

## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding School Bus Transportation

Oconee County Transportation Department receives many calls a week regarding different issues with the bus routes. Here is a list of FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS to assist you with answers to the most commonly asked questions. If your question is not answered here, please do not hesitate to phone 706-769-3508 and every attempt will be made to answer your concerns.

1. Why is my child's bus late?
2. Why did you suspend my child from riding the bus?
3. Why can't you call when you know that the bus will be late?
4. Why can't you come further into my sub-division?
5. Why does my child have a seat assignment?
6. Why can't my child get off wherever they want in the afternoon?
7. Why are there only 30 students riding some buses and my child's bus is crowded?
8. How can I become a school bus driver?

### **Why is my child's bus late?**

Weather, traffic, driver absenteeism, maintenance difficulties, and unforeseen incidents are responsible for delays in the arrival of school buses in the morning and afternoon. Please know that we are doing everything humanly possible to have all buses running on schedule every day. In the event that your bus does not arrive as scheduled, please allow ten to thirty minutes before calling the transportation office or the school.

### **Why did you suspend my child from riding the bus?**

Behavioral expectations of the school bus are much like those in the classroom. Then, factor in the mobility of that "classroom" and traffic, added noise and the size of the "classroom" and you have a potential catastrophe if there are not clear expectations and enforcement. The behavioral expectations on the bus revolve around the individual rights of every person on the bus, including the driver and the collective rights of students and driver as it pertains to SAFETY. Anything that jeopardizes the safety of individuals on the bus is viewed as serious.

Most drivers have Bus rules or Expectations posted on the bus. If there is an infraction, a referral is turned into the school administrators, who are responsible for contacting the student and parent to resolve the lack of compliance with bus expectations. The school administrator is solely responsible for consequences based on the incident as described by the driver and student. All buses have video cameras, which are used to verify incidents. Our goal is never to deny any student transportation to and from school, but we must maintain safety for all students.

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

It is simply a numbers problem. There are as many as 50-60 students on each bus. That is at least 50-60 phone calls in a short time frame to parents who are quite possibly at the bus stop with their children. It is just not feasible. Please know that there is a bus on the way and that we will do everything humanly possible to transport your child to and from school in a timely manner every day. Please allow for unforeseen incidents and allow at least ten minutes before you call.

**Why can't you come further into my sub-division?**

School buses come in various sizes ranging from 25-36 feet long, 20,000-26,000 pounds, 12-13 feet high and 6-9 feet wide. The length is what limits the school bus to be maneuvered in cul-de-sacs and tight places. Smaller buses can turn in a shorter radius, while longer buses cannot maneuver the same circle without backing the bus. Residents sometimes park trucks, boats, and trailers on the streets. Children leave their bicycles, skateboards, and basketball backboards on the streets. Although our drivers are trained to be able to parallel park their buses, some sub-divisions are not designed with school bus transportation in mind. Please know that we will design school bus routes to be safe and convenient to the majority of students within the limits of time and physics.

**Why does my child have a seat assignment?**

Seat assignments are a positive way for the ride to be consistent and safe. The driver has the right to assign a seat when he/she deems necessary for the safety of all students. This aids the driver with discipline.

**Why can't my child get off wherever they want in the afternoon?**

To avoid multiple problems, the driver requires a note, signed by the parent and school administrator to alter the destination of students. This allows the drivers to focus on driving and safety instead of having to decide whether the student should be allowed to change their routine and get off with a friend or ride to an entirely different neighborhood. This should be the decision of the parent. The driver has no other way to verify that the parent has made this decision. This policy is for the safety of the students.

**Why are there only 30 students riding some buses and my child's bus is crowded?**

Decisions regarding each bus route are made by careful planning based on information from the school registration, previous similar routes, and Department of Transportation data. Most routes are fixed during the summer months and changes are made after the first two weeks of school, if not sooner. The more current information we are given, the better decisions can be made regarding specific routes, locations (rural areas), as well as neighborhoods. Sometimes, it is just not possible to have the exact number of students on every run.

**How can I become a school bus driver?**

Applications can be obtained from the Board of Education office located at 34 School Street in downtown Watkinsville. Once the application is filed, a background check is performed and at that point the application is forwarded to the Transportation Director. Interviews are scheduled on an as needed basis. The requirements for a school bus driver are that they obtain a class "B" CDL with an "S" and "P" endorsement. We do offer training to prospective drivers who meet the requirements. You cannot be hired until you pass the final CDL exam and also pass a physical. Any further questions, please call the Transportation Department at 706-769-3508.