



ST ALBANS  
SCHOOL

## **Pupil Transportation at St Albans School; an Overview of Operations and Risk Assessment**

This document is written by the School to help all stakeholders understand the aims, operations and constraints of the School's transport system.

***Document dated April 2023***

***St Albans School  
Abbey Gateway  
St Albans AL3 4HB***



## Context

St Albans School:-

- is a selective independent school, educating some 900 pupils (boys aged 11-18 and girls 16-18) to a very high standard<sup>1</sup>, many of whom go on to make a significant contribution to society as doctors, vets, engineers, scientists, etc. in accordance with the School's ethos and motto (*non nobis nati, born not for ourselves*);
- is a registered charity;
- has been on or near its current site in the centre of St Albans for more than 1,000 years;
- is one of the larger employers in St Albans, with some 200 staff and a turnover of some £19million per annum, most of which is spent locally; and
- is one of the key facilities that makes St Albans a desirable place to live.

The Independent Schools Council's economic assessment tool calculates that St Albans School's annual financial contributions are as follows:-

Total annual contribution to UK GDP	<b>£29m</b>
Total annual contribution to St Albans area GDP	<b>£14.4 million</b>
Total number of jobs supported by the School's activities	<b>514</b>
Amount of UK taxes paid per annum	<b>£8.8 million</b>
Annual savings of educating pupils who would otherwise be paid for by the taxpayer	<b>£7 million</b>

The School recognises that the historical location and success of the School bring with it challenges, particularly in terms of transport and logistics. The streets were built well before the invention of motor transport.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in 2022 at A level, A&A\* grades represented 77% of entries. The national average is 35%. More details can be found on our website <https://www.st-albans.herts.sch.uk/information/exam-results/>



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## **A – Aim of School Transport Arrangements**

St Albans School's aim in relation to transport is to provide the environment for pupils to be able to travel to and from the School in an efficient, safe and cost-effective setting that minimises the wider impact on the city.

This is entirely consistent with the aims of Hertfordshire County Council as set out in Healthier, Safer, Greener journeys to School (Hertfordshire's Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS) for Schools and Colleges 2018/19, which are:-

- To reduce the use of the car for journeys to, from and between educational establishments;
- To improve accessibility to, from and between educational establishments;
- To improve child road safety;
- To improve child health through active travel and therefore reduce congestion and pollution around schools;
- To improve the quality of the local environment by reducing traffic in and around school sites.



## **B – Considerations and Constraints**

The overriding principle is the safety and security of pupils on their journeys to and from the School and to venues associated with their life and education as pupils of St Albans School. That is not, however, the sole issue for consideration.

### **1. Safeguarding responsibilities**

The School's responsibilities for pupils under safeguarding are set out in the government's document "Keeping Children Safe in Education".

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance<sup>2</sup> as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

The School is also required to comply with the provisions of the Regulations <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulating-independent-schools> which are set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2019.

Compliance is mandatory and the School is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate on behalf of the Department for Education against these.

At the School's last inspection (Autumn 2022) the School received a "pass" in regard to compliance (it is pass/fail – no other gradings) and "Excellent" in the Educational Quality categories.

### **2. Health and Safety (for pupils, staff, drivers and the general public)**

The School has a duty, both morally and under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, for the health, safety and welfare of anybody who could be impacted by what it does and how it does it. The safety of the pupils, staff, coach drivers and general public is a core value of the operations of the School. This should not be confused with the School's Safeguarding responsibility as set out above.

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<sup>2</sup> Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2022, page 6



### **3. Minimising impact on local area, including for businesses and residents**

The School recognises that the coaches are large, take up space and make noise, so wherever they travel and stop, the impact on others, including local businesses, residents and visitors needs to be understood and minimised. When examining schedules or operating procedures with a view to change, it must be recognised that there are no impact-free solutions, and by redirecting buses, it merely displaces them elsewhere rather than reducing them. Current routing is designed to keep coaches, as far as possible, from driving through the congested city centre.

The School is not the only user of large vehicles in the city centre. Local buses, refuse and recycling lorries, delivery trucks and construction vehicles service the many homes and businesses in and around the School's vicinity, yet are nothing to do with the School.

