



HUNTERVILLE SCHOOL

Bruce Street, Huntermville Phone: 06-322 8210 Fax: 06-322 8294

E-mail: office@huntermville.school.nz www.huntermville.school.nz

Principal Stephen Lewis A/H 027 778 1995

25 May 2017

Open Letter to Parents re Students Using School Buses

Hi Parents

There are a few bus issues I'd like to share with you or clarify for you in relation to our school bus services...

1. Conveyance Allowances

This is a payment made by the Ministry of Education to parents, where parents have to travel to meet the official school bus. There is a major change, which the Ministry, despite baulking at one stage, have informed me in writing they are sticking to. This is now outlined clearly on the MOE website. The *main* two rules around eligibility for a conveyance allowance are now:

- A student must be attending his/her *nearest school*. (This is the new bit)
- The student must live more than 3.2km from that school

Students currently receiving a conveyance allowance will continue to do so. The above applies to applications received after 1 January 2017.

Students attending a school other than their nearest school, do retain the eligibility to use the *bus service* to their more distant school, provided they meet the 3.2km criteria above.

2. Student Behaviour on Buses

We expect student behaviour on buses to reflect the behaviour we would expect of them at school. It is not an ideal situation to have large numbers of students on a bus unaccompanied (apart from the driver!) but that is the reality and has always been the reality. In settling 'issues' it's often a case of how much noise on a bus is too much noise, and in the case of disputes between students on a bus it's a case of, "He said she said!" It is seldom straight forward or clear cut! ☺

It has always been the case that a driver or the principal may deny a student the privilege of using the school bus service if the student's behaviour is unsatisfactory. Unfortunately I have felt it necessary to ban some students from using the bus for a period of time every now and then – I could certainly cite a case or three each year where this has happened! The major reasons for doing so are for that of safety. I.e. a noisy or disruptive bus causes unnecessary driver distraction and therefore puts passengers at unnecessary risk.

A secondary reason is that we expect students to be respectful to each other and to the driver and to comply with any requests from the driver, and for that matter from any responsible senior student. (See below under 'Bus Monitors')

Students Banned From Using a Bus

Taking into account the above, and notwithstanding an incident that is deemed serious enough to warrant an instant ban, and notwithstanding that any driver (and by the way drivers are not employed by the school, nor are they 'answerable;' to the school) may for any reason refuse to transport a student, this is the pathway I use towards a bus ban:

1st instance: student spoken to by myself and warned. Issue is documented. Parent not contacted

2nd instance: (Within an unacceptable time from the first, in my opinion). Parent contacted

3rd instance: (Within an unacceptable time from the previous, in my opinion). Parent contacted and informed a bus ban for that student is effective immediately.

I mention the above because a number of issues are beginning to come to my attention and a gentle word in the ear by a parent to their child might help things! I also want to be transparent about how all this plays out so that there can be less scope for uncertainty or anguish should a student be denied use of a school bus.

I wish to reassure all parents of students on one of our five bus routes (six if you count the Yr 7/8 'manual' run) that I am quite comfortable with upsetting a student (and their parents too, unfortunately) by banning the student from the bus, so that other students can travel more safely and comfortably.

I know it can be an inconvenience to parents to have a child banned from using a bus, and I do appreciate a child's behaviour on the bus cannot be directly controlled by the parent, but it comes back to the point that I consider the greater 'injustice' is to have other passengers and/or the driver inconvenienced or their safety compromised by a few.

And the reason I write this open letter now is that I'm now poised to pounce on a few students re their bus behaviour and I don't want this to be too much of a shock to a parent. ☺

3. Role of Bus Monitors

- Take the roll each afternoon (supervised by a teacher) and lead their group to the bus in an orderly manner
- Report any bus issues or concerns to me for following up
- When travelling ON the bus there is no student 'hierarchy'. All students travelling on a bus are expected to respond to and respect the pleasant advice of *any senior student* (I.e. normally Year 7/8) regarding reminders of bus rules / expectations.

4. Students off the bus in the Afternoon

- Please inform the office or if a last minute decision get your child to run to bus lines and inform their bus monitor. (From time to time buses are held up while we search for a student only to find they've been picked up from school.)
- Our *general position* re changes to a child's normal after school travel arrangements are that unless we hear from a parent we will send the child home on their bus as usual.

5. Students off the bus in the Morning

- Please inform the school or driver the day before if you can, or if it's in the morning please contact a family before yours to pass on the message to the driver. Thanks

6. Students Left Unaccompanied Waiting for Buses in the Morning

- Not an issue if it's at your own driveway
- Obviously far from ideal at the stops where multiple students get on (I.e. Leedstown Road and Kie Kie Rd, combined totalling approximately 40 students)
- Leedstown Rd parents, ideally I'd suggest students wait with you in your vehicle until the bus arrives. This is what is now happening at Kie kie Road
- Or if that's not possible on occasions, could you ask another parent to have your child(ren) sit in their vehicle if you have to drop and run?
- Or parents Could we make a roster of parent supervisors for the morning at the Leedstown Rd /Jeffersons Line pick up. Let me know. Happy to coordinate. Or are things fine as they are? Thoughts?

7. Students Left Unaccompanied After Being Dropped Off in the Afternoon

- The school's position on this (and all the drivers have been so accommodating) is that if the stop is not at your own driveway, the driver will wait a short time and then bring the child back to school where we will follow up. (Rather than leave alone on the roadside)
- This doesn't work at the Leedstown and Kiekie Rd stops where so many get off at once, but we have been grateful to other parents at such times, when they either wait or phone parents, or phone us to come and sort – which we're happy to do.

Parents, for any discussion or clarification on the above or any other related bus issues, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me. Our aim is to make bus travel a safe, orderly and pleasant experience for everyone! ☺

Regards



Stephen Lewis
Principal