

Viney Hill Christian Adventure Centre

Minibus Safety Policy

Approved by Trustees Jun 2026

Next Review Mar 2029

Policy Change Log

Section/Page	Change Summary	Reason for Change	Updated By / Date	Approved By / Date
All Sections	New Policy	General Review by Centre manager Business Manager Senior Instructor	J Holden T Paragreen C Pickersgill 27.04.2026	Trustees Approved 09.06.2026

Minibus Policy

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1. Purpose of Policy

This policy sets out how Viney Hill Christian Adventure Centre will ensure that any minibus used on its behalf is operated safely, lawfully and responsibly. It covers legal compliance, employer duties, driver responsibilities, passenger safety, supervision, maintenance, insurer requirements, trailer use, and emergency procedures.

2. Scope

This policy applies whenever a minibus is used on behalf of Viney Hill Christian Adventure Centre for charitable activities, transport of children, young people, staff, volunteers or guests, visits, events, off-site activities, and any other authorised Centre purpose. It applies whether the minibus is owned, leased, borrowed or hired for Centre use.

3. Legal and operating framework

Viney Hill Christian Adventure Centre operates its minibuses under a Section 19 Permit and the minibus must only be used in accordance with the conditions of that permit and for the charitable purposes authorised by the Centre.

The Centre will ensure compliance with road traffic law, health and safety law, safeguarding duties, insurance conditions, roadworthiness requirements, seat belt rules, and licence entitlement requirements. The minibus must not be used for private hire, reward, or any unauthorised commercial purpose.

4. Employer Responsibilities

The Centre, as employer and operator, will take all reasonable steps to protect drivers, passengers and other road users. Driving for work will be treated as a work activity and managed as part of the Centre's wider health and safety arrangements.

The Centre will

- authorise suitable drivers only
- check that drivers hold the correct licence entitlement and meet insurer requirements
- ensure vehicles are insured, maintained, serviced, taxed where required, and MOT tested where required
- operate pre-use, weekly and periodic inspection systems and defect reporting arrangements
- remove vehicles from use where safety or legality is in doubt
- plan journeys sensibly with regard to duration, route, weather, passenger needs and supervision
- provide emergency contact details, insurance, breakdown information, and driver procedures
- maintain suitable records of licences, checks, maintenance, defects, incidents and driver approvals

5. Insurer's Requirements

In addition to legal requirements and Viney Hill's own standards, drivers must meet the insurer's conditions for use of the minibus. The insurer states that the driver is only legally allowed to drive that minibus if they meet specific conditions.

- They are aged between 25 and 70.
- They have held a full UK licence for over 2 years.
- They are using the minibus only for charitable purposes.
- They are medically fit and well.
- They have declared all accidents and convictions within the last 3 years.
- They have completed Viney Hill's Driver Assessment Form.
- They have checked that the vehicle is insured.

6. Driver Authorisation and Eligibility

No person may drive a Centre minibus or tow a trailer unless formally authorised by Viney Hill Christian Adventure Centre. The Centre may withdraw authorisation at any time where it considers this necessary for safety, legality or insurance reasons.

To be authorised to drive a minibus, a driver must hold

- a full and current UK driving licence
- a D1 category permission on their licence
- satisfy the insurer's age, licence and declaration requirements
- complete the Centre's driver assessment / approval process
- read and follow this policy and all associated procedures
- immediately report any change that may affect their entitlement, fitness or insurance status

To be authorised to tow a trailer, in addition to the above, a driver must hold

- D1+E category permission

7. Drivers Responsibilities

Drivers **are personally responsible** for ensuring that they are fit, lawful and properly prepared before every journey, alert and confident to drive. They must not drive if they are tired, ill, impaired, or affected by alcohol, drugs or medication. Drivers also have the following responsibilities: -

- ensure they have the correct licence entitlement and remain within its limits
- meet insurer requirements at all times
- complete all required pre-use checks before setting off
- not drive an unsafe, overloaded or unlawful vehicle
- ensure seat belts are worn and passengers are carried safely
- drive with due care, within applicable speed limits, and without avoidable distraction
- report defects, incidents, collisions, near misses or concerns immediately

8. Group Leaders and supervisors

Where an escort or other accompanying adult is present, they support the driver and help reduce distraction. They should assist with passenger supervision, safe boarding and alighting, behaviour management, communication, and emergency arrangements.

9. Journey Planning

All drivers must carry out Journey planning and consider the following: -

- The time required to do pre-use checks and log book data
- The purpose of the trip and destination
- the number of passengers and seating capacity
- the need for an escort or additional adult supervision
- consider known medical, behavioural or access needs
- consider weather and road conditions
- consider sufficient time for the journey and suitable rest breaks
- consider emergency contacts and communication arrangements
- consider safe arrangements for collection, handover and return

10. Pre-use checks

A recorded pre-use vehicle check must be completed before every journey. If any defect may affect safety or legality, the vehicle must not be driven and the issue must be reported immediately.

