

## **Fife Council – Annual Seat Belt Statement for Academic Year 2025- 2026**

### **Education Buses**

All school transport contracts maintained by Fife Council are specified to ensure that any dedicated bus or coach used by a contractor must be fitted with seatbelts. This applies to vehicles used for home to school transport (Closed Contracts) and for all school trip transport services. However, most Fife Council school transport contracts are registered local bus services, which are exempt from the seatbelt requirements laid down in the *Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Act 2017*.

#### **Conditions specific to home-to-school journeys which are closed contracts (non-registered)**

The introduction of some Closed Contracts, from August 2025, prompted tender and award documentation to require seatbelts. In addition, successful contractors have been issued with guidance on Section 15B of the Road Traffic Act 1988 (Requirement to notify bus passengers to wear seat belts).

Vehicles must be fitted with seatbelts in line with the *Seat Belts on School Transport (Scotland) Act 2017*.

On all vehicles of up to 16 passenger seats, the contractor shall be responsible for ensuring all children are wearing an appropriate child restraint or seat belt.

#### **Conditions specific to bus/coach hires**

Vehicles used on any contract must be fitted with a seatbelt on every seat used by a passenger.

For all school contracts booked, where a seat belt is provided on a vehicle, there is a requirement for the pupils to use the restraint and to remain seated during the journey.

On all vehicles of up to 16 passenger seats, the contractor shall be responsible for ensuring all children are wearing an appropriate child restraint or seat belt.

School staff will also ensure the use of seat belts on a contracted bus/coach hire.

### **Education Taxi & Minibus**

All taxis, private hire cars and minibuses (up to 16 seats) used on Fife Council contracts are built with seatbelts fitted.

#### **Conditions specific to taxi & minibus contracts**

The contractor shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of passengers not only whilst they are aboard the vehicle but also at such times as they are boarding or

alighting. The contractor shall be responsible for the opening and closing of the vehicle doors. The contractor shall ensure that all children are seated and, where relevant, wearing seatbelts and/or appropriate restraints before the vehicle moves off.

The contractor shall comply with all relevant current legislation in respect of seat belt provision and the wearing of seat belts for the type of vehicle being used. In addition:

- on all vehicles of up to 16 passenger seats the contractor shall be responsible for ensuring all children are wearing an appropriate child restraint or seat belt.
- on all larger minibuses and Mini coaches, the contractor shall be responsible for ensuring that all children under the age of 14 are wearing an appropriate child restraint or seat belt.
- on larger minibuses and Mini coaches, the contractor shall be responsible for informing passengers 14 years or over at each stop to fasten seatbelts and a pictorial sign encouraging the wearing of seatbelts should be displayed in the vehicle.
- all vehicles, regardless of size, used to provide nursery transport must be fitted with an appropriate child restraint or adult seat belt for all children and the contractor shall be responsible for ensuring all children are using the child restraint or seat belt.

Notwithstanding the above the contractor shall ensure that appropriate restraints and/or seatbelts are provided and worn by all passengers in all vehicles provided for children with additional support needs. All restraints including child safety seats and special seats must be fitted properly in line with manufacturer's instructions by the driver of the vehicle. Seatbelt buckle guards are not permitted.

### **Seat Belt Use**

Fife Council monitors compliance through a programme of school transport visits.

For all school transport vehicles, where a seat belt is provided on a vehicle, there is a requirement for pupils to use the restraint and to remain seated during the journey.

Drivers and escorts (where applicable) must be aware of legal responsibilities for the wearing of seatbelts on school transport vehicles and endeavour to ensure that pupils remain seated with seatbelts fastened during the journey. Any difficulty experienced in gaining co-operation from pupils in the wearing of seatbelts must be reported to the school.

In line with best practice, schools will work in partnership with parents/carers and the council to ensure the wearing of seatbelts by pupils on all school transport journeys, where a seatbelt is provided.