6. 15 Student Driver Policy

Why do we need to be concerned about young drivers?

Most young drivers are careful, safety conscious and considerate when driving. However, they are one of the most vulnerable road user groups because of their inexperience, relatively undeveloped driving skills and a distinct pattern of behaviour relating to youth culture and lifestyle. Furthermore, research shows that travelling with teenage passengers constitutes an increased risk for young drivers. Other issues may also arise in rural areas where distance and associated fatigue may play a part.

The reality is that:
• in their first year of driving, young people are about three times more likely to be killed or injured than older, more experienced drivers
• crash risk significantly increases as the number of passengers increases

In this context, we all have a responsibility to look at all possible ways of improving the safety and wellbeing of young people.

While most young drivers try to be careful, safety conscious and considerate when driving, it is important to recognise that despite a decline in the number of road deaths in Victoria since 1990:
• road casualty deaths remain the biggest killer of people aged 15-25
• in their first year of driving, young people are about three times more likely to be killed or injured than older, more experienced drivers
• young drivers aged between 18-25 comprise over 25% of all driver fatalities despite representing only 13% of the population.

Why is this the case?

Relative to older drivers’ young drivers:
• are inexperienced (which research shows is the single most important risk factor)
• have poorly developed cognitive and perceptual skills
• have a tendency to drive more often and for longer distances in all conditions
• believe that their level of driving skill is much greater than it actually is
• have a belief in their own invincibility that results in a tendency to take more risks, including a propensity not to wear seat belts and to speed
• have less well developed hazard-detection skills
• often drive for reasons of sensation seeking.

Many young drivers rationalise their risk-taking by talking down or avoiding talking about the possible outcomes, and blaming outside factors for their driving indiscretions.
What about young drivers carrying young passengers?

Travelling with teenage passengers constitutes one of the greatest risks for young drivers and, the more passengers, the greater the risk.
- The fatal crash risk is increased five times when two or more passengers are carried.
- The increased risk with passengers present is greatest when young male passengers accompany young male drivers and is thought to be largely the result of distraction and increased risk taking.
- Friends and peers are generally a negative influence on the behaviour of young drivers, particularly young male drivers as it is thought there is an increased tendency by the young driver to take risks in response to peer pressure.
- Distractions caused by social interaction among peers are likely to play a role in increasing driver inattentiveness.
- The mere physical presence of a 16-24 year old passenger is more likely to stimulate the driver to engage in risky and anti-social behaviour.
- A 16-24 year old passenger is more likely to tell the driver to take risks, to engage in anti-social driving, and to talk to the driver, than a passenger aged 55 years or older.

What do young people say about young drivers carrying young passengers?

Through research programs, young people say:
- having a young passenger in the car is more likely to stimulate the driver to engage in risky and antisocial behaviour,
- young passengers are more likely to tell the driver to take risks, to engage in anti-social driving, and to talk to the driver than older passengers,
- they do tend to take risks and give the following reasons:
  - peer group pressure
  - the need to impress friends
  - going along with the crowd
  - a need to feel accepted
  - not being a ‘wuss’
  - a desire to experiment
- passengers are often unaware that they are having the effect on drivers that drivers say passengers are having on them.

References
NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust, Understanding Passenger Influences on Driver Behaviour: Implications for Road Safety and Recommendations for Countermeasure Development, Accident Research Unit, Monash University, Saferoads, Enhancing the Safety of Young Drivers: A resource for Local Communities, December, 2003.
Transport Accident Commission, Young Drivers Fact Sheet, www.tacsafety.com.au
GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS DRIVING TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Policy Statement
Requirements for Students Driving Cars to School
Welfare and safety of student drivers

The School has a responsibility to take all reasonable measures to ensure the welfare and safety of students. Our Student Driving Policy outlines what we expect from student drivers and copies of this may be obtained from the Vice Principal or on the Shelford Girls’ Grammar website. A Parent Permission and Student Agreement Form can also be collected from the Vice Principal. All student drivers and parents/guardians are required to sign this form and return it to the school.

Students as responsible drivers in the community.

Our School takes pride in maintaining a positive image within the local community. With an increasing number of our students driving to and from school, it is important that they recognise that any careless and unsafe driving reflects poorly not just on them personally but also on the School. If student drivers have been found to put themselves and other road users at risk, appropriate sanctions will be applied and, if necessary, the police notified. Concern for our students’ safety and welfare are paramount and we ask that the whole school community works together to achieve this end.

