



# MHCBE Transportation Frequently Asked Questions

## NEW: COVID-19 Questions

**Q: *Is my child required to wear a mask while riding the school bus?***

**A:** Students in grades 4-12 must wear masks as part of new school safety measures. Students and staff will receive 2 reusable masks from the government of Alberta. Mask use will be mandatory in all settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Students will be required to wear them in all shared and common areas such as in hallways and on buses. Exemptions will be made for students and staff who are unable to wear a mask due to medical or other needs. Mask use for kindergarten to grade three students will continue to be optional as mask use for younger children is a challenge due to difficulties with proper fit and compliance.

**Q: *Will hand sanitizer or disinfectant wipes be available?***

**A:** Hand sanitizer will be available for use. All children will be asked to sanitize their hands after boarding and before leaving the school bus. The bus will be sanitized prior to the morning and afternoon routes. Between routes, the bus driver will be sanitizing high touch surfaces.

**Q: *Will there be a seating plan implemented on my child's bus?***

**A:** Buses will be loaded starting from the back of the bus to the front. This is to help prevent from contact tracing while loading the bus. Medicine Hat Catholic will revisit depending on the capacity of the bus route.

## Eligibility & Attendance Zones

**Q. *Does my child qualify for school bus transportation?***

**A.** Visit Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education's website <https://www.mhcbe.ab.ca/parents>; Under: Transportation Tab

- Elementary school students who live 1.2 kilometers or more from the school in their attendance zone
- Middle school and high school students who live 2.4 kilometers or more from the school in their attendance zone
- Elementary school students attending a middle school who reside 1.2 kilometers or more from the school in their attendance zone
- Kindergarten students – one-way transportation (transportation to school if attending only morning Kindergarten program OR transportation to home if attending only afternoon program) for those who live 1.2 kilometers or more from the school in their attendance zone
- Special education students directed to attend Division programming outside their attendance zone
- Special programming students from all Division attendance zones, regardless of their designated school boundary
- Pre-school aged children who qualify for PUF may not ride the bus, however, provisions for transportation, such as parent provided contracts, may be arranged, subject to eligibility
- It will be the practice of the Division to allow students who do not qualify for the provincial transportation grant to ride a school bus if space on an existing bus allows and if students present themselves at an

existing stop. Priority for non-eligible students will be determined on the basis of distance from the school, with preference given to younger students.

**Q. *What is my child's school attendance boundary?***

**A.** Visit Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education's website <https://www.mhcbe.ab.ca/parents>  
Under: Transportation Tab

**Q. *Does my child have to attend the school nearest our residence?***

**A.** For the most part Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education has an open boundary policy which means you can apply to any school in the system as long as there is room available at that school. However, transportation will not be provided if you choose to send your child to another school which falls outside of the attendance zone in which you reside.

**Q. *Are there exceptions to the rule of attending outside your attendance zone?***

**A.** Yes. Students from all School Division, regardless of designated school boundary, may attend the following programs. Transportation will be provided for eligible students.

- École St. John Paul II School - French Immersion (Kindergarten to Grade 6)
- St. Mary's School - French Immersion (Grades 7 to 9) & Fine Arts (Grades 7 to 9)
- Notre Dame Academy - Sports Academy (Grades 6 to 9)

**Q. *Does Medicine Hat Transit Charter Bus Service provide transportation for students attending Notre Dame Academy?***

**A.** No, this service is being provided by Southland Transportation for eligible students.

**Q. *We are moving ... will transportation still be provided?***

**A.** When a student no longer resides in the attendance zone for the school they are currently attending, the parent must provide transportation to school of choice.

**Q. *I have chosen a caregiver outside of my child's school attendance zone. Will transportation be available from my caregiver location?***

**A.** No. Students are only eligible for transportation from place of residence to school. (See School Act 273).

**Q. *Custody of student is shared by parents in two separate locations. Is transportation provided to both residences?***

**A.** No. Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education will transport a student to school from one place of residence (see School Act Section 273). Eligible residence will be determined by address school submits to Alberta Education.

**Q. *Are pre-school children eligible for transportation?***

**A.** No. Pre-school children must be transported to and from school by a parent or guardian.

### **School Bus Information**

**Q. *What are Southland hours of operation?***

**A.** Southland Transportation Dispatch (6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) - (403) 526-4655  
Routes, pick up points and times (6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) - Refer to Southland website - <http://www.southland.ca/medicinehat/>

- or direct questions to the School Bus Dispatch at (403) 526-4655

Emergency Contact (after 6:00 p.m.) - (403) 502-3827 or (403) 878-6789

Eligibility (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) - Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education - (403) 502-8351

**Q. *How long does it take for transportation arrangements to come into effect?***

**A.** If a route change is required to accommodate your child, it typically will take up to 5 business days once information is received. Routes are prepared prior to the start of the school year. Because route arrangements have already been completed, altering routes requires time.

**Q. *Who is responsible for my child?***

**A.** It is the parents' responsibility for their child's safety and conduct while walking to, from and waiting at a designated bus stop. The School Division's responsibility begins when the student boards the bus in the morning and is retained until the child leaves the bus at the end of the day, or until released to the parent/guardian.

**Q. *The bus drives right past my house. Why can't it stop at my house?***

**A.** Higher frequency of stops will delay the bus making it difficult to meet bell times and overall student ride time will be longer.

**Q. *I cannot see the bus stop from my house.***

**A.** The School Division provides transportation for several hundred students to and from school each day. We are not able to position bus stops so that all parents are able to see the stop from their home.

