



Backwell School

An Ofsted Outstanding School
A National Teaching School

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Home-School Transport Consultation

As you may be aware a number of Backwell School students were transferred from school coaches to public transport as a means of getting to school. Since this change was implemented, in September 2017, the school has had ongoing concerns regarding the reliability, punctuality and safety of our students using public transport to get to school.

We are aware that parents also share our worries regarding the use of public transport.

North Somerset Council are currently running a consultation on home-school transport provision from September 2020. Below are the main points of the school's response to the consultation submitted by Mr Nunes, Headteacher.

We thought that parents would like to be aware of our response. Parents are welcome, and entitled, to respond to the consultation themselves should they so wish. The consultation is open until the 15 March and can be found here:

<http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/HTST20/consultationHome>

Timing

The pick-up and drop off times of private coaches carrying out home-school transport are agreed to best suit the timings of the school day and the needs of the students. This is not the case with public buses and trains: the timings are set already and are less convenient for the students and their parents. In addition, public transport, especially public buses, do not run frequently enough across North Somerset to provide our students with regular alternatives should a bus be missed, full or delayed.

Travel disruption

Any system of home-school transport is vulnerable to disruption from road/rail problems. However, the private coach companies are able to be flexible about the routes they take to avoid particular problems or even take two journeys where necessary. Where public transport is disrupted there is no amelioration possible for our students who are, therefore, more likely to be inconvenienced and miss education. During Trial Exams at Backwell School in 2018 road closures led to students on public transport being late to school, missing some of their exam and being very anxious: none of the students on private coaches were late.

Student behaviour

The school takes very seriously its role in student behaviour to and from school. We work closely with the drivers of the private coaches both to prevent poor behaviour and to follow-up instances of disruption when they occur. We are able to investigate incidents through the cooperation of the drivers and coach companies, including use of CCTV. Relationships developed over years between the school and individual drivers contribute to the reduction of problems and allow us to reassure

parents that everything is done to ensure that their students travel to school in a safe environment. None of this is possible with public transport, where even the most basic level of useful communication with Rail and Bus companies is not possible. Not only are instances of poor behaviour by students more likely on public transport and more difficult to follow-up, they also, of course, have a bigger impact on the general public.

Student safety

On several occasions students have been left waiting for public transport alone. This has occurred when trains have been cancelled or buses are full and/or fail to stop at the appointed place. Children have been left unsupervised and unsure how to get to school. There have also been occasions when children have been intimidated or threatened by members of the public (these incidents have tended to be connected with overcrowding and an apparent resentment of students taking space on public transport). None of these issues had ever occurred with private coach providers.

Loss of education

By using public transport for student-school travel, the Local Authority is failing in its basic commitment to allow students access to the entirety of their education. Students traveling by train and public bus are regularly late to school and miss parts of their education. This has occurred far more frequently than for students traveling by private coach and, as mentioned above, has had an impact on students who are preparing for and taking their examinations.



Jon Nunes
Headteacher