School Requirements

1. Students are required to adhere to all road rules and drive in a safe and responsible manner.
2. Students may not drive their car to school until the Parent Permission and Student Agreement Form has been lodged and processed.
3. Students may not drive other students to/from school without the written permission of their parent/guardian and that of the passenger’s parent/guardian.
4. Car make and registration details must be recorded with the Year 12 Coordinator.
5. Students are required to notify the school of any passenger who may be travelling with them to and from school (see 3 above).
6. Students may not drive to/from the School Formal.
7. Cars are parked at the owner’s own risk. Students may not park on school grounds, the staff car park, in Hood Crescent or Helenslea Road.
8. If any of the above requirements are not followed, the student will have an appropriate sanction applied which may include, but is not restricted to - a warning, after school detention, withdrawal of the student’s right to drive to school.
9. No student may use or have access to their motor vehicle within the School day e.g. lunch-time for any purpose. Students must remain on school grounds until the end of the school day or until they are entitled to sign out.
Letter to Parents of Drivers and Passengers

Dear Parent/Guardian,

A number of our senior school students are driving or intend to drive to school this year and some have indicated that they intend to carry another student as a passenger.

Despite the fact that most young drivers try to be careful, safety conscious and considerate when driving, research clearly shows that they are at a higher risk of having a serious crash than older, more experienced drivers. The presence of young passengers also greatly increases the risk for teenage drivers and, the more passengers, the greater the risk.

It is important that all students and their parents/guardians are aware of these risks and the type of behaviour that the school expects from student drivers. Copies of the school policy on student drivers and the Parent Permission and Student Agreement Form are attached. The policy outlines the School’s expectations and provides information regarding the transport of passengers.

Of particular note is that student drivers are not permitted to carry other students as passengers to and from school without the written permission of their parent/guardian and the passenger’s parent/guardian. No more than one passenger is permitted to travel with the driver. This is based on research that shows that young drivers carrying several passengers are more likely to engage in risk taking behaviour.

To ensure that all involved are aware of these requirements, student drivers and a parent/guardian and, where appropriate, a parent/guardian of any passenger(s), are required to sign a Parent Permission and Student Agreement Form. The form must be signed and returned prior to students driving to school or as a passenger of another student who is driving to school. These requirements are intended to ensure the welfare and safety of students and maintain a positive image of the school within the local community.

Yours sincerely,

Polly Flanagan
Principal
Students Driving Cars to School

Parent Permission and Student Agreement Form

This form must be completed by any student who intends to drive to school either occasionally or regularly.

Student Name ________________________________________________________________
Car Make ___________________________________________________________________

Colour ___________________________ Registration Number ____________________________

Note: If the student intends to drive any car other than the one registered on this form, it must also be registered with the school.

Parent Permission

I give permission for __________________________________________ (student name) to drive to school.

I am aware of the School’s requirements regarding students driving to school.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: ____________________________________________________

Date: ______________________

Student

I agree to adhere to the School’s requirements regarding students driving a car to school.

Signature of Student: _____________________________________________________________

Date: ______________________

Note: A photocopy of the student’s driver licence must be attached to this form
Passenger Permission Form

This form must be completed by the parent/guardian of any student intending to travel to school as a passenger of a student of this school who drives a car to and from school and the parent/guardian of the student driver.

Parent Permission (of the student passenger)

I give approval for ______________________ (student passenger’s name)

to travel with ______________________ (student driver’s name).

We accept all conditions detailed in the School’s Student Driver Policy.

Parent/Guardian name ________________________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian ___________________________ Date: ______________

Student Passenger name ________________________________

Signature of Student ________________________________ Date: ______________

Parent Permission (of the student driver)

I give permission for __________________ (student name) to drive to school and take

____________________ (name of the passenger indicated on this form). I am aware of the School’s requirements regarding students driving to school.

Parent/Guardian name ________________________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian ___________________________ Date: ______________

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School Approval

Approved By: ____________________________

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ______________

Acknowledgements

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS
JUNE 2004

An initiative of the Transport Accident Commission (TAC)

In partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) and the following organisations:

- Parents Victoria • Victoria Police • SGC Education Consulting • Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals. • VicRoads - This booklet is available for download as a Word document from: