceptable. All stakeholders need to acknowledge the important role they play in the safe and responsible bus travel of school students and support the effective implementation of the Code.

## Students

All students have the right to enjoy a safe and comfortable bus journey and to be respected and treated fairly. Students are responsible for conducting themselves in a manner that ensures both their own and others' comfort and safety.

### Students' role

To be a safe and responsible passenger and respect the bus driver, other passengers and property.

### Students' rights

- To be safe.
- To be respected and treated fairly.

### Students' responsibilities

- To act safely and responsibly by:
  - presenting a valid bus travel pass or paying a fare when required – this includes showing their bus travel pass to the bus driver when requested or tapping on and off with a valid smart card
  - following bus driver instructions
  - following the bus rules and the Code
  - respecting themselves and others
  - respecting their own property and the property of others, including the bus

- communicating respectfully with others
- not interfering with operation of the bus including bus safety and emergency equipment
- accepting consequences for bus misconduct which can include refused travel

## Students' expected behaviours

- Hail the bus and wait in an orderly manner.
- Respect other people and property.
- Behave in a way that ensures a safe bus journey for all passengers by:
  - following the bus rules
  - staying in the right place
  - behaving in a calm, non-aggressive way
  - keeping hands and feet to themselves
  - speaking politely
  - storing all objects safely
- Get on and off the bus in an orderly manner.
- Follow the bus driver's instructions.

## Parents and guardians

All parents/guardians expect their children's school bus journey to be safe and pleasant. By taking responsibility for the behaviour of their school-aged children parents/guardians play an important role in ensuring safe and responsible bus travel. It is important that parents/guardians inform their children about expected behaviours while travelling on buses.

Parents/guardians should always communicate respectfully and cooperate with the bus driver, bus operator (including staff) and department staff. Verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated.

## Parents' and guardians' roles

To actively support bus safety with their school aged children and engage respectfully with bus driver and other stakeholders.

## Parents' and guardians' rights

- Safe and comfortable travel for their children.

- To be respected and treated fairly.
- To be consulted and to receive accurate information about the behaviour of their children.

## Parents' and guardians' responsibilities

- Ensure their children are capable of travelling independently on the bus.
- Provide their students with a fare/valid bus travel pass/smart card for bus travel.
- Ensure there are funds on their student's smart card.
- Support their children to understand the Code, the bus rules and expected behaviour.
- Communicate respectfully with the bus driver, bus operator (including staff), school and department staff.
- Teach their children about bus safety and raise their awareness of the consequences for misconduct, which can include refusal of travel.
- Demonstrate appropriate bus travel behaviours to their children.
- Cooperate with the school, bus operator and bus driver in managing bus misconduct.
- Ensure the safe travel of their children to and from the bus stop.
- Be available for discussions about the behaviour of their children.
- Cooperate with the implementation of agreed consequences under the Code including refused travel for a period and/or the use of behaviour agreements to support improvements in students' travel behaviour.
- Ensure that a student who has been refused travel does not attempt to use the bus service.

## Parents' and guardians' expected behaviours

- Cooperate with their children's school and the bus operator in discussing behaviour incidents and in implementing any agreed disciplinary action, such as making alternative travel arrangements during a period of refused travel.
- Communicate with the bus operator and the school about their children's bus transport and respond to phone and written communication.
- Raise concerns about their children's bus travel or the bus service promptly by contacting the bus operator so relevant issues can be managed using the Code.
- Not to approach the bus driver to discuss concerns while they are in control of the bus.
- Comply with a direction by the bus driver, or authorised person, not to enter a vehicle.

- Adhere to decisions made by the bus operator regarding any refusal of travel for their child. Noting there is a process for raising a complaint or requesting a review of a decision to refuse travel.

## Schools

Schools play an important role in advising their students about the Code and the consequences for misconduct on the bus. Schools liaise closely with bus operators and are a key stakeholder in managing school student behaviour on buses. Schools often provide valuable assistance in suggesting approaches to managing incidents of misconduct.

