

Our Lady of La Vang

Specialist educational facility for students with intellectual disability

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School Bus Policy

Context

Catholic Special Schools provides educational services for students with intellectual and multiple disabilities in a co-educational setting. Staff, students and parents at Catholic Special Schools work together to promote a safe and caring Christian environment where each student is treated as an individual, with the utmost respect for his/her dignity and personal rights. We recognise that our students have complex and varied individual needs. We support parents through the provision of a relevant and meaningful education for their children. A fundamental part of this endeavor involves supporting students to develop independence. Utilizing the school buses before and after school is an important part of this.

Definition

Our Lady of La Vang provides transport for students to and from school each day and for use as part of the school's day-to-day curricula.

This policy relates to students' travel to and from school. The buses, in so far as is practicable, operate in a defined geographical area to include as many students as possible requiring transport to and from school. Because the schools do not receive any direct financial government support for before and after school travel, the service operates as a user-pay system.

Students are picked up from their home or designated points (as negotiated with the parents/caregivers) each morning and driven to the school to begin the school day. The bus run returns students to their home or designated point at the end of each school day.

Parents/caregivers are responsible for payment of appropriate fees as decided by the School Board. Fee reductions will be negotiated individually and confidentially with the principal and/or finance officer.

Safety

Two staff members are assigned to each bus on before and after school bus runs:

1. Bus driver

2. Bus support staff member

Bus drivers will hold Bus Driver Accreditation (as per Passenger transport Act, 1994, Section 28).

The primary responsibility of the bus driver is to ensure the safety of students in his/her care. While the driver will provide support for students when necessary, the bus support staff member assigned to each bus manages and supports students on the journey.

The school mobile phone assigned to each bus will be carried on the bus at all times.

It is the policy of the school that the driver and the support staff member will not leave the bus at any point in the journey unless:

- there is an emergency situation
- student needs support to get on/or off the bus

In the case of an emergency, the support staff member will provide appropriate assistance for the student(s). Unless the situation demands otherwise, the driver will remain in the bus and make contact with relevant agencies/emergency services and the principal or his/her delegate (see emergency Bus procedures)

GUIDELINES

Parents choosing their school's bus service to transport their child to and from school are required to cooperate with, and observe, the following guidelines:

1. With appropriate support, students are expected to keep themselves and others safe while travelling on the bus.
2. In the event of unsafe or inappropriate student behaviour:
 - the bus support staff member will inform the student's class teacher/s on arrival at school and fill out an Incident Report.
 - in liaison with the principal, the class teacher/s will consult with parents and, where relevant, other staff e.g. Allied Health therapists, to develop plans to support the development of appropriate behaviours.
 - this may also involve providing bus support staff with strategies and/or materials to ensure a relevant response to unsafe behaviour prior to, during and/or after the time of its occurrence.
 - where necessary other forms of transport to and from school may be explored. This may also include adapting the student's bus travel schedule to better suit his or her needs. In such circumstances, the school will liaise with parents to support the student to develop the appropriate behaviours to enable safe travel.
3. In the case of a medical emergency, an ambulance will be called to take the student to the nearest hospital and the support staff member will notify the parents and principal as soon as possible. The support staff member will accompany the student in the ambulance if possible. The safety of the other students on the bus must be considered and so such a decision about a staff member accompanying a student will be made in

consultation with the principal and the bus driver. (See School Bus Emergency Management procedures)

4. Parents will notify the school of any changes to their child's travelling arrangements. This should be done in writing either in letter form or in their child's diary which is then transferred to the Bus Communication book.
5. If a child is sick or has an appointment in the morning, parents are to phone the bus mobile directly to inform staff that a pick up is not required.
6. For health and safety reasons and to be consistent with a student's health care plan, if applicable, if a child is sick or has a seizure during school hours, the parent/carer will be contacted to pick the student up from school. Equally if a student is highly elevated or unsettled during the day and, in collaboration with the Principal, it is unsafe for the student to travel home on the bus, parents will be called and asked to pick up their son/daughter.
7. The Bus Coordinator will decide pick-up and drop-off times and places after appropriate discussion with the bus driver and parents. Arrangements cannot be changed without the Principal's approval. On occasion, the Principal may authorise changes to bus routes and times to accommodate changes to enrolment patterns. Bus rosters will also be temporarily changed accordingly to curriculum needs e.g. sports day, early dismissal (end of term) etc. In the event of such changes, parents will be notified accordingly.
8. The school will notify parents of the nearest pick-up and drop off point, if the student's home is not on the direct bus route.
9. The school cannot guarantee a continuation of the service if a family moves house. The proximity of the new house to the bus route will need to be considered.
10. A tight schedule is followed on all routes. Parents are expected to be very punctual, as the driver will wait for only 5 minutes before moving on to the next pick up/drop off point. Students will not be left unsupervised at the drop off point and if parents are not home the students will not get off the bus unless prior arrangements have been made. Refer to Guideline 11.
11. In the event of a parent/care giver unexpectedly not being able to meet the afternoon bus run, s/he is will make alternative arrangements, eg. have the child dropped off at another place which is on the bus route. Clear instructions need to be given to both the driver and the school. Contact via the bus' mobile phone will facilitate this process. The mobile phone numbers are printed in the school's weekly newsletter.
12. Should someone other than the agreed parent/care giver meet the bus to collect the child, such arrangements should be conveyed to the school in writing beforehand. In an emergency this can be done by telephone.
13. On arrival at home, parents can arrange for a student to move from the bus to the house without acknowledgment from the parent to the driver. Such arrangements must be in writing. In such circumstances the school advises that the school and bus staff's duty of care to the student ceases once the student is seen to enter the house.

14. The school supports students becoming more independent. Parents and school staff may negotiate to allow a student to let him/herself into the house. In this event, parents must give permission in writing.
15. Students travelling on a part-time basis on the school bus will receive a pro-rata reduction in fees depending on the number of times per week the service is used.
16. If there are insufficient places on the bus, priority will be given to students who require full time placement for this service. This will be the decision of the Principal in consultation with the student's parents/carers.
17. References to "Principal" include the authorised Assistant Principal or POR staff member acting in lieu.

Policy ratified by the School Board:

Board Chair Signature:

Review Date:

