



**WESTCOUNTRY**  
SCHOOLS TRUST

# **DRIVERS' HANDBOOK**

## **About this drivers' handbook**

If you work for Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) and you drive a vehicle for business purposes, this guide is for you.

We want you to keep safe and to be able to offer a great service to our customers. It is your responsibility to adhere to current legislation and keep your vehicle in a presentable and roadworthy condition. If this guidance is not adhered to, you may be in breach of our employer's liability insurance and your own personal business motor insurance.

We are committed to achieving the highest possible standards of driver awareness and understanding, and we are more than happy to answer any queries not covered in this handbook. Contact Mark Bullard – WeST Director of Estates;

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## 1 Your Vehicle

### 1.1 Vehicle defect checks

It is your responsibility to make sure your vehicle is in a roadworthy condition. You should carry out daily defect checks to make sure this is the case.

Items that should be checked daily include –

- Tyres
- Wipers / Washers / Windscreen
- Lights / indicators / reflectors
- Mirrors
- Brakes
- Fluid leaks
- Horn
- Oil / water levels
- Dashboard management lights

What to look for when checking your vehicle –

Tyres / Wheel nuts – tread, condition (refer to Tyre section 1.5 ) Check for any loose or missing wheel nuts.

Wipers / washers / windscreen – Checks wipers clear the screen effectively and washers are operational (refer to Windscreen section 1.4).

Lights / indicators / reflectors – Check they are present, undamaged, unobscured and operational.

Mirrors – Check they are clean, aligned correctly, free of damage and unobscured.

Brakes – Check the handbrake is effective without excessive play, footbrake is operational without excessive play. Pedals must have anti slip rubber on.

Fluid leaks – Check under and around vehicle to ensure no leaks. Fuel cap is present and fitted. Check engine bay for any leaks.

Horn – Check it works.

Oil / Water levels – Check on oil dipstick that level is correct. Visual check of water levels against marks on container.

Dashboard management lights - Ensure all lights go out as they should when engine is running.

Body security – Check all fastenings, doors, panels are secure. Check bumpers and trim are secure.

Most of these items can be checked before driving the vehicles but other defects may become apparent when setting off, e.g. steering, suspension, brake efficiency.

Urgent and non-urgent defects must be rectified prior to driving.

You must never drive your vehicle if you suspect that it could be illegal, unsafe or unroadworthy in anyway. If in any doubt, contact the Director of Estates.

### 1.2 Vehicle maintenance

You are responsible for making sure your vehicle has a yearly full service and/or MOT test if applicable.

### 1.3 Breakdowns

You are responsible for making sure that your vehicle has breakdown cover.

### 1.4 Windscreens

A crack or chip of more than 10mm within your line of vision (the sweep of the wipers) is an MOT failure. A 40mm crack or chip outside the line of vision is also an MOT failure. It is advisable to get screen chips etc repaired ASAP to avoid further damage and cost.

### 1.5 Tyres

The minimum legal tread for a van is 1.6 mm. This depth must be maintained across  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the central width of the tyre in a continuous band around the full circumference of the tyre. WeST recommend that tyres are replaced at a minimum of 2mm tread depth.

You could be fined £2500 and receive 3 penalty points for each defective tyre.

When checking your tyres you should look for -

- Correct tyre pressures
- Tread depth, bulges / cuts / nails / large stones in the tread
- Under inflation - causes outer edge wear
- Over inflation - causes increased centre wear
- Wheel misalignment - causes uneven wear to one side

Incorrect tyre inflation or low tread will also cause poor fuel consumption, increased braking distances and poor handling due to tyres overheating. You can find the correct tyre pressures in your vehicle handbook or on the vehicle plate normally found on the door pillars.

### 1.6 Road Fund Licences

It is your responsibility to ensure that vehicles are taxed when the reminders are received from DVLA. Vehicles no longer have to display tax discs and it is the vehicle owner that is liable should a vehicle be used on the road without being taxed.

