

Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel

Guide for parents and carers

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1	November 2013	Passenger Transport	Reinforced and clarified parent and student responsibilities (sections 8.1 and 10). Outlined student and driver responsibilities when a student has missed their stop (section 11). Included a Student Travel Planner to assist parents and carers in planning their child's travel to and from school (section 10.1 and attachment). Added a new section that introduces the Critical Response Plan (section 16).
2	September 2016	Passenger Transport	Feedback from the Department of Education, NT Police and bus operators included to clarify in a clear and concise manner the responsibilities of stakeholders and update operational processes to assist the management of student behaviours. Updated pages 4 to 5 to include a web link to the CCTV Policy and response to recent issues that occurred on the network. Updated page 7 to bring the Code in line with other jurisdictions and at the request of bus operators.
3	November 2019	Passenger Transport	Transition children only permitted on buses were assessed as competent by the principal. Adults only permitted on buses to manage misbehaviour. Obligation on children to report incidents they witness to the driver immediately or parent / carer / teacher as soon as possible if unsafe to report to driver. Prohibition of use of phones and other devices to record. CCTV procedure amended to comply with FOI. Children not to be placed in the care of Transit Officers.
4	February 2022	Passenger Transport	Included Chief Health Officer directions and mask mandates within the code including student and parent / carer responsibilities.
5	August 2022	Passenger Transport	Changed date of <i>Information Act 1992</i> to 2002. Updated section 7.4.1 to include that Transit Officers may be called to assist in the Darwin, Palmerston and up to Humpty Doo areas only. Included note in section 9.3 that Transit Officers only patrol the Darwin, Palmerston and up to Humpty Doo areas only.
6	February 2023	Passenger Transport	Minor section reference updates and changes to contact details.

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1. Introduction

Each year students going to and from schools in the Northern Territory undertake over one million bus trips. Northern Territory students traveling free of charge on designated School Buses is a benefit provided by the Government of the Northern Territory.

Most students behave appropriately most of the time. However, inappropriate behaviour by some students can make travel unpleasant for their peers, distract the driver, and result in damage to vehicles or, in extreme cases, put bus occupants and other road users at serious risk.

To help ensure that bus travel is safe and enjoyable for all school students, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) together with the Department of Education (DoE), bus operators, schools and police, have developed this Code of Conduct for students, schools, school bus drivers, bus operators and parents/carers.

2. What is the Code of Conduct?

The Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel (the Code) is a set of guidelines for students, parents/carers to follow when travelling on school buses. It forms the basis for the specific rules to manage behaviour on buses and at interchanges.

The Code also includes procedures for bus operators, bus drivers and schools to follow.

3. Who can Travel on School buses?

Students from years one to twelve attending primary, middle and senior schools in the Northern Territory can use the school bus network to travel to or from school. See 3.1 for information regarding the circumstances that transition students may be permitted to travel on the school bus network.

Parents/carers must ensure their children are competent to independently travel on board school buses and that they are able to identify their own bus stop or drop off location before they are allowed to travel on the bus.

For special needs school transport, please refer to the [Transport for Students with Special Needs Policy](#).

For transport to and from Intensive English Unit Schools, please refer to the [English as a Second Language page on the DoE website](#).

3.1. Transition students on school buses

Parents/carers can apply for transition students to travel on school buses through their school. The school principal will review the student's competence and independence to travel on the school bus. This could include considering whether the student will need to change buses, whether a parent/carer will be at the bus stop for drop off and pick up and whether the transition student will be travelling with a buddy or older sibling.

If the school principal supports travel for the student, they will forward student and travel arrangement information to the DIPL for approval.

3.2. Adults on school buses

Adults, including parents/carers, are **not** permitted to travel on school buses.

In special circumstances, the DIPL may permit an adult to travel on a school bus. For example, this could be a school employee assisting a bus driver with managing behavioural issues on a bus.

For this to happen, the school principal must submit a request to the DIPL. The request must include justification and a copy of the adult's working with children clearance. The DIPL, in consultation with the DoE, will review and approve or not approve the request.

4. How does the Code benefit you?

The Code sets standards of behaviour and provides an agreed systematic process so that disruptions or inappropriate behaviour by students are dealt with quickly and fairly. It also aims to minimise the number and severity of these disruptions.

The behavioural standards table in Section 5 lists some of the types of behaviour expected on school buses.

