

April 2010

Dear Parents and Friends

Sixth Form Driving to School

Parents will know that all Sixth Form students attended a safer driving course before Christmas and we are confident that parents of young drivers will have reinforced rules about driving on icy, rural lanes and encouraged many young drivers to accept lifts or take the school bus on the cold dark days. There are clearly special skills required in driving on the roads around and within the school in the winter months and we are relieved that we have reached the Easter break without serious accident or tragedy.

As a school, we have also been considering our responsibilities to our young drivers and the support we can give them and you. We took the matter to School Committee in the autumn to seek their advice. Some members of School Committee thought that banning students from driving to school, as happens in other local independent schools, would be the way forward – not just for their safety, but to encourage the use of school transport and to reduce our carbon footprint. However, the consensus view recognised that, living and working in this rural community, the benefits of allowing young people to drive can outweigh the disadvantages. We know too that many parents are grateful to be able to give up the “school run” after so many years.

The research on young peoples’ driving reveals four significant factors that we endeavoured to factor into our driving to school policy.

1. Young men are more likely to have motor vehicle accidents than young women; young men who have an accident are more likely to have a serious accident. The insurance premiums recognise this, but we have decided not to make our policy gender specific.
2. The risk of accidents increases the more young people are travelling in the same car. This may be because of the distraction of conversation or loud music, or because of “showing off”. So we will insist that student drivers do not give lifts to others.
3. The risk of accident is highest the nearer to the test date – so we want to build in a time lag between passing the test and granting permission to drive to school.
4. The risk of accidents for young drivers reduces (as does the insurance premium) if an advanced driving course such as Pass Plus is taken. We want to make this a requirement of our permission to drive to school.

We recognise that those students currently driving to school will not have fulfilled the requirements of this new policy and we have no wish to apply it retrospectively. However, students wishing to take up driving to school after the Easter break must follow the procedures described overleaf.

Sixth form students wishing to drive to school must:

Obtain a “permission to drive” form (copies available from the Head, Head of Sixth Form or school office)

Return a completed “permission to drive” form for the named vehicle to the Head of Sixth Form with a copy of one of each the following:

- A full driving licence in the student’s name
- the vehicle insurance naming the student as driver,
- registration document (log book)
- MOT certificate where applicable
- A certificate to show that the student has completed a recognised advance driving course, such as Pass Plus.

Sixth formers given permission to drive to and from school must agree to:

Use the vehicle only as a means of transport to and from school – not to make local excursions during the day

Arrive and leave the school at the normal times and park in the designated area

Drive slowly and respectfully on the school campus

Refrain from wearing headphones to listen to music on campus; turn music off before entering the school grounds.

Students given permission to drive to school must, under no circumstance, give lifts to other students. Exemptions to this rule can be made, for siblings for example, only on receipt of a written request from the parents of all involved, and once written permission has been given by the Head.

Breaches of these rules will be treated severely and the permission to drive to school is likely to be removed. We have a duty to ensure the safety of our drivers and all those who use the school site, some of whom may not be concentrating as they should in areas where cars are parked or moving.

We value your support in helping everyone to be safe.

Michael Goodwin

Head, Sibford School