



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report of the

**AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL INTO THE QUALITY OF
SERVICE ON CONTRACTED SCHOOL BUS SERVICES**

April 2002

INTRODUCTION

The Panel

Councillor Iredale (Chair)
Councillor Hey and Ms P Cross

Lead Officer: Adam Wilkinson

Committee Administrator: Brian Tewkesbury

BACKGROUND

The Review was set up following local concerns over the quality of service reported to the Education Scrutiny Panel. Although the review was primarily concerned with the use of contracted school bus services information has also been obtained on the use of other school transport provision.

The Panel has met on five occasions (7 December 2001, 14 January, 5 February, 14 March and 17 April 2002) and has also visited Honley High School (5 March 2002) and Colne Valley High (26th March 2002) in order to obtain the views of students who use school transport. In addition the Panel has travelled on school transport provided from King James's High School (21 January 2002) to experience the service at first hand. The opportunity was taken to seek the views of the students using the school buses during this exercise.

INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE

The Panel has considered the following in reaching its conclusions:-

- (a) Information obtained from students who use school transport at Honley and Colne Valley High Schools;
- (b) Information gathered when travelling on school buses from King James's High School;
- (c) Information given by METRO on the success of the SAFEMark award scheme in South Yorkshire and its trial in West Yorkshire;
- (d) Outcomes of discussions with representatives of bus companies providing school transport;
- (e) Outcomes of discussions with local Education Authority staff and school staff with responsibilities for school transport provision;
- (f) The results of a school transport questionnaire exercise amongst students.

In addition the Panel has received assistance from Angie Dickinson and Julie Walker of the Young People's Service and Sharon Weavill of the Education School Transport Section in gathering information from school transport users.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

During its deliberations the Panel noted the ideas put forward for improvements by pupils of Honley High School and Colne Valley High School as well as the following:-

- (i) That contract vehicles were provided for school transport at a number of schools in Kirklees (Honley High School, St John Fisher Catholic High School and Colne Valley High School).
- (ii) Only pupils who had been assessed by the Local Education Authority and qualified for free school transport were eligible to travel on these buses.
- (iii) Pupils living beyond the qualifying distance were issued with boarding cards to demonstrate qualification.
- (iv) That the SAFEMark awards scheme which is now being piloted in West Yorkshire after a successful launch in South Yorkshire had the following aims:-
 - (a) to improve the quality of the journey to and from school by public transport, tackling in particular the behavioural issues caused by a minority of secondary school students;
 - (b) to address safety concerns on school buses;
 - (c) to encourage more pupils to travel by public transport.
- (v) That notable improvements in the school transport experience at particular schools in South Yorkshire had been achieved following the granting of the SAFEMark award.
- (vi) In areas not covered by other transport provision services were tendered by METRO (often subsidised) and pupils could board and pay the appropriate fare.
- (vii) METRO had found that there were sufficient seats available for pupils in all cases but overcrowding problems arose when pupils chose to use a particular bus.
- (viii) In order to overcome difficulties some schools had utilised a boarding card system on contracted buses, sometimes in conjunction with the allocation of a specific seat.
- (ix) Most problems were associated with the use of registered service vehicles where there was a perception of overcrowding mainly due to the manner in which the students chose to use the buses.
- (x) That where seating plans existed they greatly assisted promoting good behaviour.
- (xi) That it was important to maintain links with the Healthy Schools Initiative.

- (xii) That there appeared to be less difficulties on school bus services where there was a regular driver (it being noted that regular drivers were usually only employed on contracted bus services whereas public services often involved groups of drivers on a rota or shift basis).
- (xiii) That there was a need for training and awareness raising of responsibilities with regard to school transport amongst pupils about to transfer from primary schools to secondary schools.
- (xiv) That an increased use of video cameras on buses would greatly assist in identifying exactly what had happened in any particular incident.
- (xv) That for normal out of school activities pupils would need to be accompanied by adults on an approved ratio whereas for journeys to and from school it was quite possible that apart from the driver there would be no adult in charge of a group of up to 70+ pupils.
- (xvii) That most of the problems being encountered in Kirklees were also being encountered nationwide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That from September 2002 the SAFE Mark Award Scheme be introduced in Kirklees in order to improve the quality of school bus services by promoting partnership working between young people, parents, schools and bus companies.
2. That appropriate Officer resources be allocated to the SAFE Mark Award Scheme.
3. That progress of the SAFE Mark Award Scheme be monitored and the outcome be reported in due course to the relevant Scrutiny Panel.
4. That as part of the introduction of the SAFE Mark Award Scheme, METRO and the bus companies investigate the use of video cameras on school buses.
5. That liaison continues to take place with the Healthy Schools Initiative.
6. That schools be requested to strengthen their school transport procedures to reduce the likelihood of overcrowding on buses.
7. That the increased use of video cameras on school buses be encouraged and clear signs be displayed to indicate that cameras are in use.
8. That training be introduced at the transfer stage from primary to secondary education to raise awareness amongst pupils of their responsibilities with regard to the use of school transport.

APPENDICES

1. Extracts from the SAFE Mark Awards Scheme pack.
2. Extract from Honley High School Student Planner (Key Stage 3) re Pupil Behaviour on School Transport.
3. Kirklees Mainstream School Transport Survey 2002
 - (a) Survey Form
 - (b) Results

24 April 2002

(as read over from Brian Tewkesbury's e-mail of 21 May 2002)

Quality Of Service on Contracted School Bus Services
Action Plan

Recommendation	Action Taken	Lead Officer
1. That from September 2002 the SAFE Mark Award Scheme be introduced in Kirklees in order to improve the quality of school bus services by promoting partnership working between young people, parents, schools and bus companies	Initial meeting with School/Metro July 2002 Questionnaire to be distributed in September 2002 to CVHS	Sharon Weavill. LEA. J. Mellors – Metro
2. That appropriate Officer resources be allocated to the SAFE Mark Award Scheme	Revise JD's by end September 2002	
3. That progress of the SAFE Mark Award Scheme be monitored and the outcome be reported in due course to the relevant Scrutiny Panel	Report by January 2003 as to progress	
4. That as part of the introduction of the SAFE Mark Award Scheme, METRO and the bus companies investigate the use of video cameras on school buses.	Report from METRO indicating cost and alternative arrangements being made	

<p>5. That liaison continues to take place with the Healthy Schools Initiative</p>	<p>Letter to Graham Hoffman to advise of process being followed by Ed Tran and Metro</p>	
<p>6. That schools be requested to strengthen their school transport procedures to reduce the likelihood of overcrowding on buses.</p>	<p>Advice from Transport Office to Graham Hoffman re connection with Health Schools Initiative</p>	
<p>7. That the increased use of video Cameras on school buses be encouraged and clear signs be displayed to indicate that cameras are in use.</p>	<p>As 4 above</p>	
<p>8. That training be introduced at the Transfer stage from primary to secondary education to raise awareness amongst pupils of their responsibilities with regard to the use of school transport</p>	<p>Ongoing audit of each schools needs by Metro</p>	

Recommendation	Action Taken	Outcome
<p>1. That from September 2002 the SAFE Mark Award Scheme be introduced in Kirklees in order to improve the quality of school bus services by promoting partnership working between young people, parents, schools and bus companies</p>	<p>Initial meeting with School/Metro July 2002</p> <p>Questionnaire to be distributed in September 2002 to CVHS</p>	<p>The SAFE Mark scheme has been implemented in Colne Valley. SAFE Mark training has had a positive impact on the behaviour of both pupils and drivers. The situation on buses has improved greatly</p> <p>SAFE Mark training has also been rolled out at other high schools. It is provided for all children regardless of whether they use commercial or specialist school bus services.</p>
<p>4. That appropriate Officer resources be allocated to the SAFE Mark Award Scheme</p>	<p>Revise JD's by end September 2002</p>	<p>METRO are responsible for the delivery of the SAFE Mark Scheme in schools.</p> <p>The LEA has received a bursary from the Department for Transport (DfT) and the DfES for issues relating to safety on school bus services. METRO have been allocated a proportion of this bursary to train staff to deliver the SAFE Mark Award Scheme.</p>
<p>5. That progress of the SAFE Mark Award Scheme be monitored and the outcome be reported in due course to the relevant Scrutiny Panel</p>	<p>Report by January 2003 as to progress</p>	<p>This was done on two separate occasions in 2003/4. The panel were pleased with the progress that was being made.</p>
<p>4. That as part of the introduction of the SAFE Mark Award Scheme, METRO and the bus companies investigate the use of video cameras on school buses.</p>	<p>Report from METRO indicating cost and alternative arrangements being made</p>	<p>The issue of security cameras is being tackled by the introduction of Yellow Buses.</p> <p>The scheme is currently being piloted both regionally and locally. All buses have security cameras installed.</p> <p>The scheme is being funded by the DfT and DfES and is being delivered in partnership with METRO.</p> <p>It is hoped that 150 yellow buses will come into operation in our region over the next three years.</p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Transportation are currently looking at this issue in detail. The Education Panel is maintaining an overview of progress.</p>

<p>5. That liaison continues to take place with the Healthy Schools Initiative</p>	<p>Letter to Graham Hoffman to advise of process being followed by Ed Tran and Metro</p>	<p>Liaison with the Healthy Schools Initiative is being done through the development of School Travel Plans.</p> <p>School Travel Plans are a new initiative and the DfES has made capital funding available to those schools that have developed one before March 2005.</p> <p>The plans look at how pupils access schools (bike, foot etc) and how access can be developed and improved (e.g. developing walking buses, bike sheds etc).</p> <p>Each school in Kirklees is developing/has developed a School Travel Plan. This involves liaising with the Healthy Schools Initiative.</p>
<p>6. That schools be requested to strengthen their school transport procedures to reduce the likelihood of overcrowding on buses.</p>	<p>Advice from Transport Office to Graham Hoffman re connection with Health Schools Initiative</p>	<p>Issues like this are being tackled through School Travel Plans.</p>
<p>8. That the increased use of video Cameras on school buses be encouraged and clear signs be displayed to indicate that cameras are in use.</p>	<p>As 4 above</p>	<p>As 4 above.</p>
<p>8. That training be introduced at the Transfer stage from primary to secondary education to raise awareness amongst pupils of their responsibilities with regard to the use of school transport</p>	<p>Ongoing audit of each schools needs by Metro</p>	<p>The Education Service is currently looking to extend SAFE Mark training to all Junior Schools. It is hoped that this will ensure that all year six pupils are trained and fully pre</p>