5. What are the Standards?

Parents/carers should discuss these standards with their children so they clearly understand what they should and should not do.

For most students, complying with the Code will not require any change in their current behaviour. By continuing to act in accordance with the Code, students will help ensure that all passengers have a comfortable and safe journey.

Bus drivers also abide by this Code. To provide feedback on bus driver behaviour, please contact the DIPL in the first instance on 8924 7666.

Table 1: Behavioural Standards for School Bus Travel

Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code of Conduct
Respect other people and property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat other people and their possessions with respect. • Make a seat available for those who may require it, i.e. student who is injured / on crutches. • Follow the bus driver's directions without argument. • Do not interfere with bus property, equipment, shelters or signs by marking, removing or damaging them. • Store school bags/equipment under the seat or in appropriate luggage areas. • Report other passengers who are deliberately damaging bus property, equipment, shelters or signs to the driver or a parent / carer.
Wait for the bus in an orderly manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait well back from the kerb or roadside until the bus stops and allow other passengers to leave the bus first.

Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code of Conduct
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand quietly without calling out or shouting in an obscene, unruly or aggressive manner. • Do not push or shove other people and step onto the bus in single file.
<p>While on the bus, conduct yourself in an orderly manner</p>	<p>Students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all instructions issued by the driver, and must wear seat belts if they are fitted. • Middle School and Secondary students are to produce a valid Student ID card if requested by the bus driver / operator, Transit Officer or Police Officer. • Sit properly on a seat if one is available (in an allocated seat if directed by the driver). • If standing, remain in the designated area (i.e.: stand behind the front passenger seat) and ensure a good hand hold on the strap, chair or railing. • Speak quietly and do not create unnecessary noise that may distract the driver. • Follow all directions specified by the NT Chief Health Officer (CHO) as required. <p>Students must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand on the bus, if standing is not permitted. For more information on when standing is permitted on school buses, please refer to the Standing on Buses Policy. • Sit in the luggage compartment. • Move around on the bus or unbuckle the seat belt while it is in motion. • Place feet or jump on the seats, or stand forward of the front passenger seat. • Fight, bully, harass or intimidate other vehicle occupants. If an incident occurs, inform the bus driver as soon as practical. • Interfere with the driving controls, emergency exits, switches. • Vandalise or damage a seat belt fitted to a school bus or other students' property. • Distract the driver. • Play audible music (loud music that may distract the bus driver) without the permission of the driver. • Swear, yell and spit or use offensive language. • Smoke or consume food and drink without the permission of the driver (other than water from a sealable container). • Throw any article around or from the bus. • Leave rubbish on the bus, or at stops or Interchanges.

Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code of Conduct
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow any part of their body to protrude from the bus while it is in motion. • Carry dangerous items (such as knives etc.). • Use a mobile phone or another device of any description, to film, photograph or otherwise obtain image or audio of other passengers, drivers or their surroundings either inside or external to the vehicle. • Possess, discuss or distribute any material that may be considered inappropriate or offensive (for example material of a violent or sexually explicit nature).
Use designated stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the responsibility of students to disembark at their correct designated stop. When travelling on rural services advise the driver where to disembark when a designated stop is not available. The driver will stop in a safe location as close to the request as is practical.
When leaving the bus, do so in an orderly manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait until the bus stops before moving to get off. • Never cross the road in front of or behind the bus. Wait until the bus has moved away and it is safe to cross. • Use crossings or traffic lights where available. • Stop, look, listen and think before crossing the road.
In case of an emergency or a breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the driver's instructions. • Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion. • Wait in the area indicated by the driver.

6. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras are one of a number of measures that help to reduce inappropriate behaviour and reduce fear of criminal activity in a defined area. This system is used throughout the school bus network and operates in line with applicable law and guidelines.

Where CCTV is fitted, the footage is stored for up to ten days by the bus operator. Where a serious offence has occurred such as an assault, carrying a dangerous item or destruction of bus operator property the footage will be stored for up to 12 months or a longer period of time.

CCTV footage will be used in investigations in relation to incidents on the school bus or at bus interchanges.

Due to information privacy principles, parents/carers are not usually permitted to view CCTV footage. However, parents and guardians can request to view CCTV footage through school principals, in the case of disciplinary matters, or the NT Police, in the case of potential offences. School principals are required to consider requests in accordance with the information privacy principles contained in the *Information Act 2002*.

