

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)

Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Headteacher: Matthew Quinn B.Ed (Hons), M.A., NPQH

Our Ref: MQ/TF/SM

March 2019

Dear Parents/Carers

653 BUS SERVICE BETWEEN FAREHAM, PORCHESTER AND OAKLANDS CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM COLLEGE – OPTIONS FOR FUTURE PROVISION

For those parents who currently have children at Oaklands you will be aware from previous annual letters on the provision of the 653 Bus Service from Fareham and Porchester to Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College that the future sustainability of this bus service has been kept under constant review.

This service is a privately contracted service, paid for in full by Oaklands. Over the past five years we have seen the number of pupils using this service drop by over half from 75 in the academic year 2014/15 to 33 in this current academic year. One of the main reasons for this significant drop was the withdrawal of the Faith School travel subsidy as a result of a change of Government policy (this was withdrawn after the then Year 11 students left school in August 2016).

The current cost of subsidising the 653 Bus service is £30,000 a year and this is no longer sustainable based on the increasing financial pressures Oaklands finds itself bound by, a position shared by many schools nationwide. The Trustees of the Academy have a responsibility to ensure that Oaklands balances its budget and they often have to make some difficult decisions in order that the school remains able to deliver the best education for our children.

The option of sharing a similar bus service with another educational establishment in the area, such as the current arrangement we have for the shared provision of the 654 bus service from Hambledon and Denmead, has been explored. Unfortunately because of the proposed different starting time and current finishing time of the other educational establishment, this is no longer a viable option.

The aim is for the school to stop running the 653 Bus Service from Fareham and Porchester to Oaklands at the end of this academic year, after Thursday 18th July 2019. This leaves the following potential options:

Option 1 – pass the full cost of providing this service to the parents of students using it. Based on the current numbers, it would increase the cost per student between £900 and £1,000 extra to what is already being charged for an annual 653 bus pass. This is seen as an unviable option because of the increased financial burden on individual families.

Option 2 - decrease the current subsidy provided by the school by up to 50%. Even a reduced subsidy of 50% of the current level provided by the school would see the cost of an annual pass from Fareham increasing from £795.00 to between £1,245 and £1,295.70. This option is also seen as unviable because of the increased cost to parents and the continuing, albeit reducing, financial burden on the school.

Option 3 – ask parents to decide on an alternative method of travel to and from Oaklands. This is likely to be a choice of the following:

- Parents driving their children to and from school direct
- Paying for their children to travel on public transport either:
 - Using the No 3 Bus from Fareham to Cosham and then the No 7/7A bus from Cosham to Stakes Hill Road with a bus stop not far from the school gates. The journey time is approximately 1 hour and there are at least 3 services an hour in the morning and afternoon.
 - Using the train from Fareham to Cosham and then the No 7/7A Bus from Cosham to Stakes Hill Road
- A combination of private transport and public transport depending on individual family circumstances

Noting that ultimately it is the parents' responsibility to get their children to school, we believe that Option 3 is the better of the three options, particularly when taking into account that the cost of a Hampshire Child First Annual bus pass is currently £430.00 and allows unlimited travel on all First services within the Hampshire (including Portsmouth and Southampton and Eclipse) area for one year. Other ticket options are also available.

It is fully appreciated that the security of travelling on a dedicated bus service from a destination close to home direct on to the school grounds provides parents with an element of peace of mind and that most parents are happy to pay a premium for such a service. Unfortunately the school is no longer in a position to provide a subsidy for this service and we are equally aware that to expect parents to pay any more than they are currently paying is not fair. To mitigate these concerns it is worth noting that the 7A from and to the Cosham Health Centre still drives onto the school grounds in morning and again leaves from the school grounds in the afternoon. We are also aware that there are a number of students who safely travel on public transport to and from school on a daily basis from a wide range of destinations and therefore we hope you will still feel able to allow your children to come to Oaklands and benefit from a strong faith led learning environment.

In order that we can gauge the likely methods of transport that will be used by students travelling from the Fareham and Porchester areas from September 2019 we would be grateful if you could complete the short survey attached.

Yours sincerely



Mr Matthew Quinn
Headteacher

SURVEY OF PARENTS CURRENTLY USING THE 653 BUS SERVICE FROM FAREHAM AND PORCHESTER TO OAKLANDS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

From:(Parent/Guardian of)
.....(Child(ren)'s Name)

I acknowledge receipt of the letter outlining future options that have been considered for travel arrangements from Fareham and Porchester for my Child(ren) and offer the following responses:

From September 2019 my child(ren) is/are likely to travel to and from Oaklands by private transport to and from school direct. **Yes / No***

I will pay for my child(ren) to travel on public transport by using the No 3 bus from Fareham to Cosham and then the No 7 bus from Cosham to Stakes Hill Road. **Yes / No***

I will pay for my child(ren) to travel on public transport by using the train from Fareham to Cosham and then the No 7 Bus from Cosham to Stakes Hill Road. **Yes / No***

My child(ren) will use a combination of private transport and public transport based on our family home location, individual family work and/or other child care commitments.. **Yes / No***

Other – Please give brief details:

I am considering moving my child to another school as a result of this decision. **Yes / No***

(*) Please circle/delete as appropriate

Please send this completed survey back to the school, with your child or drop it into the school reception, in a sealed envelope marked for the attention of the 'Business Support Team'.

We very much hope that you will be able to continue to allow your child to be educated at Oaklands and thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.