### 1.7 Parking

The provision of car parking space is not guaranteed at any WeST site for any employee and where there is no on-site parking provided, WeST does not pay for alternative parking.

## 2 Hired Vehicles

### 2.1 Vehicle Condition Checks

Many of the hire vehicles used by WeST will have already been checked for any damage by the Hire Car Company when they are delivered. However, you still need to check the vehicle if, for example, it is delivered direct to a home address, as hire companies can charge for any damage when the vehicle is returned.

## 2.2 Maintenance and Breakdowns

All hired vehicles are covered for routine maintenance and breakdowns by the hire company. You should find the scheduled service dates on a sticker on the inside of the vehicle.

Any defects on hire vehicles should be reported to the hire company. In the first instance, ring them on the number provided on the rear of the sticker in the vehicle.

## 2.3 Refuelling

Please remember to refuel your hired vehicle to the level that it was when you took delivery, as hire companies charge for refuelling at premium rates.

# 3 Health & Safety

## 3.1 Driving Tips

### General driving

Before setting off make sure that you familiarise yourself with the location and function of the controls.

Check that the vehicle seat is adjusted correctly allowing you to be comfortably supported and that you can reach the pedals and steering without stretching. Your knees should be bent and your thighs supported by the base of the seat. Check that the seat belt fits comfortably and is the right height if adjustable.

If your vehicle is fitted with a head restraint ensure that it is set at the right height.

Ensure your windscreen and side windows are clear and your mirrors are clean and correctly adjusted.

### Braking

In normal circumstances you will be looking ahead and braking early and gently.

Generally, if your vehicle skids you should ease off the brake and accelerator, reapply the brake and then steer into the skid (steer in the direction the vehicle is going) to recover it.

If you drive through deep water, or have been driving in heavy rain for a long period without using the brakes, you should dry them out by gently applying pressure to the brakes while driving.

### Coasting

"Coasting" is when the vehicle is travelling in neutral or with the clutch depressed. This reduces your control of the vehicle and is to be avoided at all times.

Engine braking is eliminated, downhill speed increases rapidly and it may be difficult for you to select gears when they are needed. It's also more difficult to quickly accelerate out of a potential hazard.

## Reversing

A large majority of low speed accidents involve reversing and you should always follow some basic guidelines:

- Always check your rear view and side mirrors before reversing. If your car is fitted with parking sensors / camera, allow them to engage before you reverse.
- Check your front vision before reversing to ensure the vehicle does not swing out too much.
- Switch on your hazard lights in busy areas such as car parks or when visibility is poor.
- If you are alone, inspect the area that you will reverse into first. This is essential if you have a large car as it is easy for a small vehicle / motorcycle to pull up close behind and not be seen in the mirrors.
- If an assistant guides you, be absolutely clear about their signals. If in any doubt, stop and check.

## Driving in hazardous conditions

In any hazardous conditions, slow down, allow more space between your vehicle and others, and give yourself more time to complete your journey.

Heavy rain: Water on your brakes will increase your stopping distance. Rain and misting can reduce your visibility. Ensure your demister works correctly. Standing water may hide large pot holes.

Strong wind: High-sided vehicles will be vulnerable to side winds and you should take care when crossing exposed bridges etc.

Snow and ice: Ensure your windows and mirrors are completely clear of snow and ice before setting off. Do everything slowly and gently and select as high a gear as practical to prevent wheel spinning. Try to let the engine braking slow the vehicle rather than the brakes and allow plenty of space to perform all the usual manoeuvres.

It is always a good idea to take extra clothing, a tow rope and a spade.

## Defensive driving

Defensive driving will make for a more relaxing journey as well as being more economical and better for your vehicle.

The golden rule is to always drive as if all other road users are about to do something stupid! With this in mind, always give other road users plenty of space and time. Allow adequate time for your journey and keep at least two seconds behind the vehicle in front to ensure you can always stop.

