

## **Scholars Bus 926**

Turton School have had an ongoing issue with the service provided for students traveling on the 926 scholars bus route. The main concern is that the single decker bus that has a maximum capacity of 70 passengers is not fit for purpose as the number of students who need to use this service is \_\_\_\_\_. As a school we have been in constant dialogue with TfGM about this issue as parents are constantly contacting the school desperate for a solution so that their child can come to and from school safely. Turton School is an oversubscribed secondary school whose leadership and staff pride ourselves in our broad and inclusive environment we offer. Our catchment area has grown in recent years however, the local government and TfGM have not made suitable adjustments either financially or in terms of service so that we can get our students to and from school. Below (in blue) is the correspondence we have received from Alban Green at TfGM:

*TfGM (Travel for Greater Manchester)*

*The position of the low bridge on Turton Road means a double deck vehicle cannot be used on service 926. We currently have a 70-capacity single deck vehicle allocated to the route.*

*We've discussed possible options regarding this issue, and we have examined patronage data from services operating over the past few days. Unfortunately, we are unable to allocate a double deck vehicle to service 926 without requiring a lengthy diversion, which isn't feasible. Similarly, we have no spare funding to allocate a second single-deck bus to service 926, and as you may be aware, there is currently a shortage of bus drivers locally, and in the wider industry, and I don't believe allocating a second vehicle would make full use of the limited resources available.*

*Instead, I'd like to work with you to provide the information your pupils need to make their journeys using the public bus network. There are alternatives available on the public bus network from Harwood to Turton School that fall within the statutory guidance for home-to-school journeys. As part of the Bee Network there's an aim to encourage further use of buses and active travel and I believe encouraging pupils now is the right approach to allow them to be more confident making journeys by public transport into the future. Additionally, pupils using the public bus network contributes to the ongoing financial stability of the network and allows us to invest more in those bus services.*

*Pupils travelling from Harwood are able to use services 480 and 507 from Harwood to Bradshaw Brow, to connect with services 533 and 541 to Toppings.*

*In the morning, pupils can catch:*

- 1. 507 Bus at 07:15 from Harwood White Horse, then change at Bradshaw Brow for 541 Bus at 08:15, to arrive at school approx. 08:25.*
- 2. 507 Bus at 07:50 from Harwood White Horse, then change at Bradshaw Brow for 541 Bus at 08:21, to arrive at school approx. 08:30*

*In the afternoon, pupils can catch:*

- 3. One of two 541 Buses both leaving Turton School at 15:07, then change at Bradshaw Brow for 507 Bus at 15:23 or 480 Bus 15:39.*
- 4. 533 Bus at 15:30 from Turton Road, then change at Bradshaw Brow for 507 Bus at 16:00.*

*Below are links to the TfGM website, for the timetables for services mentioned above and for the TfGM journey planner, which can be used to show other possible alternatives, such as walking and cycling as well as public transport.*

*[480 22-SC-0561.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](#)*

*[533 23-SC-0442.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](#)*

*[507 23-SC-0438.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](#)*

*[541 23-SC-0444.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](#)*

### *Cost of tickets:*

*The £7.60 ticket is for school buses only (i.e. 926) and the £10.50 ticket is for all services, public and school. So, while it may be an increase compared to if people buy the £7.60 ticket, with the £10.50 ticket it's only 50p more than if they were to buy single tickets each way every day, so is more cost effective. The £10.50 also has the added benefit that it can be used at all times, unlimited travel across 7 days, so you do get more use out of the £10.50 ticket.*

As you can see, there are two main issues here;

1. The 'solutions' given incur further cost to parents of our school. We cannot assume that our children use the bus for any other reason than getting to and from school safely.
2. The 'solution' only refers to one area of the route which is effectively putting a plaster over one small part of the problem. We have students who live in other areas of this route such as Brightmet which is an even longer and rightly more worrying walk home for children and parents that we serve.

### **DfE: Travel to school for children of compulsory school age**

#### **Statutory guidance for local authorities January 2024**

##### ***Unsafe walking route***

*29. A child is eligible for free travel to school if:*

- *They attend their nearest suitable school, and*
- *it is within the statutory walking distance of their home, and*
- *the nature of the route means they could not be expected to walk there in reasonable safety even if accompanied by their parent, and*
- *there is no alternative route within the statutory walking distance that they would be able to walk in reasonable safety, even if accompanied by their parent.*

*30. When assessing whether a route can be walked in reasonable safety, local authorities should consider the whole of the route. This will include, for example, any sections that use footpaths or bridleways, as well as sections that use roads. They should consider a range of risks such as canals, rivers, ditches, speed of traffic and fields of vision for the pedestrian and motorist.*

##### ***Sustainable modes of travel strategy***

*151. Local authorities must publish a sustainable modes of travel strategy for each academic year. The strategy should:*