**Q. *Can my pick up or drop time be changed earlier/later so I can get to work?***

**A.** No. The Carrier cannot adjust pick up or drop times to suit parent's needs as bus routes are interactive and a single change for one student can impact the timing for dozens of other students.

**Q. *Can I request that the bus driver change my pick up time, pick up point or route?***

**A.** No. Drivers are employees of the transportation carrier and not the Board. The carrier is under contract with the Board and as such both the carrier and driver must comply with the board's policies and terms of the contract. All requests should be made through the transportation carrier and not the individual drivers.

**Q. *Why is my child's bus late?***

**A.** Weather, traffic, driver absenteeism, maintenance difficulties and unforeseen incidents are responsible for delays in arrival of school buses. Please know that our transportation provider endeavours to have all buses running on schedule each and every day. In the event your bus does not arrive as scheduled, you may contact Southland transportation at 403-526-4655. Please allow 10-20 minutes from pick up/drop off time before calling.

Alternatively, parents can access "my school bus monitor" via the <http://www.southland.ca/medicinehat/> Website.

- Go to the website and select "My School Bus Monitor" Tab, then type in the name of the school their child attends, then search. When a bus is delayed 10 minutes or more, an explanation as to why and how late it is running is updated on the website.

**Q. *Why can't you call when you know the bus will be late?***

- A. There may be as many as 50 students on each bus. It would be impossible to contact everyone in such a short time frame. Also, many parents are not home or are waiting at the bus stop with their child.
- Q. *Why are there only a few students on some buses and my child's bus is crowded?***
- A. *Distance from school, number of buses and drivers, and grouping of students and neighborhoods are all factors that are considered. It is not possible to have an equal number of students on every bus run.*
- Q. *If students are misbehaving on the bus and mistreating my child, who should I contact?***
- A. The school bus is an extension of the school and as such the school principal is responsible for the discipline of students. It is expected that the students follow not only specific bus rules but those rules and regulations that the principal has established at the school.
- Please visit Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education's website  
<https://www.mhcbe.ab.ca/parents>; Under: Transportation Tab  
 Please Refer to: Transportation Handbook  
                     AP 550 Transportation of Students  
                     Student Conduct on Buses
- Q. *May the School Division suspend busing services for a child?***
- A. Yes. Transportation is a privilege, not a right. The principal has the right and responsibility to withdraw transportation privileges to maintain a safe riding environment for other students on the bus.
- Q. *Can the school bus driver suspend my child from riding the bus?***
- A. No. A driver may recommend to the principal that a passenger be suspended from riding the bus for a specified period of time for breaking any of the bussing rules.
- Q. *Who is responsible for resolving discipline problems that occur on the bus?***
- A. The bus driver may attempt to correct inappropriate behavior. If not resolved, it will require the intervention of a school principal. The bus driver will complete a report out that our Student Management Coordinator forwards to each school principal to address any issues that may arise.
- Q. *Who is driving my child to school?***
- A. The School Division contracts out our bus services to a local transportation carrier that recruits and trains drivers. All drivers are required to have safety and first aid training and require a criminal background and child welfare check before they get behind the wheel of the school bus with children on board.
- Q. *I would like to talk to my child's bus driver about a problem on the bus. How do I go about this? Couldn't I just meet the driver at the bus stop location?***
- A. Please do not approach the bus driver at the bus stop. Security and safety of our driver and student passengers are of greatest concern at bus stops. You may contact Southland Transportation directly regarding any concern you have regarding problems on the bus.
- Q. *Can a parent or guardian board or ride a school bus?***
- A. Parents and guardians are not allowed on regular school bus runs. Harassing the driver or other bussed student is a serious offence which may be reported to the City of Medicine Hat Police.
- Q. *When would I expect bus service to be cancelled?***

A. In the unlikely event transportation needs to be cancelled due to weather conditions, announcements will be made through the local radio station.

**Q. *What happens if a school bus is involved in an accident?***

A. If your child's bus is involved in an accident, the driver will immediately radio the dispatcher with vital information. The dispatcher will notify the appropriate emergency personnel to respond. The school will be notified and an appropriate school representative may be asked to go to the scene depending on how serious the situation may be. If your child needs to be transported anywhere for any reason by emergency medical technicians, we will notify you or your emergency contact as soon as possible. As well, all parents will be contacted by school administration if their child is on a bus that is involved in an accident even if there are no injuries.

**Q. *Why can't my child eat on the bus?***

A. Children cannot eat on the bus because it is a shared environment and due to the potential for severe allergic reactions of other students.

**Q. *My child is having a birthday party after school and can his/her friends ride the bus home with he/she?***

A. Students are encouraged to ride on their assigned bus. This procedure ensures consistency and a regular schedule for students and bus drivers and provides safety to students so that they do not inadvertently board a school bus or leave a school bus at a different bus stop. Bus capacity is limited therefore students who reside in the area where the bus is assigned, will have first priority to ride.

**Q. *Can my child be dropped off at a different stop?***

A. Students are encouraged to disembark from the bus at their assigned stop. This procedure ensures consistency and a regular schedule for students and bus drivers. The Transportation carrier is under contract with the Board and as such both the carrier and the driver must comply with the Board's policies and term of the contract to ensure that all bus stops meet safety standards. In addition, unassigned stops will delay the bus making it difficult to meet assigned drop off times and overall student ride time.