For further information refer to the Passenger Transport Branch's [Policy on Public and School Bus Closed Circuit Television Systems \(CCTV\)](#).

7. Responsibilities

7.1. Student Responsibilities and Consequences

7.1.1. On the Network

Parents/carers must be confident that their children are competent to travel independently on board school buses and ensure that they are able to identify their own bus stop or drop off location.

Students should immediately inform the bus driver if they miss their desired bus stop or if they have caught the wrong bus. The bus driver will then contact the bus operator to clarify the correct procedure to ensure the student is safely transported to or from school.

School bus network morning services will only drop off at school and no other location on the route of travel without prior written approval from the school with the consent of the parent/carer.

If Middle and Secondary School students wish to travel on school buses and are not in school uniform, they should provide a valid student photo identification in order to get free travel. If they do not have a valid student ID they may need to pay the fare. However, it is expected that a student should not be left behind under any circumstance.

7.1.2. What happens if students do not comply with the Code?

To promote consistency and fairness in responding to students who do not follow the Code, inappropriate behaviour has been divided into three categories.

There are various actions that may be taken if a student does not follow the Code. These range from a warning, banning from travel or possible civil or police action.

The following factors will be taken into consideration when categorising the breaches of the Code:

- the threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident;
- the seriousness of the breach;
- the age of the student; and
- whether the breach was the first or one of a series of incidents about which the student had been previously cautioned.

For further information please refer to the Section 9 Procedures for Managing Inappropriate Behaviour.

7.1.3. Category 1 – Nuisance and Offensive Behaviour

Examples – This includes behaviour that may be irritating or unpleasant but is not physically dangerous. These behaviours might include, but are not limited to:

- failing to show a student identification card upon request;
- supplying a false name or no name when requested;
- failing to report observations of breaches of “the code” to a person of authority (parent, teacher or bus driver/operator), unless doing so may place the student at risk;

- not waiting for the bus to stop before moving to get off;
- continually and unnecessarily pushing the STOP bell;
- eating and drinking on the bus (other than water from a sealable bottle) without the permission of the driver; or
- using offensive body language or language (e. g. swearing or racist language).

Result – Repeated incidents within a 10 week period will result in a written warning being forwarded to the school by the bus operator. Repeated offences may lead to a ban on the student travelling for up to 10 school days.

7.1.4. Category 2 – Dangerous Behaviour

Examples – This category includes behaviours where there may be some physical danger to individuals or assets, including, but not limited to:

- distracting the driver by persistent noise (e.g. yelling and shouting);
- spitting;
- bullying, harassing and intimidating other passengers;
- damaging other students' property;
- allowing any part of their body to protrude from the bus while it is in motion;
- not wearing an available seat belt in a seat belt-equipped bus;
- standing or sitting on the steps or in areas that are not set aside for standing, or refusing to sit down;
- moving about the bus while it is in motion;
- swinging on handrails;
- crossing the road in front of, or behind the bus, before the bus has moved away;
- deployment of spray-on deodorant/perfume while on the bus;
- using electronic devices to record visual or audio recordings;
- throwing objects inside or outside the bus;
- deliberately stopping others from getting off the bus;
- group inappropriate behaviour (e.g. yelling and shouting, throwing objects etc.); refusing to obey reasonable instructions from the driver;
- not abiding to CHO directions e.g. not wearing a mask during a mandatory mask mandate if you are a student 12 years or older; unless you have a lawful exemption; or
- verbally threatening the driver.

Result – Such behaviour may result, with no warnings given, in a ban on the student travelling for up to 15 school days.

7.1.5. Category 3 – Very Destructive and Dangerous Behaviour

Examples – This category includes behaviours that are very dangerous to individuals or very destructive such as:

- fighting;
- smoking;
- using matches or lighters;
- carrying dangerous items (e.g. knives etc.);
- pushing other passengers out of the doors or windows;
- deliberately interfering with the driving controls, emergency exits or switches;
- destruction of bus operator property (e.g. breaking windows, slashing seats and seat belts); or
- physically attacking students or the driver.

Result – Such behaviour will result in an immediate 20 school day bus travel ban (with no warnings) while decisions are made by the bus operator about the duration of a longer term ban which may lead to the permanent refusal of travel privileges, or possible civil or police action.

The cost of repair of damage to a bus operator's property may be sought from the student's parent/carer.