- *set out the local authority's vision, objectives and work programme for:*
  - o improving the infrastructure for sustainable travel;*
  - o promoting sustainable travel to places of education;*

*\*[Unsafe walking route] The guidance for 'suitable' walking is 3 miles including off road paths, ginnels and fields. The route from Turton School to Harwood (fig 1), where a large number of students travel to and from, is a 45-minute walk and includes walking through The Rigby fields alongside a river and a large cricket ground. All of which can be deemed unsafe and stressful for both child and parents, especially during the dark nights. The journey from Turton School to Brightmet (fig 2) is even more onerous and potentially dangerous for students. This walking route is 1 hour 3 minutes and includes crossing a river, passing a lake and passing Seven Acres Nature Reserve. All of which can be deemed unsafe, especially during dark nights. These areas are not lit up.*

Both of these routes are not safe. We teach children to stay in lit up areas and in public spaces, especially in the dark, and neither of these 'quickest' routes, which TfGM refer to, adhere to the safety of our young people.

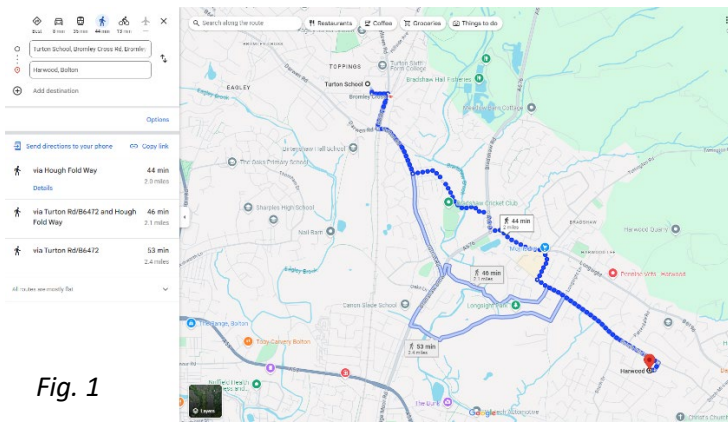


Fig. 1

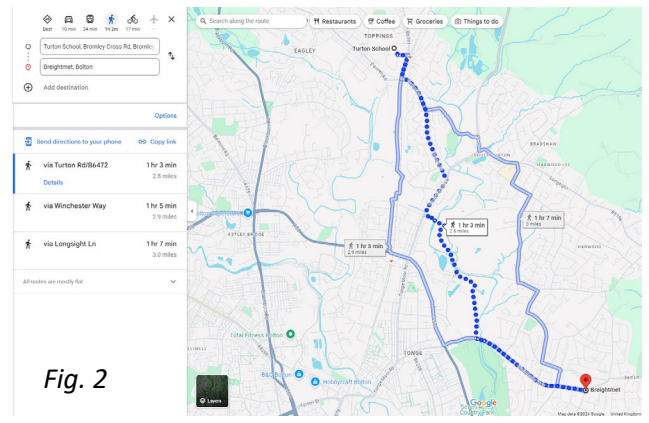


Fig. 2

In addition to this, TfGM have not assessed the needs of the children who need to travel on the 926 bus. Sen Power Ltd. – Home to School Transport’s website states that *‘Local authorities have a duty to provide non-stressful transport arrangements.’* At this current moment in time, TfGM are not and cannot be adhering to this as it is not aware of the children they get on the bus, and more importantly those they are currently having to turn away. As a fully comprehensive school, we have a large mix of students with complex and at times, hidden needs. We cannot and will not start singling children out who can be deemed ‘eligible’ to get on the 926 school bus. Therefore, we have to accommodate all of our students and so should the DfE and TfGM.

\*[Sustainable modes of travel strategy] The guidance in section 15.1 states that the local authority must publish sustainable modes of travel strategy for each academic year. This has clearly not been addressed as this issue with the 926 bus has been an ongoing for a number of years, and therefore has been ignored and / or overlooked. Bullet point two on the DfE ‘promoting sustainable travel to places of education’ is a particular concern for us as a school as this issue is clearly not promoting sustainable travel. For the students that require to travel on the 926 school bus, there is no sustainable travel as it is a lottery every morning and evening, adding to children’s anxieties and stresses.

The TfGM concluding that there is ‘no spare funding’ in order to keep children safe goes against the DfE guidelines and therefore the TfGM and / or local government need to step in and address this as a matter of urgency. Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Provide two 926 scholars buses that run a short time of distance apart.
2. Provide a double decker bus in the current buses place so that it can deal with the volume of students. The bus could end at Turton Bridge. This could require a bus turn being created.
3. Add an additional bus that picks up from our extended catchment area and allows the 926 route to start where it previously did.