The following pre-use checks should be carried out as a minimum:-

- tyres appear properly inflated and have no obvious damage
- lights appear to be working
- mirrors, windscreen and windows are clean and usable
- number plates are present and readable
- no obvious fluid leaks are visible
- fuel is sufficient for the journey
- seats and seat belts are present and in good order
- doors open, close and secure properly
- no warning lights remain on after starting
- brakes feel normal
- steering feels normal
- wipers and washers work
- horn works

11. Weekly Inspections

Pre-use checks do not replace regular maintenance. The Centre will operate routine weekly or periodic inspections and ensures that servicing, repairs and statutory compliance are kept up to date. Any defect affecting safety or legality must be logged, reported and rectified promptly. Vehicles must be taken out of service where necessary.

Routine checks should cover the following as a minimum

- MOT, tax and insurance
- bodywork, tyres, wipers, windscreen and doors checks
- lights, indicators and warning systems
- engine fluids and brake fluid
- handbrake, dash lights and internal lights
- seat belts, first aid kit and fire extinguisher
- cleanliness and general roadworthiness

12. Trailer Use

Where a trailer is used with a minibus, the driver must hold D1+E and carry out additional pre-use checks. If there is any doubt about the legality or safety of towing, the journey must not proceed until the matter has been checked and authorised.

Before towing, the driver must check the following

- that the hitch and lock are secure
- that the breakaway cable or brake cable is correctly fitted
- that the handbrake operates correctly
- that lights and indicators work properly
- that tyres are serviceable
- that the trailer structure is sound
- that the load is distributed safely and fully secured
- that the vehicle and trailer remain within legal and manufacturer limits

13. Passenger Safety & Supervision

The driver and accompanying adults must ensure that passengers are carried safely at all times including:-

- No passenger may be carried in excess of the number of fitted seats.
 - One person must occupy one seat.
 - Seat belts must be worn.
 - Bags and equipment must not block aisles or exits.
 - Passengers must not distract the driver or interfere with doors or safety equipment.
 - Dangerous, disruptive or boisterous behaviour must not be allowed.
- Children and vulnerable passengers must be appropriately supervised throughout the journey.

14. Safe Driving Standards

- Drivers must comply with the Highway Code and all road traffic law.
- Drivers must observe the speed limits that apply to the vehicle and road type.
- Extra care must be taken because of the size, handling and stopping distances of a minibus.
- Unnecessary reversing should be avoided; where reversing is necessary, it should be done with particular care and adult guidance where available.
- Mobile phone must not be used while driving with the exception of Satnav for navigation purposes.
- Drivers must stop if they become tired, unwell or unable to continue safely.

15. Boarding, alighting and end of journey responsibilities

- Passengers must only board or leave when the vehicle is fully stationary.
- Boarding and alighting must take place in a safe location.
- Children must be supervised during boarding and alighting.
- At the end of the journey, the driver must ensure that all passengers have left safely and that no child or vulnerable person is left without suitable collection or supervision.
- The driver should check the vehicle for forgotten items, defects or damage and report any concerns immediately.

16. Accidents and Incidents

If an accident or incident occurs, the driver must make safety the first priority and respond as follows:-

- stop safely and switch off the engine where appropriate
- protect passengers and other road users as far as possible
- call emergency services if required
- ensure passengers, especially children, remain together and supervised
- exchange the necessary details with others involved
- obtain witness details where possible
- not admit liability
- notify the Centre as soon as reasonably practicable
- complete the required accident or incident report

17. Breakdowns and Emergencies

If the vehicle breaks down, the driver's first responsibility is the health, safety and supervision of passengers and consider/act as follows:-

- stop in the safest possible place and use hazard warning lights where appropriate
- decide whether it is safer for passengers to remain in the vehicle or leave it
- if passengers leave the vehicle, keep them together and away from traffic
- never leave children or vulnerable passengers unattended
- contact breakdown assistance and notify the Centre as soon as practicable to do so
- be able to provide clear location details (for example What3Words app)
- be able to explain if children or passengers with mobility difficulties need additional support
- follow any wider Centre emergency procedures where the incident is serious or prolonged

18. Records and Monitoring

The Centre will maintain suitable records of driver approvals, licence checks, insurance conditions, pre-use checks, weekly checks, trailer checks, servicing, repairs, incidents and defects. These records form part of the Centre's overall health and safety and vehicle management arrangements.

19. Breach of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to withdrawal of driving authorisation and, where appropriate, management action under the Centre's normal procedures.

20. Related Documents

Driver Assessment Form
Driver Pre-Use Minibus Checks & Log Book
Weekly vehicle check forms
Trailer check records
Section 19 permit
Insurance Certificate
Minibus Pack with important information
Accident Report Form