7.1.6. Repeat Offenders

Where a student has been a repeat offender (for example, three periods of banned travel within a 12 month period), the DIPL Manager Public Transport, or a representative will meet with the DoE, bus operator, school principal, parent/carer and school based constable to review the appropriateness of a travel ban of up to 12 months.

The bus operator and school principal may need to consider if the student's return to the bus is conditional on the parent/carer, student and bus operator signing a written behaviour management agreement setting out conditions for travel. If the student breaches the agreement, then refusal of travel is immediate.

7.1.7. Reporting Incidents

Students are encouraged to immediately report incidents where other students are breaching the Code to a person of authority (i.e. the driver, a teacher or a parent / carer).

Students should try to immediately report all incidents of inappropriate behaviour to the driver, particularly incidents involving deliberate damage to bus operator or other students' property. If a student feels unsafe doing so, the student should try to report the incident as soon as possible after the incident, to a teacher or parent / carer.

7.2. School Responsibilities

Schools and school principals play a key role in advising students of their responsibilities and the consequences of breaching the Code.

School principals are responsible for contacting the parents/carers of children who have received warnings or banning letters and informing them that such letters have been received. If the parents are unable to be contacted prior to the commencement date of the ban, the school must advise the bus operator.

Schools also assist by:

- providing Road Safety Education in particular road crossing after students get off buses;
- ensuring the school community is aware of the Code and how to access it;
- communicating with students about the importance of adhering to the Code;
- providing assistance in managing breaches of the Code in consultation with the relevant bus operator and parents/carers;
- manage requests and complaints by parents/carers regarding a banning notice or seeking to view CCTV;
- review and, if appropriate, provide written approval for a student to be dropped at an alternate location on the way to school in the morning, e.g. doctor appointment.

7.3. Parent or Carer Responsibilities

Parents/carers have responsibility for the behaviour of their children and hold primary responsibility for ensuring their child attends school. Accordingly, they should:

- ensure their child understands the Code, is competent to independently travel on the school bus network, can cross the road safely and can identify their own bus stop or drop off location;
- understand the school bus network is complex and may not be able to meet all transportation requests;
- be aware that school bus transport is primarily provided to the nearest appropriate Government schools, and school bus network morning services only drop off at schools and no other location on the route of travel;
- if requested, attend a meeting with the bus operator and school principal to discuss their child's inappropriate behaviour and the consequences if the child's behaviour has breached the Code;
- contact the bus operator to discuss matters regarding their child's school bus travel (it is not appropriate for parents/carers to discuss these matters with bus drivers);
- contact the school in the event that their child reports an incident of another students' inappropriate behaviour;
- recognise that if their child is refused travel, they will need to make alternative travel arrangements and meet any costs for such transport; understand they may be required to afford restitution in cash to cover costs incurred by damage to bus property, equipment, shelters and signs;
- understand that parents/carers are not permitted to travel on school buses;
- understand that bus drivers and buses may change school routes due to operational requirements;

- understand that bus drivers cannot be expected to know each child's origin and destination (e.g. which stop they need to get off at);
- ensure that a backup wet season travel plan is in place so that children have alternative arrangements available if flooding restricts the operation of normal school bus services;
- understand that bus operators may review images captured on security systems such as Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), to substantiate claims of breaches of the Code;
- understand that a request to view CCTV must be submitted through the school or Police in the first instance and not directly from the bus operator;
- follow directions outlined by the NT CHO as required; and
- realise that a record of a student's inappropriate behaviour will be kept on file.

7.3.1. Student Travel Planner

A Student Travel Planner is available (see Appendix) to assist parents / carers in planning their child's travel to and from school.

All parents and primary caregivers are encouraged to use this checklist to help get their child safely to and from school.

7.4. Bus Driver and Operator Responsibilities

Bus drivers are responsible for the general operation of the bus including:

- driving in a safe manner and taking reasonable care for the safety of the passengers (students); and ensuring no student is left in a bus at the end of service;
- complying with all legal requirements of the relevant legislations and Code;
- treating all students with respect;
- contacting the bus operator for clarification of correct procedures when a student informs them that they have missed their stop or caught the wrong bus;
- providing reasonable directions to ensure the safety and comfort of the students;
- contacting the bus operator for clarification of correct procedures if there is any uncertainty in relation to student inappropriate behaviour; and
- ensuring that no person travels on a dedicated school bus other than a student or a duly authorised person.