### **4. Reducing carbon footprint**

The School has clear social and ethical responsibilities to minimise its environmental impact. Holywell Hill at The Peahen junction is one of the most polluted roads in the country, and we do what we can to avoid adding to this. The School community, including staff, pupils and parents, are concerned to ensure that the carbon footprint of their travel to work is minimised.

### **5. Costs**

The School has a responsibility to minimise costs for parents.

### **6. Loss of competitive advantage**

It is in the interests of both the School and the city of St Albans that the School prospers and attracts pupils from a wide geographic area. An efficient transport system is an essential element of that.

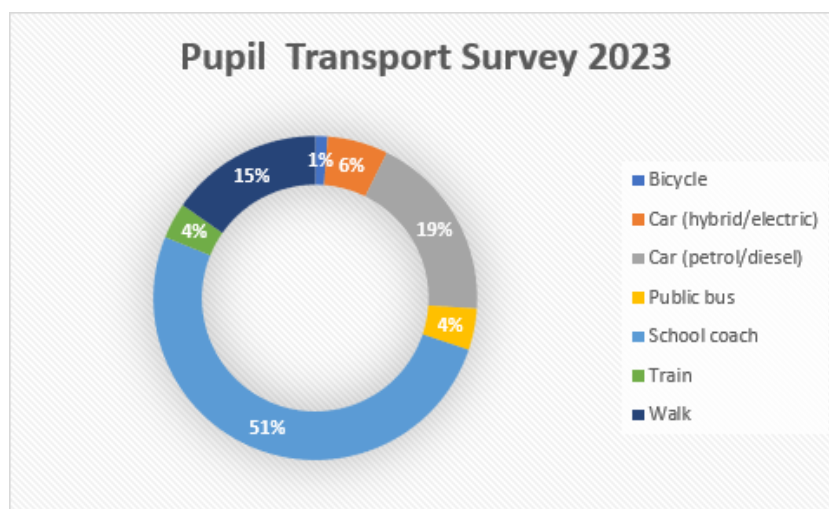
Each of these matters are considered in more detail in the Risks section below.



## C – Description of Operations

### Usage

- Some 480 pupils, about 50% of the School's pupils, travel by school coaches each day. The use of mass transit at this high level means that nearly 1,000 car journeys are saved each day, or 170,000 each year.
- About 25% travel by car (19% in petrol/diesel, 6% electric/hybrid), while the remainder travel by a mix of walking, public transport (public bus and train services) and cycle.
- The proportion travelling to St Albans School by car is considerably less than the average in Hertfordshire schools, which is 40%<sup>3</sup>. If the School were to operate at this average level, that would imply some 270 additional car movements each day in the area.



### Timing

- The coaches pick up from a wide range of locations around St Albans and aim to arrive at School in the period 08:15-08:30. This cannot be predicted with perfect accuracy as arrival times vary with traffic.
- They leave once again in the evening, in two shifts between 16:00 and 16:30 (for those not taking part in academic or co-curricular activities following afternoon lessons) and then late buses operate between 18:00 and 18:15.

### Routing

- In the morning, six of the coaches arrive via Batchwood roundabout, in through College Street and to Romeland. They do not go into the centre of the city. Other buses come in via London Road or Holywell Hill, pass the Peahen and then turn down into George Street.
- With no alternative exit from Romeland in the afternoons (as George Street is closed), they exit via Fishpool Street so that they do not go through the city centre to reduce traffic through the most congested and polluted areas of the city.