"Only a fool breaks the two-second rule"

Pick a fixed object by the road side and count the time between when the vehicle in front passes it until your vehicle does. The gap should always be a minimum of two seconds in the dry and three seconds in the wet.

Economical driving and looking after your vehicle

In order to save fuel and unnecessary wear on the vehicle, use the following driving tips:

- Drive smoothly, don't over rev and don't labour the engine.
- Change gear at the optimum revs, many new cars have gear selection prompts.
- Avoid sharp acceleration and braking.
- Regularly check your tyre pressures; deflated tyres use more fuel.
- Don't "brake" with the gears, they are more expensive to replace than brakes.
- Remove roof racks if no longer required.
- Ensure your vehicle is regularly serviced. A poorly-performing engine uses more fuel.
- "Riding the clutch" or keeping your foot on the pedal while driving will cause premature wear. Select neutral and apply the handbrake at traffic lights. The engines in cars fitted with "Eco" options are designed to stop / start under these circumstances to save fuel and reduce emissions.
- Don't hold the clutch on hills

Items on seats and dashboards

WeST recommends adopting a "dashboard clear" policy. This means you should not leave newspapers, takeaway wrappers, documents, etc. on the dashboard. As well as looking unsightly, they could move while you are driving and cause an accident.

Seat belts

The law states that you must wear a seat belt if one is fitted. We have a duty of care to ensure that you adhere to this.

3.2 Speed limits and braking distances

It is important to note the speed limits for cars. Speed limits on restricted roads are usually 30mph where there are street lights, unless otherwise indicated.

Typical stopping distances

Below are some average stopping distances for different speeds. These are based on well-maintained vehicles in the dry with an alert driver.

<b>Speed</b>	<b>Thinking Distance</b>	<b>Braking Distance</b>	<b>Total Stopping Distance</b>	<b>Distance in Car Lengths</b>
20mph	6 metres	6 metres	12 metres	3 car lengths
30mph	9 metres	14 metres	23 metres	6 car lengths
40mph	12 metres	24 metres	36 metres	9 car lengths
50mph	15 metres	38 metres	53 metres	13 car lengths
60mph	18 metres	55 metres	73 metres	18 car lengths
70mph	21 metres	75 metres	96 metres	24 car lengths

Please make sure you are familiar with the Highway Code.

### 3.3 Mobile phones

Using a mobile phone or handheld device whilst driving any vehicle is illegal and is considered a disciplinary matter. Research has shown that using a mobile phone while driving can significantly increase the potential for an accident, even with a handsfree kit.

With this in mind we have adopted the following for all mobile phone users:

- You should only make and receive calls and messages when the vehicle is stationary and parked in a safe place.
- If you have a handsfree kit you must park safely when making or receiving calls.

This code is designed to make it clear that it is everyone's responsibility to act in a safe and responsible way when using a mobile phone.

### 3.4 Driving Licences / Motoring Offences / Medical Declarations

#### Licence checks

If you have a provisional licence, you are not permitted to drive any vehicles on WeST business.

If you fail to present your licence details for checking when asked, if your licence has expired or if there are any other queries about it, you may be suspended from driving until we can ensure we can meet our duty of care.

### 3.5 Fitness to drive – Medical Conditions, Alcohol and Drugs

#### Alcohol / Drugs

It is not permitted for anyone to drive a vehicle on WeST business while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

New regulations have now come into force making it illegal to drive with both illegal substances as well as more than the medically-prescribed dose of certain prescription

medicines. The main prescription drugs are shown below but for a complete list please visit the DVLA website.

Amphetamine, Clonazepam, Diazepam, Flunitrazepam, Lorezepam, Methadone, Morphine, Oxazepam and Temazepam. If it is suspected that you are driving on WeST business whilst under the influence of drink or drugs, you may be suspended from driving and disciplinary action may be considered.