When a student breaches the Code of Conduct the bus driver shall:

- advise the student that their behaviour was inappropriate;
- request the student's name and school;
- advise the student that they will be reported to the school and bus operator and that their behaviour may be investigated; and
- record the incident and pass this information onto the bus operator, which will then make a determination of the appropriate action. When the outcome is an actual ban for more serious inappropriate behaviour, the CCTV footage will be stored and forwarded to the school and

the DIPL for further consideration.

7.4.1. Students not to be put off buses for inappropriate behaviour

Bus operators should not remove students for inappropriate behaviour from a dedicated school bus while on route.

However, where the bus operator or driver holds a reasonable belief that a student constitutes, or is likely to constitute an immediate danger to the health, safety or wellbeing of the student or any other person, the driver may:

- stop the bus and arrange for the student to be removed and placed in the care of the Police or teacher from their school. Transit Officers may be called to assist in the Darwin, Palmerston, and up to Humpty Doo areas, however students should not be placed in their care ; and
- if there is a health problem, radio in for assistance and an ambulance.

7.5. Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics Responsibilities

The DIPL has overall administrative responsibility for public transport in the Northern Territory. The DIPL has responsibility for developing and distributing the Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel in consultation and conjunction with schools, the NT Police, the DoE, bus operators, parent groups and non-government organisations.

8. Fair Processes

Students will only be refused travel after the bus operator has informed the school principal in line with Section 9 Procedures for Managing Inappropriate Behaviour.

If parents/carers have any questions about decisions made by bus operators in responding to breaches of the Code, they should take the matter to the school concerned. The school should contact the DIPL if the matter cannot be resolved. If parents/carers remain dissatisfied with the bus operator's decision, they may contact the DIPL and request a review of the decision.

Bus operators should note that the DIPL may issue an instruction that a bus operator's decision to refuse travel to a student be deferred while the matter is being investigated in consultation with stakeholders. The bus operator and drivers must follow this instruction.

9. Procedures for Managing Inappropriate Behaviour

Bus drivers are responsible for the safe carriage of students travelling to and from school on both dedicated school buses and public transport buses. In cases of student inappropriate behaviour, the driver will follow these procedures.

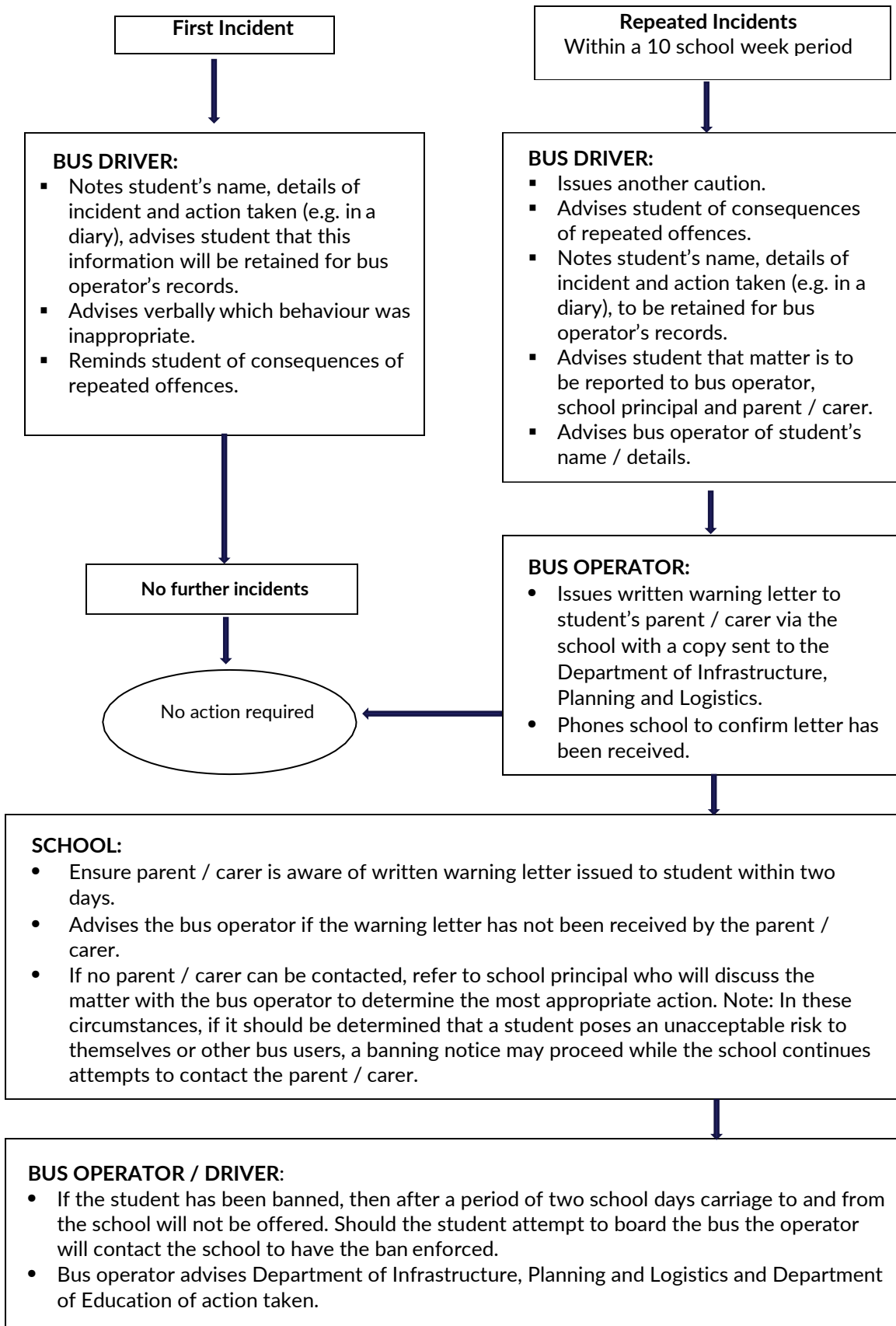
Depending on the nature of the inappropriate behaviour, this may involve simply cautioning the student on the spot, formally recording the inappropriate behaviour as part of the driver's own record, or immediately reporting the incident to the bus operator for follow up, which may lead to a ban on school bus travel.

Where a ban is imposed for more serious behaviour such as an assault, carrying a dangerous weapon or destruction of bus operator property, the bus operator will provide a copy of the CCTV footage to the school and DIPL for further reference.

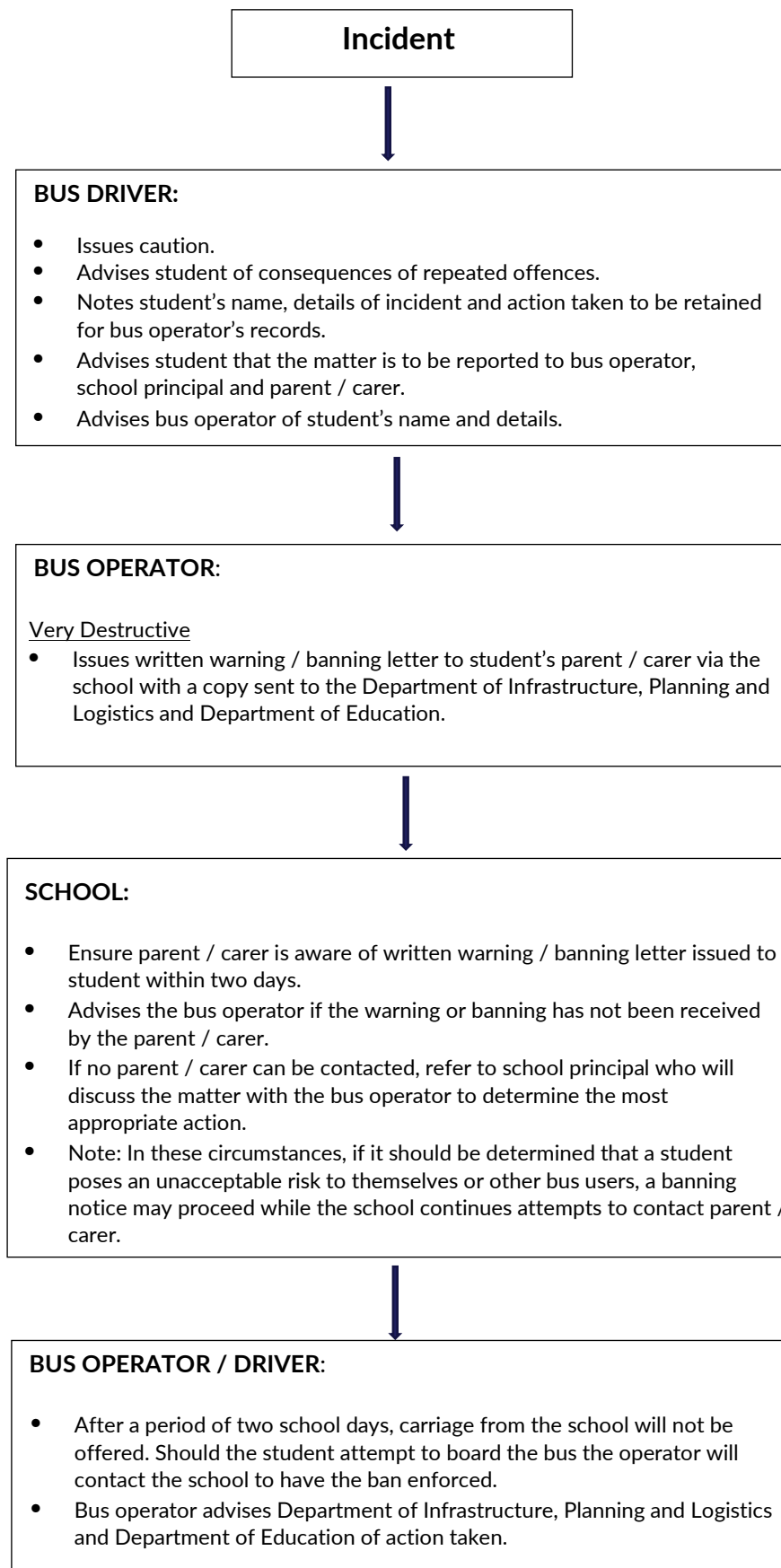
For most students, complying with the Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel will not require any change in their current behaviour. By continuing to act in accordance with this Code, students will help ensure that all passengers have a comfortable and safe journey. Section 5 lists examples of behavioural standards expected by students.

Flowcharts displaying the procedures for each of the three categories are on the following pages.

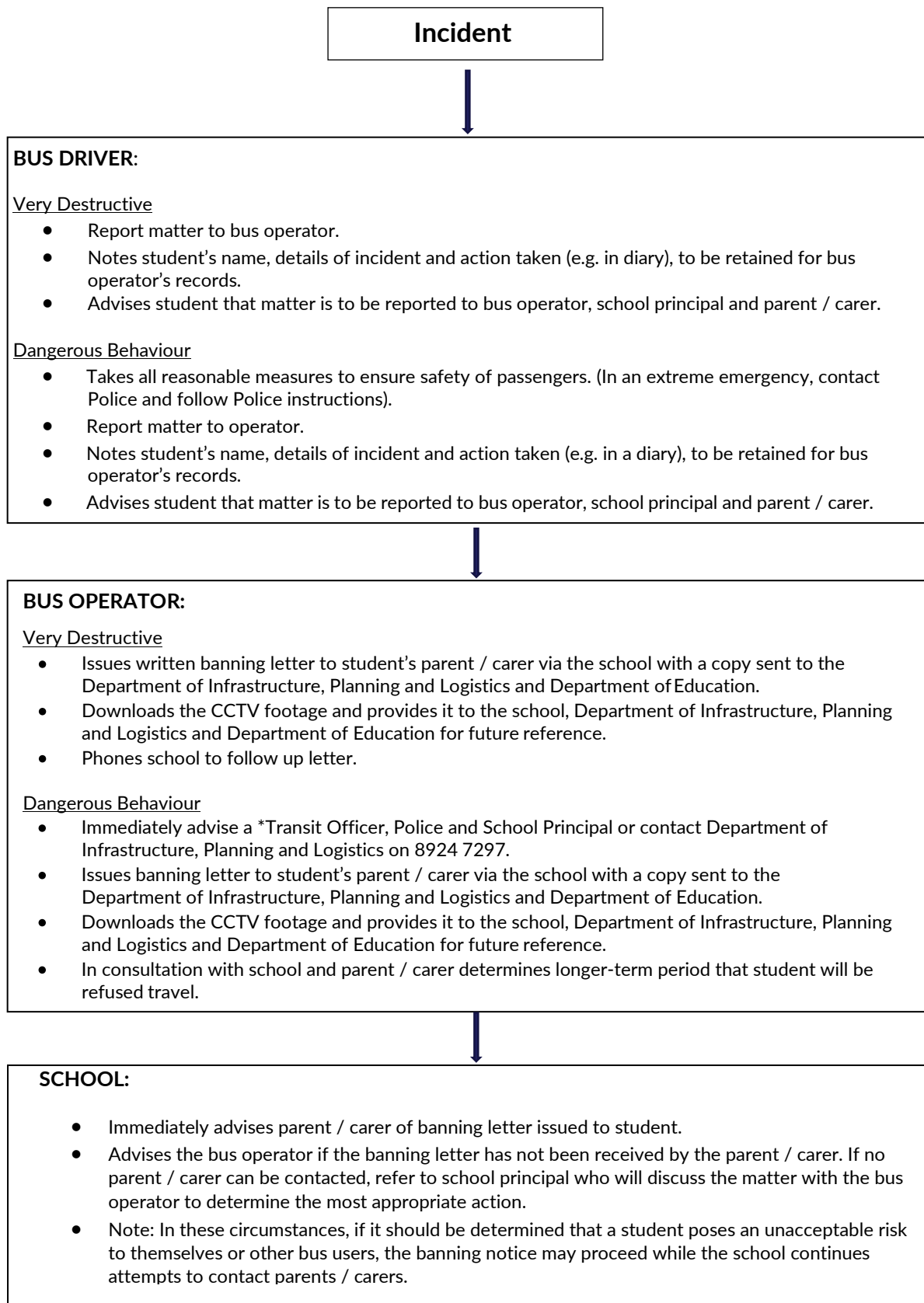
9.1. Category 1 Procedure



9.2. Category 2 Procedure



9.3. Category 3 Procedure



*Transit Officers patrol the bus network area in Darwin, Palmerston and up to Humpty Doo.

10. Critical Incident Management

In rare circumstances a critical incident will occur during the delivery of school bus services.

A critical incident is an incident that significantly impacts on the normal transport of students to and from school using school transport services contracted by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

A critical incident response is coordinated by the DIPL in close consultation with the DoE, bus operators and other key stakeholders according to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Critical Incident Response Plan for Public and School Transport. Student safety is the primary concern in responding to a critical incident.

11. Review

The Code is reviewed by DIPL on a three-yearly basis.

12. Contact Details

12.1. School Bus Operators Contact Details

Contractor	Location	Position	Phone
CDC Northern Territory	Darwin	Operations Manager	8944 2444
CDC Northern Territory	Humpty Doo	Depot Manager	8988 2762
CDC Northern Territory	Alice Springs	Depot Manager	8952 5611
CDC Northern Territory	Batchelor	Depot Manager	8988 2762
Territory Transit	Katherine	Operations Manager	8946 2003
Golbuy Transport	Nhulunbuy	Manager	1800 627 382
G & C Pastoral	Ti Tree	Manager	8952 2966

12.2. Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics

Public Transport 08 8924 7577 public.transport@nt.gov.au

12.3. Department of Education

School Operations 08 8999 5612 schoolops@education.nt.gov.au

Appendix – Student Travel Planner

All parents and primary caregivers are encouraged to use this checklist to help get your child safely to and from school.

	Does my child?	How can I help?
Bus	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand the Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel?	<input type="checkbox"/> Read the Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the bus number and stop to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure your child is capable of travelling independently.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the bus number and stop from school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice walking your child to and from their bus stop.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know what to do if they miss their normal stop?	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure your child stays back from the road and waits until the bus stops.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Need a school bus buddy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss what to do if your child misses their stop; stay on the bus and tell the driver, don't get off at the next stop.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know their wet season backup travel plans?	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss wet season backup travel plans.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand that they must follow directions outlined by the CHO as required.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure your child is following directions by the CHO as required.
Walk	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the safest pathway to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice walking to and from school.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know how to cross a road safely?	<input type="checkbox"/> Set an example, always use the crossings.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a walking buddy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Be sure to wait for traffic to stop before crossing.
Car	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the safest pathway to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice walking to and from school.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know how to cross a road safely?	<input type="checkbox"/> Set an example, always use the crossings.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a walking buddy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Be sure to wait for traffic to stop before crossing.
Bike	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the safest pathway to school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice walking to and from school.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know how to cross a road safely?	<input type="checkbox"/> Set an example, always use the crossings.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a walking buddy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Be sure to wait for traffic to stop before crossing.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a bike helmet?	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the safest places to cross the roads.

Does your child know their contact details? Cut, laminate and store these details in your child's school bag.

My contact details:			
Name			
Address			
School			
Bus Number		Bus stop location	