Principals play a pivotal role in maintaining positive partnerships with bus operators. This ensures appropriate processes are in place and provides a link between the school's approach to behaviour management and the Code. Collaboration between schools and bus operators supports application of the Code.

### Schools' role

To promote bus safety and collaborate in the management of student bus safety.

### Schools' rights

- Safe and comfortable travel for their students.
- To be consulted and to receive accurate information about their students' school bus behaviour.

### Schools' responsibilities

- Communicate respectfully and collaborate with stakeholders in implementing the Code.
- Support bus operators in the application of the Code's procedures and processes.
- Consider requests from bus operators for the disclosure of student personal information to support administration of the Code in line with established procedures.
- Reinforce safe bus travel and the Code's messages in school-based processes.
- Facilitate effective communication between bus operators and students and parents/guardians.

## Schools' expected behaviours

- Provide information on the Code to parents/guardians.
- Support the bus operator in implementing consequences for school students who breach the Code, which can include refusal of travel.
- Collaborate with bus operators and parents/guardians in relation to their students' travel behaviour.
- Ensure a suitable level of supervision at school bus collection points, where appropriate.
- Reinforce with students the need for safe and responsible behaviour on buses and the expectation to present a valid bus travel pass or pay a fare when required.

## Bus drivers

Bus drivers have the important responsibility of driving the bus in a safe manner, as well as ensuring the safety and security of passengers. As bus drivers are required to issue directions to ensure the safety of all passengers, it is important that all passengers respect the authority of bus drivers while they are in control of a vehicle.

It is expected that bus drivers treat school students, parents/guardians and school staff with courtesy, and always use non-discriminatory and appropriate language and actions. Mutual respect between stakeholders will ensure a safe and pleasant journey for all.

Bus drivers are expected to:

- hold appropriate Driver Authorisation.
- remain with the bus while students are being transported, except in cases of emergency or when the bus is stopped (engine off with key removed and hand brake on).
- follow the procedures outlined in the Code particularly regarding reporting incidents of misconduct to bus operators.
- maintain personal standards of behaviour in keeping with other professionals who are responsible for the care of students.

Serious cases of drivers failing to comply with guidelines in this Code may lead to Driver Authorisation being suspended or cancelled.

## Bus drivers' role

- To drive the bus safely.

- To follow the Code for managing bus misconduct.

## Bus drivers' rights

- Be safe.
- Be respected and treated with courtesy.
- Be trained in the Code and behaviour management strategies.
- Receive help and support from the bus operator in dealing with issues of student misconduct.

## Bus drivers' responsibilities

- Drive safely.
- Undertake training on bus driver roles and responsibilities under the Code.
- Utilise behaviour management strategies appropriately in handling bus behaviour.
- Follow the Code's procedures and the bus operator's directions, policies and procedures.
- Communicate in a clear, appropriate and respectful manner.
- Promptly record and inform the bus operator of student behaviour incidents (including fare evasion) and the action taken.
- Treat students fairly and with respect.

## Bus drivers' expected behaviours

- Respect passengers and their property.
- Always drive professionally and safely.
- Always behave and communicate professionally and courteously.
- Be fair and consistent in dealing with passengers.
- Follow the Code's procedures and the operator's bus rules promptly, consistently and impartially.

## Bus operators

A bus operator is a person (including a company, local authority or other organisation) carrying on the business of providing a public passenger service.

Positive and collaborative partnerships between bus operators, schools and parents/guardians ensure the Code is effectively and promptly implemented when managing incidents of student misconduct. Cooperation between stakeholders shows

students that the bus operator, the school and parents/guardians are dealing with behaviour issues in a seamless and consistent way.

Serious cases of bus operators failing to comply with guidelines in this Code may lead to Operator Accreditation being suspended or cancelled.

## Bus operators' role

To ensure the quality operation of bus services.

## Bus operators' rights

- Be respected and treated courteously.
- Be supported by stakeholders in the appropriate implementation of the Code.
- Receive payment of a fare by all passengers.

