

11/02/2021

COVID-19 Safety Measures Pertaining to School Buses and Transit

Belgian Authorities require that specific measures be applied to all school transit and transport as of September 2020. These measures are designed to ensure the highest possible level of safety during transit to and from school, and forestall the spread of COVID-19 : they include a mix of social distancing, cleaning, and protective behaviours.

1/ GENERAL RULES ON HOW TO BEHAVE DURING THE HEALTH CRISIS

- Keep abreast of a fast-evolving situation. Use the usual public information channels, such as COCOM (<https://www.ccc-ggc.brussels/fr>), commune administration communications, SPF Public Health (<https://www.health.belgium.be/fr>). Heed and abide by all safety instructions communicated by the Belgian Authorities. Do not volunteer your own ideas or your own initiatives. A toll-free 'Green Number' is available for your questions at: 0800/22.000.
- Inform and/or report to all relevant staff and personnel to help prevent the further spread of the pandemic, both within the school premises and outside, especially as regards cleanliness and hygiene issues.
- Keep all parents informed of all decisions taken by your department as the situation evolves. In particular, should the necessity arise, a renewed period of lockdown may have to be considered.
- Ensure that all the measures that aim at ensuring cleanliness and hygiene are well-known, continually improved, and heeded at all times by all. These measures include, but are not limited to : wearing a face mask, observing social distancing, washing hands with soap for at least 30 seconds, coughing or sneezing into one's elbow and then washing hands again, and disposing of used paper tissues into an appropriate disposal bin only.
- Always ensure and control that common surfaces are kept properly cleaned at all times.
- Communicate with and confirm to your Establishment's Health Service which measures are in force and keep them informed of any difficulty you might experience in applying such.
- All APEEE personnel are currently in the process of signing a sworn statement, confirming that the health measures imposed by the Belgian Authorities are being fully complied with.
- All personnel working for or on behalf of APEEE are conforming to all requisite safety rules, which include wearing a face mask and regularly washing hands.

Specifically, the following rules apply onboard school buses:

2/ SAFETY RULES IN FORCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020

- A procedure is in place upon both boarding and getting off the bus, ensuring that social distancing rules are upheld, both between passengers and with respect to drivers and any proctors or accompanying staff.
- Social distancing must be upheld as much as possible whenever passengers leave their seats. Therefore, only one passenger, whether getting on or off the bus, may stand at any given time. Children will be enjoined by the accompanying proctors and/or the driver to refrain from horseplay or skylarking and to avoid physical contacts.
- All driving and accompanying staff (drivers, proctors) **must** wear a face mask throughout the ride and when present on school grounds.
- **All secondary pupils must wear a face mask** at all times when on the bus. Under applicable Belgian law, face masks are mandatory whenever in a coach or public transit vehicle. They constitute an essential safety measure aimed at protecting both the other students on the bus, the driver, and any staff present on board. (Note to parents: please ensure that you remind your children to wear their face masks)

All primary and nursery pupils must wear a face mask: a Covid risk assessment study was performed by IDEWE (<https://www.idewe.be/fr/>), the external prevention office of the APEEE. One clear recommendation of the report was to extend the use of masks in the buses to also MAT and PRIM children in order to minimize the risk of contamination in the school bus. In the same period of time a vast majority of parents of children using the bus service expressed themselves in favor of this measure through our latest survey too. **Consequently, as of Monday 16 November 2020, the APEEE requests that all children, including kindergarten and primary wear a face mask in the buses.**

We understand that it might be difficult for very small children to wear masks, however we count on your cooperation for the sake of all. Please **provide a face mask for your child to wear during the school bus transport** as of Monday 16 November 2020.

The obligation to wear a mask does not apply in the case of disabilities that prevent mask wearing or for those with medical condition where a mask can cause harm. If this would be the case for your child, please inform the transport department.

(Note for parents: Please provide your children with face masks. Secondary pupils without a mask shall not be allowed onto the bus. If needed, a face mask may be provided, which will be invoiced to parents at € 1 for the first time, and then € 5 every time after that.)

- If the bus has two separate doors, both boarding and getting off the bus shall occur through the *rear* door.

- If the bus has only one (front) door, the proctors, or the driver should no proctors be present, shall exit the bus *first* and let passengers get on or off the bus before getting back on board.
- **Seating arrangements:** As a rule, pupils must always occupy the same seat.
- **Siblings:** The APEEE has received an update from the Collège Réuni Commission Communautaire Commune requiring that all children are to be seated according to their cycle of schooling. The reason for this according to the Collège is that as different Covid controls apply to different cycles (maternelle – primaire – secondaire) it's important to keep the children separated. This means that maternelle children now need to be separated from primary children, which was not previously the case, and siblings will no longer be able to sit together unless they are in the same school cycle.

The new seating arrangements will therefore be that maternelle children sit at the front of the bus, from the second row. The first row in the bus is always kept empty, in order to create sufficient distance between the driver and the children. Primary pupils are to sit behind them, with a row separating the groups if space allows. Secondary pupils are to sit at the back of the bus, also with a spacer row separating them from Primary children if space is available.

- Buses are carefully and thoroughly cleaned with disinfectants as per the stipulations of the COVID protocol that all bus companies must sign.
- Disinfectant gel dispensers are available at the bus parking entrance. Proctors also carry gel for use on board buses



* VIDE SI C'EST POSSIBLE

MAT - maternelle; PRIM - primaire; SECON - secondaire

3/ SAFETY APEEE Tracking system against Covid-19

- To comply with the new regulations we will be expanding the tracking system we operate to identify where pupils sit on our buses:
 - morning and 15:30 buses: a tracking system is already in place where the supervisors allocate a fixed seat to each child.
 - 16:20 buses: children are registered but do not have a fixed seat. Before the departure of each bus, the seat allocated to each child will be registered. This registration process might create a small delay in the departure of the 16.20 buses.
- Other children on the bus, who are not sitting close to someone who has tested positive, are classified as low risk and may continue to use the bus service. When there is a case of a positive Covid case on an APEEE bus, the APEEE will inform all parents whose children use that bus, as has been the practice in the past.

4/ RULES SPECIFIC TO BUS COMPANIES AND TO DRIVERS

A reminder of the binding rules which apply to drivers:

- Drivers **must** wear a face mask throughout the ride and whenever present within school grounds
- If the bus has two doors, getting on and off the bus shall occur through the rear door
- If there is only one door, the accompanying proctors, or drivers if no proctors or other staff are present, will first get off the bus and let the passengers board or exit, before they get back on board.
- The full convention protocol for bus companies is attached (addendum)

5/ ACCOMPANYING PERSONNEL ON BOARD

- Accompanying personnel are seated at the back of the bus and/or move about in the bus to ensure that all pupils are correctly seated. They must ensure that pupils use their assigned seat number every time.

6/ RULES AND HEALTH RULES PERTAINING TO THE PARKING AREA

- Upon arrival, the pupils seated at the back are the first to leave the bus via the rear door. Accompanying staff must ensure that order and social distancing be properly maintained when exiting the bus.
- Disinfecting gel and spare face masks are also available to APEEE staff in the booth.
- Gel dispensers are available at the bus parking area entrance.
- The social distance of 1.5m applies within the parking area as well.

Measures will be in place to ensure the smooth flow of circulation and prevent any thronging or bottlenecks during access to the parking area.

7/ IF AND WHEN A CASE OF PUPIL INFECTION IS SUSPECTED

- **In case of a suspected case within a class :** the School shall abide by the Case Management Protocol stipulated in document 7955/7956 of Wallonie-Bruxelles (attached).
- **When a pupil develops symptoms for the first time when on board a bus :**
 - Accompanying staff must isolate the child at least 1.5m away from the other children, if at all possible.
 - Accompanying staff will provide the child with a new mask and disinfectant gel.
 - The Transit Office shall be notified immediately by accompanying staff and the child will be handed over to an EEB2 proctor, who will take the child to the infirmary.

Upon arriving at School, the School shall abide by the Case Management Protocol as stipulated in document 7955/7956 of Wallonie-Bruxelles (attached).

Should a pupil develop symptoms before boarding or upon boarding a bus in the afternoon: a School proctor shall take the child to the infirmary or to School management. Thereafter, the School shall abide by the Case Management Protocol as stipulated in document 7955/7956 of Wallonie-Bruxelles (attached).

- **Should a pupil develop symptoms after the afternoon bus has left:**
 - Accompanying staff must isolate the child at least 1.5m away from the other children, if at all possible.
 - Accompanying staff will provide the child with a new mask and disinfectant gel.
 - Accompanying staff must immediately notify the Transit Office
- The Transit Office will then contact the parents to inform them
- The pupil is then handed over to the parents or as the case may be goes home

Note : The test results shall not be communicated to the parents of the pupils who use the same bus as the suspected case, in conformity with the Case Management Protocol (document 7955/7956).

COCOM (<https://www.ccc-ggc.brussels/fr>) deems school transit a weaker contamination risk, therefore the presence of a case or suspected case shall not automatically lead to the isolation of the other pupils on the bus. However, APEEE shall notify the parents of pupils taking the same bus that they should watch out closely for possible symptoms with their children.

Note : This document shall be updated should any further measures be taken by either the Belgian Authorities or School management.