<sup>3</sup> HEALTHIER, SAFER, GREENER JOURNEYS TO SCHOOL - Hertfordshire's Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS) 2018/19, page 4



## Use

- In the afternoon (4pm service), pupils congregate within Upper Yard, with school staff on duty marshal these pupils into the right groups. They are released down to the buses when they are called through by walkie-talkie. This prevents a build-up of pupils waiting for buses on the roadside, keeping them in a place where they are protected.
- Pupils are asked to board the buses without going onto the road, using a gap between the buses and the Romeland Wall for this purpose. It is only when cars are illegally parked does it necessitate pupils going onto the road.
- For those routes which require only a smaller vehicle which can access the Upper Yard car park, boarding is conducted on School grounds.
- Buses are held outside the city centre/conservation area to reduce the time that they are waiting in Romeland, and to reduce the number of buses there at any one time.
- Bus arrival and departure times are staggered to seek to reduce concentration of buses in one place.
- Some of the buses are used to bring pupils back from the School's sports fields at Woollams and are repurposed on arrival to become one of the buses to take pupils home. This means that the bus arrival and departure must happen in the same place.
- Most of the buses are equipped with CCTV, location trackers or both, such that most scenarios are catered for. In some cases, the buses have up to 12 CCTV cameras which cover inside and outside the bus. CCTV footage and data is retained for later review as necessary.

## Sports and Trips

- Coaches and minibuses are also used for the purposes of transporting pupils for purposes other than between home and School. Such journeys include:-
  - travelling between the main school site and their sporting activities, which might be at the School's facilities (the Woollams Playing Fields on the Harpenden Road) or to an away fixture at a different location.
  - Other activities such as educational visits, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions etc.
- Woollams is often used as a meeting point, especially outside of normal hours or when large numbers of parents are dropping off or picking up their children.

## Ownership

- The home-to-school coaches are not owned or operated by the School, but by two private companies, PPH and White's. The drivers are employees of these companies. They are all suitably checked to work with children.
- The School has clear contracts (service level agreements) with the coach companies which set out responsibilities, including (but not limited to) driver qualifications and behaviours, DBS clearance, respecting speed limits and the requirement to switch engines off when parked.
- The School owns and operates a number of minibuses. These are not used for home to school trips, as they are in use for sporting and other purposes and would be insufficient in number for commuting.





## D – Risk Framework

Issue	Potential Risks	Mitigations	Ongoing and Future Actions by the School
<b>1. Safeguarding of Pupils</b>	That the care of pupils under the care of the School does not meet the School's legal responsibilities and that pupils are in some way harmed through a failure of the School to adhere to the relevant standards.	Loading and unloading close to the School such that pupils can be supervised in an appropriate way.  Ensuring that coach drivers are suitably checked (DBS) and trained in safeguarding.  CCTV on most of the larger vehicles, with recordings available to the School.	Ongoing supervision



Issue	Potential Risks	Mitigations	Ongoing and Future Actions by the School
<p><b>2. Health and Safety for pupils, staff, drivers and the general public</b></p>	<p>That the physical safety is compromised, such as (for example) an individual being struck by a bus or a car as a result of the coach operations.</p> <p>That pupils or members of the public are put at risk by having them walk long distances from coach drop-off or pick up points, which might include the crossing of roads.</p>	<p>Loading and unloading close to the School such that pupils can be supervised by school staff. Pupils assemble in Upper Yard and are called to the coaches by two-way radio.</p> <p>Clear rules on the loading and unloading of buses, such as not stopping between pick-up locations.</p> <p>Training of drivers.</p> <p>Supervision by School staff.</p> <p>Marshalling into groups in Upper Yard and releasing them only when the coach is ready to board via clear loading areas.</p> <p>Service level agreement with coach companies.</p> <p>Scheduled deliveries to the School avoid peak times (for safety) but are timed to be within reasonable hours such that local residents should not be disturbed.</p> <p>The 20mph zone in the area around the School.</p>	<p>Ongoing close supervision by the School of its bus operations.</p> <p>Channels of communication and regular meetings between the School and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the bus companies; and</li> <li>• local residents' associations and councillors</li> </ul> <p>If illegal car parking in the Romeland bus bay increases the risk to pupils, the School would have to apply to the Council for a reinstatement of the previous arrangements, i.e. that the bus bay be reserved for School coach use at all times during School terms.</p>