## Bus operators' responsibilities

- Ensure drivers are appropriately trained and supported to implement the Code.
- Communicate respectfully with stakeholders to collaboratively manage student behaviour on buses.
- Implement the Code in a fair and consistent manner.
- Keep clear records of behaviour incidents involving school students, including actions taken.
- Ensure students and drivers travel in a safe environment.

## Bus operators' expected behaviours

- Follow processes outlined in the Code.
- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to implement appropriate consequences when dealing with students who breach the Code (this may include other bus operators).
- Clearly communicate reasons for decisions to relevant parties.
- Support and train drivers, as required, to effectively implement the Code.
- Apply principles of natural justice in making decisions related to the Code.
- Comply with Operator Accreditation and Code requirements relating to reporting breaches of the Code and the consequences of refused bus travel.

# Conveyance committees

Conveyance committees (where applicable) may assist bus operators in the administration of kilometre-based school bus services. Their role in assisting bus operators in maintaining the Code's student behaviour standards supports the effective management of these services.

## Conveyance committees' role

To assist schools and bus operators in maintaining the Code's standards on buses.

## Conveyance committees' rights

- Safe and comfortable travel for students.
- Accurate information when discussing incidents of student misconduct.
- To be respected and treated courteously.

## Conveyance committees' responsibilities

- Treat all Code related discussions confidentially.
- Adhere to the Code's processes and procedures.
- Encourage students to behave appropriately when travelling on buses.

## Conveyance committees' expected behaviours

- Cooperate with bus operators and schools in managing school student behaviour on buses.

# Department of Transport and Main Roads

The Department of Transport and Main Roads is responsible for:

- administration of public passenger services in Queensland
- developing and maintaining the Code, in consultation with school organisations, the bus industry and parent groups
- implementing a process to review a bus operator's decision to refuse travel under the Code

## Department of Transport and Main Roads' role

To develop the Code's guidelines and oversee its effective implementation.

## Department of Transport and Main Roads' rights

- Safe travel for school students travelling on buses.
- Effective implementation of the Code by bus operators and bus drivers.
- Cooperation between all parties to resolve issues of bus misconduct.

## Department of Transport and Main Roads' responsibilities

- Provide advice to stakeholders in relation to implementing the Code.
- Monitor and review bus operators' compliance with the Code.
- Manage review processes for students who are refused bus travel for breaching the Code.
- Investigate complaints about bus operators and/or bus drivers in relation to school student bus travel.
- Undertake Code policy reviews, as appropriate.

## Department of Transport and Main Roads' expected behaviours

- Collaborate with stakeholders to support the effective implementation of the Code.
- Ensure the requirements of the Code are clearly communicated and easily accessed.
- Promote resources to assist in the effective implementation of the Code.
- Provide relevant training and information to staff in relation to the Code.
- Follow departmental guidelines when investigating complaints and undertaking the review process.

# Categories of misconduct

There are four categories of behaviour:

**Category 1 – irresponsible behaviour**

**Category 2 – unsafe behaviour**

**Category 3 – dangerous/destructive behaviour**

**Category 4 – life-threatening behaviour**

Each time a student's conduct on the bus is reported, the incident is reviewed to determine how serious it is and decide on the proper response based on the circumstances. The bus operator will consider all relevant information, including the bus driver's report, in determining the category of behaviour and consequence.

The circumstances surrounding the behaviour affects which category it best fits. For example, 'spraying deodorant' could be viewed differently if it was: spraying deodorant towards a naked flame; spraying deodorant directly into another's face; excessive spraying of deodorant around the bus; or spraying deodorant discreetly for personal use.

**Bus drivers / bus operators should report any incident involving criminal or life-threatening behaviour to the police if considered appropriate.**

## Behaviour categories and examples

To promote consistency in implementing the Code, behaviour is classified as fitting into one of the four behaviour categories. The list of behaviour examples below is not exhaustive and should be used as a guide by bus drivers and bus operators when managing student behaviour on buses.

### Category 1 – irresponsible behaviour

**Definition: Behaviour that is irresponsible but not likely to cause harm.**

- Swearing and shouting at the bus driver from a distance.
- Offensive language or harmful messages in any format related to gender identity, ethnicity, sex, race, religion, disability, physical features or other identity characteristics.
- Tossing another student's belongings to them out of the stationary bus.

