

# Oxford Schools' Bus Partnership (OSBP): Frequently Asked Questions

## 1. What is OSBP?

The Oxford Schools' Bus Partnership (OSBP) is a limited company that has been set up to enable OSBP member schools to formally work together to provide a network of bus routes serving their schools. OSBP currently comprises:

- d'Overbroeck's
- Headington School
- Magdalen College School
- Oxford High School
- Rye St Antony

OSBP schools have been working together for 2½ years to address the transport challenges faced by parents. As city-centre schools, it is not feasible to host dedicated fleets of vehicles to provide a comprehensive network of individual school bus services and, as a group of schools, OSBP schools share many families. So, the obvious solution was to work in partnership rather than separately.

## 2. What are the key objectives of an OSBP network of bus services?

- **To guarantee a reliable school bus network for parents of participating schools, that is secure and lasting:** Over the years, school transport provision has been variable, ranging from well-managed parent-led/operator routes to services run by companies who have gone out of business mid-way through the school year. This has naturally caused stress and uncertainty among parents. OSBP wanted to ensure that a stable network was available that did not have the uncertainties associated with the previous services.
- **To ensure that there are high standards of safety for children on-board and full compliance to industry standards and policies:** Annual external audits will be undertaken on behalf of OSBP to ensure vehicle maintenance compliance of all operators. All OSBP operators have also signed up to a range of quality criteria, for example:
  - The use of 3-point seat belts on all regular vehicles used on OSBP routes (except occasionally when vehicles may be off the road for routine maintenance checks).
  - The use of coaches that are no more than 7 years old (except occasionally when vehicles may be off the road for routine maintenance checks).
  - All drivers must be 'OCC-badged' i.e. they must have undertaken Oxfordshire County Council's driver/safeguarding training, and will have an enhanced DBS check. Parents/carers and any other interested parties are welcome to inspect a driver's ID at any time.
  - Operators have committed to using a small pool of regular drivers on OSBP routes.
- **To ensure that younger children are escorted safely between OSBP's schools and bus services:** Provision of real-time vehicle tracking on OSBP services will enable schools to keep younger children safely inside school until the bus arrives if there have been delays to the service due to roadworks and congestion.
- **To enable parents/ carers to adjust plans accordingly should there be delays to services as a result of congestion/ roadworks:** OSBP has responded to requests from parents for vehicle-tracking on vehicles. Parents and schools will be able to see the real-time location of vehicles.
- **To actively monitor the reliability of OSBP services via the:**
  - Appointment of a dedicated Transport-Coordinator who will provide a point of contact between schools, parents and operators.
  - Use of live tracking of OSBP buses.
- **To ensure the routes have financial stability.** The OSBP service is an entirely not-for-profit initiative which provides a secure bus service provision guaranteed by the partnership schools.
- **To ensure a fair system of zonal fares and routes that serve all schools:** Historically, there has been significant discrepancy in fare levels across routes. As passenger numbers using OSBP services increase, benefits and efficiencies will be passed on to parents where possible.
- **To enable schools to respond to demand from parents:** Schools previously had little influence over geographical areas served by buses. We are now able to work in partnership with OSBP's operators and have direct influence

over bus routes and stops. We invite parents to provide feedback on future areas that they would like OSBP to serve.

- **To encourage greener, more environmentally-friendly travel for journeys to school:** The schools are fulfilling their commitment to making Oxford a greener environment by acting to cut the number of cars coming into the city. This is in line with objectives of both the city and county councils. OSBP vehicles must meet the Euro V Engine Emission standard, as a minimum.

### **3. Who will be able to travel on the OSBP network?**

Pupils from each of the OSBP schools who have booked an annual seat will be able to travel on the service. We would recommend that children from the school age of Year Three and above are most eligible for independent travel. If in doubt, please contact our Transport Co-ordinator on [info@osbp.net](mailto:info@osbp.net)

## **ROUTES AND FARES**

### **4. Does the OSBP network replace the current services operating?**

Yes, if you are currently using one of the parent-led services or the existing Heyfordian school bus services, you will need to book your place through OSBP even if the OSBP service replicates these former routes.

