

just the **FAQs**

answers to frequently asked questions

Chesterfield County
Public Schools

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Bus Safety

How can children stay safe when walking to and from their bus stop?

Parents are responsible for the safety of their children to and from bus stops and while waiting at the stops and are particularly encouraged to accompany young children. Teach children to

- be alert and watch for traffic and other hazards.
- never play in the street while waiting for the bus.
- be aware of strangers and never accept a ride from anyone but a person designated by parents.
- respect the property of bus stop neighbors.

How can parents help keep children safe getting on or off the bus?

Parents can help children stay safe by making sure that they

- arrive at the bus stop five minutes ahead of time.
- stand at least five giant steps (about 10 feet) away from the curb and line up away from the bus.
- do not approach the bus until it has come to a complete stop.
- do not allow pets to follow students into the bus.
- never run, walk or crawl in front, behind or beside the bus to pick up a loose item. If you have dropped something that you need to retrieve, tell the bus driver.
- always wait for the driver's OK signal to cross.
- never push while getting on or off the bus.
- be aware of the danger zone, which is a 10-foot-wide area on all sides of the bus where the driver's vision is limited. Students should always stay 10 feet away from the bus and never walk behind it. They should also take five giant steps in front of the bus before crossing so the driver can more easily see them.

How can students stay safe while riding a bus?

Students can stay safe by

- remaining seated at all times.
- trying to be as quiet as possible so the driver can concentrate.
- never placing any body part or object out of the window.
- keeping legs, feet, book bags and other items out of the aisle.
- paying attention to the driver and following instructions.
- keeping your hands to yourself.
- securing all drawstrings, book bag straps and dangling key chains that might become caught in the bus doors.

continued on back



continued from front

What are the consequences of misbehaving on the bus?

Bus transportation is a privilege, and students riding school buses are required to obey all rules and regulations established by the school and driver. Disorderly conduct on a school bus may result in denial of this privilege.

What if a child is late getting to the bus stop and sees the bus pulling away?

Students and parents should never run after a bus or bang on the side of a bus. These dangerous actions could result in injuries. It is better to miss the bus than risk injury. Although bus drivers are trained to look in all directions for people and cars, there are blind spots and danger zones.

Would it be safer for me to drive my child to school?

No. School buses are the safest way for children to get to school. The National Research Council found that children are 94 times more likely to be injured in a car than in a school bus.

What is the school system doing to help make buses even safer?

A top goal is providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for students. To continue to make progress toward this goal, school buses are equipped with additional safety devices:

- Bus handrails are designed to eliminate the danger of snagging students’ clothes.
- Audio and video systems monitor student behavior on new buses, and Chesterfield is seeking funds to add audio and video systems to older buses.
- The child reminder system helps prevent a student from being left on a bus. When the driver turns off the engine, he or she must walk to the back of the bus and push a safety trigger. If the trigger is not pushed, an alarm sounds and the lights flash. This system is part of all new buses, and Chesterfield is seeking funds to add it to older buses.

How are bus drivers trained?

Chesterfield County bus drivers must pass strict regulations even before they start training. They must be certified physically and mentally fit, be tested for alcohol and other substances, hold a valid Virginia driver’s license with no DUI convictions or certain moving violations, have no felony or barrier convictions and pass a background check.

After being accepted for training, drivers must pass 24 hours of classroom instruction before beginning 24 hours of behind-the-wheel training. After completing this training and receiving a contract, bus drivers attend two in-service sessions each year and take classes in first aid, student discipline and defensive driving every three years. An annual roadeo competition gives school bus drivers an opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

Why aren’t school buses equipped with seat belts?

Seat belts on buses have been debated for more than 30 years. To learn more about this topic, go to www.nhtsa.dot.gov and enter “school bus safety belts” in the “search NHSTA” box.

When I am driving my car, how can I help keep children on buses safe?

- Know what the lights on the bus mean: Yellow flashing lights mean the bus is preparing to stop and unload. Red lights and an extended stop sign mean the bus is unloading.
- Stop when approaching from any direction a stopped school bus with flashing red lights and extended stop sign. Remain stopped until all children are clear and the bus moves again. The only time drivers are not required to stop for a bus with flashing red lights and an extended stop sign is if they are traveling on the opposite side of a divided highway, separated by a physical barrier or an unpaved median.
- Never pass on the right side of a school bus where children are getting on or off.
- Be careful when backing out of a driveway or garage.
- Slow down and watch for children at bus stops. Children can become distracted and may start across the street without warning.

For more information

Chesterfield County Public Schools has a main transportation office and six area offices:

- main office 748-1656
- Clover Hill/Manchester area . . 739-6260
- Meadowbrook/Bird area 743-3605
- Midlothian/Cosby area 378-2475
- Thomas Dale/Matoaca area . . . 796-2604
- Monacan/James River area . . . 674-4506
- exceptional education 768-6124

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