



Parents & Carers
Lewis & Harris Schools

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Sandwick Road, Stornoway. HS1 2BW

Rathad Shanndabhaig, Steornabhagh. HS1 2BW

Telephone	01851 822727
e-mail	donald.macleod@cne-siar.gov.uk
Writer	Donald Macleod
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Your Reference	
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Dear Parents and Carers,

COVID-19: SCHOOL TRANSPORT UPDATE

I would like to begin by thanking parents, families and pupils for your patience and understanding over the weekend and today as the Comhairle and its transport partners worked through the impact of the confirmed cases of Covid-19 amongst bus drivers and the associated requirement to self isolate affecting a significant number of school transport staff.

On Friday afternoon, it looked very likely that we would see significant disruption to school services today and we had to make preparations accordingly in terms of asking parents to undertake transport themselves, wherever possible.

As operators worked over the weekend to rationalise services, amend timetables, clean vehicles and identify relief drivers, it became possible, throughout today, for a number of routes to operate. Whilst we appreciate the frustration felt by some parents about seeing buses running today, we could not give firm guarantees, going into a Monday morning service, that this would be the case and services continue to be very vulnerable to change at short notice.

Having now been able to talk further with operators and be in a more certain position in terms of the impact of positive tests and self-isolation requirements, we can now confirm the following:

- From Tuesday 9th March, we expect that, apart from one area, all school transport services across Lewis and Harris will operate and pupils expected to attend school will be able to access their service as normal. There are a small number of minor adjustments to individual services and this will be communicated locally to schools and parents affected.
- Whilst we expect at the moment to be able to run Bus na Comhairle services to and from Back School, Tong School and to and from the Nicolson Institute from the Back/Tong area, there continues to be a higher risk of disruption to these routes. Every effort is being made to make sure these services run as planned but parents and pupils should be prepared for the possibility of disruption over the remainder of this week. We will try to keep parents, pupils and schools informed of any changes, where it is possible to do so.

On all routes across Lewis and Harris, there remains a degree of risk that any further positive Covid-19 cases or self-isolation could affect operations or cause short notice changes or cancellations. We will endeavour to keep parents informed of any further issues or changes.

We would like to thank all Comhairle transportation staff, partner bus operators and Education Resources staff that worked tirelessly throughout the weekend and into today to get services running for our school pupils across Lewis and Harris.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that our schools and bus operators continue to follow Covid-19 hygiene and safety requirements to make sure that schools and school transport services remain as safe as possible for all that use them. In support of this, we would remind everyone of the need to wear a face covering on schools transport, maintain physical distancing from other travellers from different households and use hand sanitisation points.

Yours sincerely



[10-041-21]

Donald Macleod
Senior Education Officer
Department of Education, Skills and Children's Services