### **5. How many routes are there, and who are the operators?**

There are currently nine routes, from Reading and Henley in the south to Stow-on-the-Wold and Chipping Norton in the north. 'Across Oxford' travel e.g. from Summertown to Headington is also possible, subject to seat availability.

OSBP is working in partnership with Heyfordian, Horseman and Pulhams. Following a rigorous tendering process involving 11 operators, these companies have been contracted through OSBP and, as part of the contractual arrangements, OSBP has been able to ensure that a high-quality service will be provided for travel to/ from our schools. Operators of specific routes:

- **Heyfordian** (<https://www.heyfordian.travel/>): Routes 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8.
- **Horseman** (<http://www.horsemancoaches.co.uk/>): Routes 4 and 5.
- **Pulhams** (<https://www.pulhamscoaches.com/>): Route 9.

### **6. How do I find out route/timetable information?**

Initially, all information has been sent to all current parents at the participating schools and is available on their individual websites. There will be a dedicated website launched [www.osbp.net](http://www.osbp.net) and this will contain routes, timetables, fare zones, payment information and contact details. In the interim, information is on each school's website or you can contact our Transport Co-ordinator on [info@osbp.net](mailto:info@osbp.net)

### **7. My area is not served. What can I do?**

If your area is not served by a convenient route, we would encourage you to register interest in a future service with OSBP's Transport Co-ordinator. We are looking to add new routes to the network or amend current routes, if there is sufficient demand. There is also flexibility for additional, interim stops to be added to the routes currently proposed as long as this does not involve significant deviations and/or delay to the service. Please do get in touch at: [info@osbp.net](mailto:info@osbp.net)

### **8. Will there be a pick-up at Oxford Rail Station?**

OSBP cannot commit to picking pupils up from the train station to interchange with rail services as this could cause issues if train services are delayed. There would however be a drop-off at the station for pupils wanting to catch a public bus to their respective schools.

### **9. Why are there differences in fares compared to current prices?**

You may see a difference in pricing (both lower and higher) than under the previous arrangements for service provision. Current (2016/17 academic year) and previous routes were operated using differing pricing policies, for example, the overall cost of the vehicle may have been split between the number of fare-paying passengers irrespective of length of journey. Or, for current Heyfordian routes, the fare charged for Term 3 is lower than that charged for Term 1. OSBP felt that the fairest means of determining fares should be zonal with the cost split equally between three academic terms.

OSBP has been set up to provide parents with secure, reliable and lasting home to school transport provision. It is guaranteed by the schools, and replaces the combination of services used up to this point. Some of these services offered unsustainably low prices; the instability that this resulted in was one of the reasons for the creation of OSBP. We want to avoid, for example, the past experiences of routes being cancelled midway through a year because one or two families changed travel plans. Inevitably on some routes, therefore, the prices are higher to help ensure fairness, stability and consistency across the whole network.

#### **10. Can my child interchange from an OSBP bus to a public bus within Oxford?**

Yes, we appreciate that the OSBP network is serving 5 different schools within Oxford and for some older pupils they might have quicker journeys if they interchange to a public bus for the final leg of their journey to school. In these cases (for those with a Zone 2, 3, 4 or 5 pass), OSBP will subsidise the cost of your OSBP bus fare to reflect the amount paid for the public bus. This information should be provided when you complete your booking form.

#### **11. Timetabling of OSBP services means that I will incur childcare fees.**

Where the youngest children on a route (i.e.: from prep or junior schools) are required to go to after-school care before their bus arrives, the parent will not be required to pay for this childcare if they hold a Zone 2, 3, 4 or 5 pass.

#### **12. I have more than one child travelling to an OSBP school. Is there a sibling discount?**

Yes, there is a sibling discount of 10% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> child's fare, and any subsequent child travelling to an OSBP member school. Please fill in one form per child clearly identifying the lead child and siblings on the forms.

#### **13. How do I book?**

You can book by emailing OSBP's Transport Co-ordinator on [info@osbp.net](mailto:info@osbp.net). You do not book via the individual school.

#### **14. How do I pay?**

Payment for travel will be via your child's school, billed through the school fees' or Extras invoicing arrangements.

#### **15. Can my child travel just for two out of three terms?**

No, parents must sign-up for the year from Term 1. Payment is then divided equally across all three terms.

#### **16. What is the notice period?**

The commitment is to sign up to the service for an academic year. If for any reason you consider that there are issues with the service that can be proven, cancellation will be possible.

#### **17. Is there wheelchair access?**

OSBP and our operators are committed to ensuring that all pupils can travel on our coaches. If your child has a disability that may affect their use of the coach, please discuss your requirements with your individual school and OSBP will address specific requests on a case-by-case basis.

## **TIMETABLES AND DAY-TO-DAY ISSUES**

#### **18. On what days will the OSBP network operate?**

The OSBP bus services will run on every day that at least one of the OSBP schools is open. For 2017/18, days of operation are as follows (all dates are inclusive):

- Tuesday 5th September 2017 to Friday 20th October 2017
- Monday 30th October 2017 to Friday 15th December 2017
- Thursday 4th January 2018 to Friday 9th February 2018
- Monday 19th February 2018 to Thursday 29th March 2018
- Tuesday 17th April 2018 to Friday 25th May 2018
- Monday 4th June 2018 to Wednesday 11th July 2018

## **19. When schools finish early at the end of term, will buses still run?**

Buses will operate as usual for the journey to school but a mid-day return service will not be provided.

## **20. Can my child travel on the bus on occasional days?**

No, parents must sign-up for children to travel on 5 days per week although AM-only or PM-only options are available. If there is seat availability prior to the start of term, seats will be offered for travel on ad hoc days.

## **21. Can my child use different routes (e.g. if parents have different addresses)?**

Yes. Please identify your routes/stops on your booking form and this can be accommodated.

Subject to seat availability, pupils will also be able to occasionally travel on other routes (within the same fare zone) using their passes.

## **22. Can my child bring a friend back on the bus occasionally?**

Once demand on routes is known, we will be able to clarify – we aim to be as flexible as possible.

## **23. What happens if my child loses their bus pass?**

A replacement will be issued. A £10 administrative charge will apply.

## **24. Why do some routes now leave Oxford later in the PM than currently?**

The OSBP routes serve five schools across the city and, to ensure that they arrive on time for registration and avoid a lengthy journey at the end of the day, the timetables have been timed to address these challenges. We realise that this may mean a slightly different time to a current/previous operator. We have worked closely with each operator and each school to reflect the parent survey data indicating acceptable early morning start times and length of journey, the variable registration and finish times of each school, and the most time-efficient routes to circumnavigate Oxford traffic. We are committed to refining these routes should roadworks, congestion or customer demand change.

## **25. How will you ensure good behaviour on-board vehicles?**

OSBP will ensure that codes of conduct are in place and adhered to. Any issues with on-board behaviour should be reported to OSBP's Transport Co-ordinator who will liaise with schools and parents to resolve any concerns.

## **26. Bus stops**

It is expected that parents or carers are at the bus stop 5 minutes before pick-up as the bus will not wait. Our live tracking should facilitate this. The child will be dropped off at their usual stop and the expectation is that their parent/carer will be waiting to collect them at the end of the day. There are duty staff at the schools to oversee arrivals in Oxford.

## **27. What happens if it snows or there is similar bad weather?**

Each OSBP operator will inform the Transport Co-ordinator and individual schools if the weather is such that the safety of its passengers and driver will be impacted. Procedures will be in place for operators of each route to provide information regarding changes to services, and parents should check individual school websites for snow closure arrangements or similar in the event of severe weather.

## **28. Where can I get more information?**

If you have any further questions please contact OSBP's Transport Co-ordinator on [info@osbp.net](mailto:info@osbp.net)