

Calgary Girl's School Transportation: Frequently asked Questions & Answers

Q: What types of transportation are available at CGS?

A: CGS offers transportation to all our students but if space is limited, priority goes to students who reside more than 2.4 km from the school where they attend.

Q: Does CGS offer stops in every community within city limits?

A: CGS may be unable to service every community within city limits due to the distance that our buses travel every day. Designated stops serve multiple families within a transportation zone. A transportation zone may include several neighborhoods.

Q: Who is responsible for the supervision, care, and safety of children on their way to and from, or while waiting at the bus stop?

A: Parents are responsible for their child's supervision, care and safety on the way to and from, or while waiting at the bus stop. Parents need to consider the need to accompany their child and wait at the stop until the bus arrives. The School is responsible for supervision, care and safety when the student is on the bus.

Q: Can we submit a request to change the designated stop?

A: CGS and First Student's Safety Department will consider and respond to every email regarding the safety of a particular stop. Parent, please email concerns to transportation@calgarygirlsschool.com. Because stops are located where they serve multiple families, requests to change a stop for personal convenience such as proximity to the student's residence will not be considered. If parents feel that the walk distance is too far, or unsafe, please make the arrangements necessary – drive your child, walk with her, or make arrangements with a service provider such as a neighborhood before/after school care program. Parents within a bus zone may want to consider ways to support each other through car-pooling and/or alternating morning and after-school care.

Q: My child lives part-time with their mother and part-time with their father. Can we use the stop near each parent's primary residence?

A: Yes, if we have room on the bus for the student, we accommodate the child on both routes and/or at two different stops.

Q: Is there any way of knowing when or if our bus will be running late?

A: Yes, if you register in Family Zone on the CGS website, under the subscription tab on the left-hand side, you will receive via email any late bus notifications that are posted by First Student. You can also view www.myschoolbus.com and search Calgary Girls' School, or you can call First Student 403-531-3900.

Q: How long should we wait for the bus if it is running late?

A: Each family must have a back-up plan in case the bus is running late. Many circumstances beyond anyone's control (severe weather, high volumes of traffic and/or accidents) may cause route delays. Students must dress for the weather! If a long wait (more than 15-20 minutes) is expected, parents may choose to drive their child or opt for public transportation – city bus or LRT. As much as possible, we encourage parents to plan ahead. By making car-pool arrangements with another parent, or pre-registering for a neighbourhood childcare service, family routines will be less disrupted when the bus is delayed for a long period. In some situations e.g., severe weather, the parent may decide to keep the child at home for the day. Please note that drivers must complete their transportation routes and ensure "no student is left behind" before or after school regardless of the circumstances or delays.

Q: How is my child's learning impacted when she is late for school because the bus is late?

A: The school realizes that transportation is impacted by many circumstances beyond control. Our staff supports student learning in a variety of ways when transportation causes late arrival or missed instruction.

Q: Why are we not receiving any late bus notifications since we moved?

A: Be sure to notify the school of any changes regarding your daughter's transportation. Log into Family Zone and update any information under the "bus subscription" tab so that you receive the relevant bus notifications.

Q: Occasionally, my daughter needs to take a different bus after school so she can go to the childcare I've arranged for her. Is it ok to take a different bus?

A: Please email office@calgarygirlsschool.com to request any changes before you make them! If you are requesting a change immediately (the same day), the email needs to be sent before noon. The school will inform the driver of the change and your child will be given a "pass" to present to the driver of the route requested. We make every reasonable effort to accommodate parents' requests while also considering the impact on other students. For this reason, the school tries to accommodate changes for childcare reasons or other emergencies,; however, school transportation is not intended to accommodate requests for children to travel to social events like birthday parties.

Q: Why do the route timings occasionally change during the year?

A: If a driver is consistently not able to make the stop by the appointed time, he/she will request a change. This occurs, for example, when construction causes road closures or delays. As well, families sometimes move in the school year and a stop may be deleted as a result. First Student responds by deleting, adding, or combining stops to ensure an efficient route within the time allocated. Each stop adds between 3-5 minutes to the route time. Families will be notified in advance of changes in pick up or drop off times.

Q: Why can't my daughter who is in Grade 4 sit at the back of the bus?

A: For safety reasons, the driver will assign older students to the back of the bus so that they will be more able to help with an evacuation in the case of an emergency. Evacuation procedures are practiced with all students.

Q: What is the reasonable walking distance to a CGS bus stop?

A: Alberta Education provides funding support for eligible students defined as those who reside more than 2.4 km from the school. This sets a guideline for a reasonable walk distance to a bus stop. It is important to know that Charter Schools are not required to provide transportation services and they are not funded at the same level as other public schools.

Because CGS serves students from all areas of the City, the ride time for all other students on a route could increase significantly if one family's location is an excessive distance from a site that serves several families in the proximate area. In such a case, a family may be required to use public or private transportation to get to a stop that is further than the walk limit. Transportation handles these matters on a case-by-case basis with consideration for the impact on overall time and costs for all other students.

Q: How many students are assigned to each seat?

A: The ever-increasing costs and the challenge of reducing the annual deficit in transportation, suggest the need for maximum efficiency. Transportation routes aim for “full load” as much as possible. For this reason, students may share a seat with up to two other students especially as the bus fills, or before it begins to empty. However, the number of students assigned to a bus will not exceed the designated capacity of that bus.

Q: Why do parents pay fees for transportation and who decides the amount?

A: Alberta Education provides funding to charter schools in order to support the cost of transportation. The funding is about \$550/student annually based on eligibility criteria. Most of the students who use CGS transportation meet the criteria. However, the annual cost of transportation per student is more than \$1500. Boards across Alberta are permitted to charge fees to make up the difference. For the past several years, the fees did not make up the difference and so the board subsidized transportation. Deficit funding is not sustainable and impacts other program areas. Efforts to ensure an efficient service, including a School Year Calendar where all student days are “full days” will significantly reduce the deficit. The cost to parents for transportation service works out to less than \$2.50 per ride or about \$5.00/day. The Board approves the annual transportation fee.

More information about Transportation Services is located on the website. See: About CGS, Governance, AP 500, Transportation and Administrative Procedure 550. A Handbook, which further interprets the policy and procedure framework is available under the transportation tab on the website.

For further information regarding stop locations and route planning please email, transportation@calgarygirlsschool.com.