- Placing feet on bus seat.
- Climbing over seats while the bus is stationary.
- Repeatedly playing loud music.
- Fare evasion.
- Not showing identification when asked or supplying a false name.
- Repeated touching of others when asked to stop.
- Littering in the bus.

## Category 2 – unsafe behaviour

**Definition: Behaviour that is unsafe where there could be harm to property and/or others.**

- Verbally abusing others, including the bus driver.
- Pushing and shoving others when getting on or off the bus or stopping others from getting on or off the bus.
- Slapping other students but not causing injury.
- Throwing light objects within the bus.
- Repeatedly moving around the bus.
- Refusing to wear the available seatbelt properly.
- Placing body parts outside of bus window.
- Yelling and screaming throughout the bus journey.
- Distracting bus driver with persistent talking or noise or through use of electronic devices.
- Displaying, holding or exchanging an e-cigarette (vape) or cigarettes.
- Continually pressing 'stop' button.
- Ignoring bus drivers' instructions.
- Using an electronic device to bully or intimidate others.
- Taking photos, videos or audio recordings of other passengers or the bus driver without their consent.
- Ignoring requests from the bus driver and other passengers not to take their photo, video or audio recording of them.
- Leaving items in the bus aisle that have the potential to cause harm or injury.

## Category 3 – dangerous/destructive behaviour

**Definition: Behaviour that is dangerous or destructive and highly likely to cause immediate harm to property and/or others.**

- Threatening harm.
- Heckling or deliberately distracting the driver while driving.
- Physically attacking others, which may or may not cause injury.

- Throwing heavy objects at others or within the bus.
- Interfering with bus safety and emergency equipment for example, the window hammer or emergency door release.
- Using matches, lighters or other flammable items.
- Vaping or smoking on the bus.
- Improper and nonconsensual sexual conduct, for example exposing body parts, unwanted physical contact or sexual conduct between consenting participants.
- Interfering with the operation of the bus.
- Setting off personal safety alarm near the bus driver.
- Taking photos of a sexual nature.
- Accessing or sharing inappropriate content, for example violent, obscene or pornographic.
- Vandalism such as using a marker, pen, scissors or other implement to write on the bus seats or window, cut bus seat upholstery/seatbelts or etch initials in bus window.

## Category 4 – life-threatening behaviour

**Definition: Behaviour that is immediately life-threatening.**

- Forcing another passenger out of the vehicle.
- Threatening with or being in possession of a weapon or replica.
- Using objects or items as a weapon for example, sporting equipment, sharp implements, or heavy objects.
- Spraying chemicals into another's face.
- Hitting, pushing or interfering with the bus driver while driving.
- Throwing an object or weapon at passing vehicle or throwing projectiles at bus from outside the vehicle.
- Lighting a fire on the bus.
- Taking a bomb on the bus.
- Shining laser pointer into drivers' eyes.

# Responding to misconduct

## Principles

When addressing reports of misconduct, bus operators must collaborate and communicate effectively with stakeholders.

In consultation with relevant stakeholders, the bus operator:

- **Reviews evidence** – examines available evidence (for example, CCTV footage, witness statements) to assess the incident, considering:
  - the threat to the safety of the bus driver and passengers
  - the extent of distraction caused to the bus driver
  - the student's age
  - any existing medical condition or disability affecting the student's behaviour
  - whether the breach is a first-time or repeated offence
- **Applies natural justice principles** – ensures fairness by:
  - informing the parent/guardian/student of all relevant matters
  - providing parent/guardian/student an opportunity to respond
  - allowing all parties involved to be heard
  - considering all relevant evidence and reports
  - making a fair and just decision
  - offering a process to review the decision
  - aligning the consequence with the offence.
- **Maintains confidentiality and privacy** – ensures sensitive information is handled appropriately by:
  - determining breach and consequences
  - assessing whether the Code has been breached
  - considering consequences with input from stakeholders as appropriate
  - determining the appropriate consequence based on category of behaviour
  - notifying other bus operators involved in the student's transport if travel is refused, allowing them to consider simultaneous refusal
  - ensuring advice excludes details of other individuals.
- **Communicates and documents** – ensures transparency by:
  - clearly communicating the decision and its reasoning to relevant stakeholders
  - thoroughly documenting the process.

# Procedures

Bus drivers and bus operators must follow the below process when responding to incidents of student misconduct. The driver takes immediate action according to an assessment of the seriousness of the situation.

## Bus driver procedures

### Step 1: Assess and respond

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#### **Category 1: irresponsible behaviour**

Examples: fare evasion, littering in the bus, placing feet on seats.

- 1 Instruct behaviour to stop.
    - Use behaviour management strategies as appropriate. For example: student sits at front and/or is last to get off.
  - 2 If behaviour continues, redirect behaviour to stop.
    - Warn student of consequences if behaviour continues.
  - 3 If behaviour continues further, redirect behaviour to stop.
    - Identify the student and their school, if possible.
    - Advise the student that the incident will be reported to the bus operator.
  - 4 Contact bus operator.
    - Follow the operator's instructions.
- 

#### **Category 2: unsafe behaviour**

Examples: pushing and shoving when getting on/off bus, verbally abusing others including the driver, excessive movement around the bus.

- 1 Determine if the bus needs to stop.
  - 2 Instruct behaviour to stop and warn of consequences.
    - Use behaviour management strategies. For example: student sits at front and/or is last to get off.
  - 3 Identify student and their school, if possible.
  - 4 If behaviour continues, redirect behaviour to stop.
    - Advise student that the incident will be reported to the bus operator.
  - 5 Contact bus operator.
    - Follow the operator's instructions.
-

### **Category 3: dangerous or destructive behaviour**

Examples: threatening harm, interfering with operation of bus, vaping or smoking.

- 1 Stop the bus when safe to do so.
  - 2 Instruct behaviour to stop.
  - 3 Implement incident management plan procedures and/or contact the bus operator or emergency services as appropriate.
    - Follow bus operator / emergency services instructions.
- 

### **Category 4: life-threatening behaviour**

Examples: hitting, pushing or interfering with the bus driver while driving, lighting a fire on bus.

- 1 Stop the bus when safe to do so.
  - 2 Instruct behaviour to stop.
  - 3 Implement incident management plan procedures and/or contact the bus operator or emergency services as appropriate.
    - Follow bus operator/emergency services instructions.
- 

## **Step 2: Report incident**

Report incident to the bus operator at the end of the journey using required documentation.

# Bus operator procedures

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## Step 1: Immediate actions

1. Evaluate bus driver information and issue instructions.
  2. Implement incident management plan if required.
  3. Contact parents/guardians regarding incident. If applicable, advise parents/guardians of need to make alternative travel arrangements.  
Note: Temporary suspension of travel may be imposed for category 3 and 4 behaviours while the incident is being investigated.
  4. Report to police if it is a criminal matter.
  5. Record all actions taken.
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## Step 2: Investigate and determine if a breach of the Code has occurred

- 1 Conduct investigation
    - Investigation must commence within three school days of the incident or complaint and be completed within 10 school days.
    - Gather information from:
      - bus driver's written report
      - bus operator records (e.g., repeated incidents, other services used)
      - students, school, parents/guardians
      - CCTV footage
      - other relevant sources such as police or witness statements.
  - 2 Determine if a breach has occurred
    - Assess if a breach of the Code has occurred and which category it best fits.
- 

## Step 3: Determine appropriate consequence for misconduct

### **Determine the appropriate consequence based on category of behaviour**

Allowable consequences for each behaviour category are detailed below. Alternative individual consequences agreed to by stakeholders may also be considered.

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## **Category 1: irresponsible behaviour**

**Maximum travel refusal:** up to 10 school days for repeated incidents.

- **First incident:** consider written caution.
- **Repeated incidents (single journey):** written caution or refused travel for up to two school days.
- **Second incident (within 10 school weeks):** written caution or refused travel for up to two school days.
- **Third incident (within 10 school weeks):** refused travel for up to five school days and/or behaviour agreement for up to 10 school weeks.
- **Fourth incident (within 10 school weeks):** refused travel for up to 10 school days and/or behaviour agreement for up to 10 school weeks.

**Note:** Category 2 consequences can be considered for repeated reports of Category 1 behaviour following a period of refused travel.

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## **Category 2: unsafe behaviour**

**Maximum travel refusal:** up to 10 school days for repeated incidents.

- **First incident:** refused travel for up to five school days.
- **Second incident (within 10 school weeks):** refused travel for up to 10 school days and/or behaviour agreement for up to 10 school weeks.

**Note:** Category 3 consequences can be considered for repeated reports of Category 2 behaviour following a period of refused travel.

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## **Category 3: dangerous or destructive behaviour**

**Maximum travel refusal:** up to 10 school weeks.

- Refused travel for up to 10 school weeks and a behaviour agreement in place for up to one school year.
- 

## **Category 4: Life-threatening behaviour**

**Maximum travel refusal:** permanent refusal of travel may be considered.

- Refused travel for a defined period, for example 10 school weeks, and a behaviour agreement in place for up to one school year.
  - Permanent refusal of travel may also be considered.
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## Step 4: Advise stakeholders

1. Provide verbal advice of consequences and reasoning for the decision to parents/guardians and relevant stakeholders.
2. Follow verbal advice with written confirmation to parents/guardians and other relevant stakeholders.
3. Notify other bus operators involved in the student's transport if travel is refused, allowing them to consider simultaneous refusal.
4. Advise the Department of Transport and Main Roads promptly of any eligible students refused travel using the Refusal from Travel Advice Form.
5. If a government funded service, ensure incident reporting requirements are followed and the Department of Transport and Main Roads notified if applicable.

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## Step 5: Document process

Ensure process and actions taken are thoroughly documented.

# Consequences for misconduct

The bus operator is responsible for making the final decision as to the appropriate consequence for student misconduct, possible consequences can include:

- written caution
- period of refused bus travel
- behaviour agreement
- other consequence agreed to by stakeholders.

Bus operators must retain appropriate written records of actions taken at all stages of the process. It is also important that reasons for the bus operators' decisions are adequately communicated to the relevant parties.

At times student misconduct will be more than a breach of the Code. Serious misconduct, for example assault, vandalism, possession of a weapon or use of prohibited substances can also be a breach of the about t Code. In addition to being reported under the Code, instances of this sort of behaviour should be reported to the police.

## Written caution

A written caution is a letter from the bus operator to the parent/guardian of a student. A written caution is generally considered appropriate following the first reported incident of irresponsible bus behaviour (Category 1).

The letter outlines the reported behaviour and requests that the parent/guardian remind the student that the behaviour is unacceptable, and that repeated misconduct will result in further consequences which could include refused bus travel for a period.

## Refusal of travel

Refused bus travel is generally considered following reported breaches of unsafe (Category 2), dangerous/destructive (Category 3) or life-threatening (Category 4) behaviour and repeated reports of bus misconduct. The period of refused bus travel ranges from one day to permanent refusal.

A student may be refused travel on:

1. The bus service they were using at the time the misconduct occurred.
2. All bus services operated by the same bus operator.
3. All bus services used for travel to and from school, even if run by different bus operators.

Refusal of travel generally applies to scheduled bus services, but may also include school related journeys, for example school excursions, sport, study trips, courses at other campuses, if:

- the student is currently refused travel for similar journeys.
- the school cannot provide close supervision, for example requiring the student to sit next to a teacher or supervising adult.

When travel is refused, the bus operator must:

1. Notify parents/guardians about the period of refused travel so that alternative travel arrangements can be made and advise that simultaneous refused travel may apply across all bus services used for travel to and from school, even those run by other bus operators.
2. Confirm in writing any verbal advice given to the parent/guardian.
3. Advise the school of the details.
4. Notify the local office of Department of Transport and Main Roads if the student is eligible for transport assistance.

