

Checklist of questions for parents/carers

The coach company

- Will the company used be a Simply Safe or Benchmark member?
- If the coach company is not a Simply Safe or Benchmark member, who will have carried out background check for legal and safety compliance that are evidenced and are these check results available to parents?
- How long has the coach company been established?
- Has the coach company ever been called to a Public Inquiry by a Traffic Commissioner for serious defects in their fleet and if so what was the outcome? (Note: if the school does not know the answer to this question then they are unable to provide the legally required 'safe journey' because they do not have the relevant information on whether the coach company they intend to use is reputable or if it has been in trouble for serious vehicle defects or false record keeping on drivers hours or maintenance.)
- Does the school have copies of the coach companies VOSA records to include MOT pass rate on first presentation and Encounter Reports or can the tour operator access these?

The coach

- What type of safety belts will my child be provided with?
- What does the school's seat belt policy say?
- What age is the coach?
- What safety features are included in this vehicle?
- Will the coach be pulling a trailer?
- Is this coach suitable for the roads it will be using abroad?
- Will my child be transferred to another vehicle once getting off the ferry and if so, what coach company would this be and would the coach be to the same standard as the one they left the school in?

Drivers

- What does the school know about Drivers' Hours Regulations?
- How many drivers will be provided for this trip?
- What experience will the driver/s have of driving abroad?
- Will the driver have a tour manager with him/her?
- Will each driver have their own hotel room or will they be expected to share rooms? (Note: BUSK has discovered that many drivers are expected to share rooms even with drivers who are from a different company from them who they do not even know. Drivers that are forced to share rooms do not rest properly. Tired drivers or drivers that have their sleep disturbed are dangerous drivers. Results from a BUSK driver survey showed that often, drivers are given the worst rooms in a hotel because they are not regarded as paying guests. Some have even been expected to sleep in bunk beds designed for children. It is therefore essential to insist that the driver/s of the coach transporting your child have undisturbed sleep in a room to the same standard that your child and teachers are provided with. Your insistence on this will undoubtedly make your child journey safer although expect to pay around £20 more to cover the cost.)
- If the party book out of the hotel on the last day and go off skiing or some other activity, will provision be made for the driver to have somewhere to rest during the day if he is driving back though the night or will he be booked out of the hotel after breakfast with the party? (Note: Drivers are often booked out of the hotel by the teachers after breakfast along with every one else. They are then left to hang around all day waiting for the party to return before setting off to come home in the early evening. By this time, they are no longer refreshed and have become tired just hanging around all day. This is the reason by BUSK is against pupils travelling on coaches during the night. It would be safer to book pupils and in particular, drivers into the hotel for an extra night and leave for the homeward journey straight after breakfast. Expect to pay little more for this extra hotel night.)
- How will drivers be risk assessed by the school when they drive abroad for drink driving and on what basis would a teacher make the decision that the driver was fit and safe to drive. For example if the driver had been drinking alcohol the previous day?

The journey

- Will my child be required to travel through the night on the return journey home?
- Will all pupils, teachers and drivers be required by the school to wear their safety belts during all journeys including driving through the night?
- What research has the school done to make sure it is safe to travel through the night?
- BUSK has discovered that many pupils take their belts off so they can curl up in their seat to get comfortable. If travelling through the night teachers would also be asleep and unable to ensure pupils remained belted. This means that a duty of care for our children would be breached.
- BUSK has also discovered that some teachers stretch out over two seats to sleep and others have been known to sleep in sleeping bags on the coach floor. This is both illegal and dangerous a bad example to pupils. Does the school for bid teachers to do this?