Issue	Potential Risks	Mitigations	Ongoing and Future Actions by the School
<p><b>3. Minimising impact on local area, including for businesses and residents</b></p>	<p>That the noise and traffic disruption caused by the coaches becomes disproportionate and unreasonable.</p> <p>That the provision of school transport loses its attraction to parents and the number of pupils travelling by private car increases.</p>	<p>Ensuring that coaches are properly maintained to reduce noise and emissions.</p> <p>The School works with the council and parking officers to optimise the arrangements.</p> <p>Routing is specifically designed to avoid the city centre, where congestion is at its worst.</p> <p>Use of coaches significantly reduces the number of cars entering the city centre and the local area around the School.</p>	<p>Remind coach companies of the speed limits.</p> <p>Continue to encourage travel to school by non-vehicular means (on foot and by bicycle).</p> <p>Continue to encourage use of school transport instead of individual car journeys.</p>



Issue	Potential Risks	Mitigations	Ongoing and Future Actions by the School
<p><b>4. Reducing carbon footprint</b></p>	<p>That the impact on the environment of school transport increases or does not reduce in line with general standards.</p>	<p>By using alternative methods of transport such that car use is minimised (see appendix).</p> <p>Use of coach transport is fundamentally better than car use for the equivalent number of cars.</p> <p>Most coaches are manufactured and maintained to high environmental standards.</p> <p>Regulations in place to prevent vehicles idling.</p> <p>Encouraging applications from families within close distances (walk, cycle etc).</p> <p>Routes are shared with another school to reduce the number of buses used.</p> <p>Routing is specifically designed to reduce traffic through the city centre, where pollution is at its worst.</p> <p>The sizes of the vehicles is carefully reviewed; one large one has less impact (carbon footprint, noise, congestion) than two or more smaller ones.</p>	<p>Ongoing encouragement from the School to parents to use coaches or public transport rather than passenger cars.</p> <p>Building additional cycle sheds for pupils.</p> <p>Reminding coach companies about idling engines.</p> <p>Ensure that the coaches used have high environmental protection standards, such as Euro IV.</p> <p>Ensuring that coach companies review their vehicles as the technologies develop and regulatory environment changes. At present, hybrid/electric/hydrogen buses are not available to meet the specifications.</p>



Issue	Potential Risks	Mitigations	Ongoing and Future Actions by the School
<p><b>5. Minimising costs</b></p>	<p>That using coaches falls because of disproportionate cost, thus increasing car usage, local impact and carbon footprint.</p>	<p>Buses are generally run as full as possible.</p> <p>Coach size is kept to a minimum to reduce costs.</p> <p>Vehicles are used for other purposes during the day and during the holidays such that the full cost of these vehicles are spread across more than one user.</p>	<p>Ongoing planning of routes and bus sizes to keep costs under control.</p>
<p><b>6. Loss of competitive advantage</b></p>	<p>Reduction of pupil numbers causing challenges for the School's successful operation with a consequential negative impact and downside for the local economy.</p>	<p>Ensuring that cost-effective school transport options serve to attract parents to the School in the future.</p> <p>School marketing emphasises the attraction of the historic location of the School, its position in the heart of the community and the daily interaction with the city and its people.</p>	<p>Ensuring that the transport options provided by the School remain attractive to parents and prospective parents.</p> <p>Further marketing emphasis on the attractions and benefits of the School's location.</p>



## **E – Frequently Asked Questions**

### **For what proportion of the year are coaches used?**

- Term is usually about 170 school days (Monday to Friday), so that is significantly less than half of the calendar days in the year.

### **Can the School use smaller buses?**

- Yes, but that would mean more of them, together with greater impact on carbon footprint. For example, one of the coaches carries 100 pupils on two levels. Small buses, such as a midi bus, carry 25 pupils. The larger the buses, the lower the carbon footprint per person.
- To be economically viable, the coaches need to have alternative uses at other times of day and during the school holidays.
- The weight of the largest school coach is less than two-thirds of the council's refuse truck.

### **Why use double decker buses?**

- See above. They have high capacity and significantly reduce the number of buses and the carbon footprint.

### **Could American-style school buses be used?**

- The US-style of buses are wider than the largest of the PPH buses. They are not environmentally friendly and have no alternative use during the day or holidays.