Fitness to drive

It is your responsibility to advise your Line Manager and the DVLA if necessary, of any conditions which may affect your ability to drive eg medical conditions.

You should also advise your Line Manager if you are taking any medicines that could affect your ability to drive. Please see "Alcohol /Drugs" section.

If a manager feels you are unfit to drive for any reason, he or she must suspend you from driving on WeST business until you are fit and well again.

### 3.6 Road Safety Guidance on Driving Hours and Break Rules

When does travelling count towards working hours?

In accordance with Acas guidelines for driving at work, employees who travel to a fixed workplace will usually not have their travel to work counted as working time. Any travel required to do their role once they have arrived at their workplace and until they leave to return home, should be counted as working time.

If an employee has a fixed place of work but is asked to work from another location then any additional (to normal travel time to work) time it takes to travel to that place of work will be classed as working time.

Mobile and/or lone workers who have no fixed place of work (sometimes called peripatetic workers), and travel straight from their home to their first job should have this considered as working time. There is however no automatic right to be paid for this time. A worker should check their contract to see whether they should be paid.

How many hours can I work (including driving) in one day?

Although there is no daily limit on the amount of working time in one day (between daily/weekly rest periods), the requirements for minimum daily rest (9 hours in 24) mean an employee who is driving as required by the Trust cannot have a working day of more than 15 hours at most three times between weekly rest periods. Where an employee who is driving as required by the Trust has a full daily rest of 11 hours, the maximum working day is 13 hours.

When do I need to take a break (when driving)?

If you are driving as part of your working day, you must take 45 minutes of break time once you have driven for 4.5 hours in a day. A driver can take a split break of at least 15 minutes followed by another of at least 30 minutes (in that order). Once the 45 minute break has been completed a further 45 minutes break will need to be taken if a further 4.5 hours of driving is completed.

An employee must not work (including driving) for more than 6 hours without a break.

Severe weather

During severe weather, all drivers should only travel if absolutely essential. They are encouraged to follow all travel warnings, and follow Met Office and Highways England advice.

This guidance is not a substitute for the current full guidance documents on drivers' hours and working time, which are available on the gov.uk website at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/drivers-hours-rules-and-guidance>

#### **4 Using private vehicles on WeST business**

##### **4.1 Document checks and forms**

Before your Line Manager confirms you can to use your private vehicle for business use, you will need to prove that the vehicle is insured for business use and that it conforms to legal requirements, eg it has a current MOT.

Please refer to the WeST Business Travel policy for guidance.

It is your Line Manager's responsibility to check your driving documents on a yearly basis, including checks for business insurance and MOTs (if applicable). Copies of a Business Travel Checklist should be held on your personnel file.

##### **4.2 Health and Safety**

If you will be using your own vehicle for WeST business, it is your Line Manager's responsibility to make sure you are introduced to our policies before you start driving for us.

##### **4.3 Vehicle / Personal security**

When you leave your vehicle unattended always switch off the engine, apply the handbrake, remove the ignition keys and close the windows. Ensure the vehicle is locked and alarmed if applicable.

Theft of property

If you carry personal equipment it is advisable to remove as much as practical when leaving the vehicle.

When driving in hot weather in built up areas please ensure that items such as mobile phones / tools are not left in view or on seats where they can be grabbed.

#### 4.4 What to do if you have an accident

Try to ensure that everyone at the scene is safe and that no one is at any further risk. Pull over to a safe place if appropriate.

The law requires you to stop if there is any injury or damage to any person, vehicle or property including certain animals, eg dogs and horses.

The law requires you to provide your name and address and the name and address of the owner of the vehicle together with the registration numbers to anyone who has reasonable grounds for wanting the information.

### 5 Contacts List

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HR Department

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HR Helpline Tel: 01752 891754 ext 1765

Useful Websites

DVLA Driver vehicle and licensing agency

GOV.uk

Thank you for looking after yourself and taking care of your vehicle. By doing so, you are ensuring the safety of yourself and others.