If the student also travels with other bus operators to complete their journey, the original bus operator who refused travel may advise the other bus operators about the decision. The other bus operators may consider simultaneous refused travel on their services.

In cases of refused travel it is the parents/guardian's responsibility to arrange and fund alternative transport arrangements for their child to attend school during the period of refused travel.

## Behaviour agreement

A behaviour agreement is an agreement between a student, their parent/guardian and the bus operator. A behaviour agreement aims to teach students to be responsible for their own behaviour and to support them in improving their behaviour. A behaviour agreement is most effective if the parent/guardian reinforces the expectation of acceptable behaviour with their child and encourages improvement.

A behaviour agreement:

1. specifies acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
2. identifies the agreement's timeframe and any conditions of travel
3. outlines consequences for continued unacceptable behaviour.

While a behaviour agreement can be considered a suitable consequence for any reported breach of the Code, implementing a behaviour agreement is mandatory in cases of dangerous/destructive (Category 3) and life-threatening (Category 4) behaviours.

If parents/guardians do not engage in the behaviour agreement process, the bus operator may consider refusing travel for the student until a behaviour agreement is signed. In such cases, this period of refused travel is additional to the determined refused travel consequences.

## Other consequences agreed by stakeholders

In some instances, the relevant stakeholders may determine that an arrangement other than refusal of bus travel is the most appropriate consequence. Examples of alternate consequences may include exclusion from extracurricular activities or school detention. If another arrangement is considered an appropriate consequence for a breach of the Code, and the arrangement will take place outside the school, the bus operator needs to receive written agreement from the parent/guardian.

## Bullying

Bullying is a complex societal issue which is not the responsibility of one individual or group. Everyone, especially those who have responsibility for the care of children, needs to cooperate in managing bullying.

Physical bullying that affects passenger safety can be easily observed and is dealt with under the Code. However, other forms of bullying, while being totally unacceptable, can be very difficult to identify as threats to passenger safety.

If the driver identifies or becomes aware of bullying or harassment, they need to inform the bus operator, who advise the school of the situation. Similarly, if the bus operator receives a complaint about bullying, the school should be advised. The school will consult with the bus operator in deciding how to manage this reported behaviour.

For strategies to deal with bullying, visit [bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://bullyingnoway.gov.au).

## Repeated misconduct

Bus drivers need to record and report each incident of misconduct to the bus operator to assist in identifying repeat breaches. The guidelines provide flexibility in applying consequences, such as longer periods of refused travel (including the potential for refused travel on services provided by more than one bus operator) and the introduction of behaviour agreements for repeated misconduct.

These agreements require engagement by the student and the parent/guardian and aim to help students take responsibility for their behaviour and to learn that misconduct, including fare evasion, is unacceptable.

## Students with disability

The Code applies to all school students travelling on buses including students with disability. Additional consideration must be given when investigating behaviour incidents for students with disability to ensure the impact of their disability on their behaviour is understood, the reasonable adjustments required have been implemented and to identify appropriate consequences.

It is important to understand and consider that disability can impact language and communication. Some students with disability may communicate differently to what

people expect and, in some instances, the student's communication may be misinterpreted as an incident of misconduct.

It is critical that parents/guardians liaise with bus operators prior to the commencement of travel to provide appropriate information to support the student's disability needs for safe travel. This will help to identify the appropriate travel strategies and reasonable adjustments required before bus travel commences. In instances where the agreed travel strategies are no longer effective, the bus operator will liaise with the student's parents/guardians and school in a timely way so revised travel strategies can be put in place to proactively support the student's safe bus travel.

Dedicated school bus services for students with disability are required to have a supervisor, employed by the bus operator. Supervisors assist the driver with the care and supervision of students, including the appropriate management of behaviours associated with students' disability.

In some cases, students may travel with an individual carer/escort to support their safe travel to and from school. Individual carer/escorts must always demonstrate suitable conduct towards the bus driver, bus operator and other passengers when travelling with the student.

Any investigation of misconduct would identify whether the agreed travel strategies have been implemented by the bus driver or other bus operator staff. Where the bus operator is satisfied that the agreed travel strategies have been implemented, the bus operator, in consultation with relevant stakeholders will implement the appropriate Code consequences.