### **Can we have more environmentally friendly buses, such as hybrid or electric?**

- The buses are diesel but are generally maintained to the highest standard. Most are modern, to current Euro 6 standards so that they can go into London. The pattern of use and the limitations of existing technologies mean that current hybrid buses are unsuitable, but that will be kept under review as technology advances and as the regulatory environment changes.
- The carbon footprint of each bus is considerably better than the 50-100 cars that would otherwise have to make the same journey.

### **What proportion of the School come in by coach?**

- About half.

### **Why can't the pupils be dropped off/picked up somewhere more distant (city centre, Westminster Lodge, King Harry Lane, Chequer St. etc) and walk?**

- The options for these are kept under review. Unfortunately, there is no single, easy option that will satisfy all parties, as any change to the coach procedures is essentially displacement with one group lobbying to pass what they perceive to be a problem onto another group/area – the activity still needs to happen.
- The School has looked at a variety of options for this. In the summer holidays in 2019, the School conducted a series of dry runs to examine whether city centre stops were viable to dilute the impact of buses on Fishpool Street. The conclusions were clear; that diverting buses through the city centre and requiring them to load/unload pupils in these locations would have significant negative impact on



the pupils and their safety and on traffic and pedestrian flow in the centre of the city<sup>4</sup> and are therefore not viable.

- More distant locations, such as Westminster Lodge, King Harry Lane etc give rise to major safeguarding and security concerns, quite apart from the additional time lost by pupils.

#### **Why aren't all the buses full?**

- It is in the interests of everyone to have the appropriately-sized coaches, to reduce costs and impact. Where some buses appear not to be full:-
  - Some buses are shared with other schools, so may already have dropped off the pupils elsewhere, or have another pickup to do;
  - Some buses are also used as transport from Woollams (the School's playing fields) to avoid multiple journeys. On some trips back to the School, they are not full, but their purpose changes when they get to School, and so will then be full.

#### **Why don't more pupils walk to school? Why do they travel so far?**

- St Albans School is one of the best schools in the country. Entry is competitive and many parents seek to send their children here. While we would prefer to have pupils only from the local area, the primary selection criteria are academic and whether the School is right for the child, not on the geography of where parents live.
- The School makes every effort to reduce the overall impact of travel.

#### **What benefits does the School provide for the local community?**

- The School educates its pupils to a very high standard. Many stay in the area following their education and make important contributions to the community through their chosen careers.
- The School brings significant economic benefit to the city (see page 2 above).
- The School has strong partnership programmes with local schools:  
<https://www.schoolstogether.org/schools/school/95630/>
- The School provides many of its facilities for use by the local community, such as the Sports Centre, rooms for events, the Woollam Playing Fields etc.
- The School also opens its Upper Yard car park for community use, including by residents, shoppers and visitors to the Abbey for much of the time when it is not being used by the School. This is a free amenity which is often overlooked by users.

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<sup>4</sup> The dry runs demonstrated that potential city centre locations are unsuitable for this purpose as:-

- Three of four are too narrow for the buses to park safely and unload/load pupils without obstructing the road, the pavement or both;
- The bays are heavily used for their primary purpose (delivery vehicles servicing local businesses) and therefore not accessible for the coaches at those times;
- the bays themselves cannot be accessed by a coach without driving over the pavements or making a shunt (a reversing movement) which would be a major problem on a route through the city.
- only 5 of the 11 buses currently go through those city centre locations and diverting the remainder through the city there would increase impacts (traffic and emissions) in the city centre.



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**If pupils go up to town on their own during lunchtime, why can't they walk up to town on their own to and from the coaches parked elsewhere?**

- Only Fifth and Sixth Formers can exercise a privilege to go up into the city for lunch. Most of these pupils are 16 and over.
- Some of the pupils that use the coaches can be as young as 11.

**Have there been any incidents of injury to pupils, staff or local residents as a result of the bus operations?**

- Not to the knowledge of the School.

**Where can I find more information about the School?**

- <https://www.st-albans.herts.sch.uk/>

**How can I contact the School if I have any questions on the matter of transport?**

- Email [transport@st-albans.herts.sch.uk](mailto:transport@st-albans.herts.sch.uk)