# Complaints and review processes

## Complaints process

The bus operator should be contacted about any dissatisfaction with the service. It is important not to approach a bus driver to discuss concerns while the bus service is in operation. Stakeholders can lodge a complaint with the bus operator and attempt to resolve the issue via the company's complaints management process.

If the matter is not effectively resolved it can be referred to the nearest Department of Transport and Main Roads [school transport office](#) for investigation according to the department's complaints management process. Find a list of locations at [translink.com.au](https://translink.com.au).

Concerns or complaints relating to a school's role in the effective implementation of the Code should be directed to the school. If the matter is not effectively resolved, contact the relevant Department of Education regional office or relevant education authority.

In raising concerns, it is important that parents/guardians communicate respectfully. Verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated. Activity by a parent/guardian that impacts the safety of students, the bus driver, bus operator (including staff) or department staff, such as threatening harm or physical abuse, may be reported to the police.

## Review process

After implementing the processes outlined in the Code, one or more bus operators may decide to refuse a student travel on the bus or to implement alternative consequences. If a parent/guardian or student is dissatisfied with this outcome they can request that the bus operator/s review the decision.

If attempts to resolve the issue with the bus operator/s are unsuccessful and the parent/guardian or student remains dissatisfied with the bus operator's decision and wishes to take the matter further, the formal complaint procedure is followed. In these circumstances, and when refused bus travel is for more than five days (or less in exceptional circumstances) they can contact the nearest Department of Transport and Main Roads [school transport office](#) and request, in writing, a review of the decision.

Bus operators should note that the Department of Transport and Main Roads may issue an instruction that a bus operator's decision to refuse travel to a student is deferred while the matter is being investigated. The bus operator and/or bus driver must follow this instruction.

The process for reviewing a bus operator's decision to refuse travel is show below.

## Review process for students refused travel

The following situations can occur when requesting a bus operator to review their decision to refuse bus travel.

**Note:** The Department of Transport and Main Roads will not vary the policy or guidelines of the School Transport Assistance Scheme including transferring eligibility to other bus services as part of the review process.

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### Step 1: Parent/guardian requests review

The parent/guardian requests the bus operator to review the decision.

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### Step 2: Bus operator reviews decision

The bus operator reviews the decision and takes one of the following actions:

- a) Changes the decision and resolves issue with parent/guardian.
    - No further action is required.
  - b) Upholds the decision.
    - The bus operator communicates the decision to the parent/guardian.
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### Step 3: Parent/guardian response

If the bus operator upholds the decision, the parent/guardian may:

- a) Accept the decision.
    - No further action is taken.
  - b) Request a departmental review.
    - If the refusal period exceeds five school days (or in exceptional circumstances for shorter periods), the parent/guardian submits a written
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request to the Department of Transport and Main Roads. The request must detail the grounds for the review based on due process, natural justice, and circumstances of incident.

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#### Step 4: Department of Transport and Main Roads review

The Department of Transport and Main Roads reviews the case within five working days of receiving the written request. The decision is based on due process, natural justice and circumstances of the incident.

In some instances, the Department of Transport and Main Roads may form a panel to gather information and recommend action. This decision would be made by the department taking into consideration the circumstances of the case.

The panel may include representatives from:

- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Department of Education or school education authority
- parent group
- bus industry.

The panel reviews the case and makes one of the following recommendations:

- a) uphold the bus operator's decision
  - b) allow the student to resume travel (conditions may apply)
  - c) vary the period of refused travel.
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#### Step 5: Department of Transport and Main Roads decision

The Department of Transport and Main Roads, taking into account the recommendations of the panel if applicable, decides to either:

- a) uphold the bus operator's decision
  - b) allow the student to resume travel (conditions may apply)
  - c) vary the period of refused travel.
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#### Step 6: Department of Transport and Main Roads advises decision

The Department advises the final decision with reasons, to the following parties:

- parent/guardian
  - bus operator
  - conveyance committee (where applicable)
  - the school.
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