

Dear Parents / Carers

School Transport Changes for 2023-24

You may be aware of some changes to our commercial school bus services into Ashby School and Ivanhoe School for 2023-24, and you may have some questions about why the changes have happened.

Roberts Travel Group has provided transport to the Ashby Schools for many years. Following the change of Ashby School to becoming an Academy, the County Council changed its Home to School Transport Policy from nearest or catchment school to just nearest school which resulted in a number of villages and pupils losing their free school travel status. The council also withdrew its assistance for Post 16 transport. Recognising that a number of pupils would require transport that the County Council would no longer provide, Ashby School worked in partnership with Roberts Travel to provide a network of school bus services covering all the traditional catchment area, providing bus services for those pupils eligible for free school transport, as well as a fare paying service for those pupils not eligible for free school transport and Post 16 pupils. This arrangement has kept the school accessible for all the pupils living in the traditional catchment area for the last 7 years, allowing for pupils to travel to and from school with their peer group and ensuring that siblings can travel on the same bus together, regardless of whether they are eligible for free travel or paying for their transport. In 2022-23 the network was expanded to provide transport for some pupils attending Ivanhoe School.

To sustain this network Leicestershire County Council has in previous years purchased seats for the eligible (free) pupils, and Roberts Travel have provided additional places for fare payers. We have just recently been advised by Leicestershire County Council that for 2023-24 they have awarded the contract to transport the eligible pupils to another bus operator. This news was a great disappointment to us here at Roberts Travel as we have put a lot of time, effort and investment into building a school bus network that could meet the transport requirements of the local school communities of Ashby School and Ivanhoe School. Having lost the contract to transport 300 Leicestershire County Council eligible pupils, we can no longer provide the number of school bus services that we have in the past and we can no longer service all the villages with a school transport service. As a consequence, we have had to replan our commercial school routes to meet the reduced demand and our routes have reduced from 8 to 3. This means that some villages that we once served we no longer can.

Another consequence of the Council's contract award is that eligible pupils will now travel separately from fare paying pupils, regardless of whether they live in the same village, or even the same household. You may also see more school buses in the area as splitting the eligible and fare paying students up will inevitably require more vehicles. Roberts Travel Group have advised the Council on several occasions to the likely consequences of breaking up the school bus network and the impact this would have on students, parents, schools and the community. Now that the decision has been taken by the council, we have done our best to cover as much of the network as we can with a fare paying service, otherwise those pupils not eligible for free transport including all the Post 16 students, would have no school bus option to get them to school. However, despite our best efforts it has not been possible to cover all of the existing commercial bus network and we have not been able to serve some villages or provide any services to Ivanhoe School.

We have been in discussion with the Life multi academy trust about the impact on the schools in Ashby and they are fully aware of the situation and are in communication with the Council on this matter. Both schools have also been advised of the situation.

Finally, we would like to thank all our Ashby School and Ivanhoe School customers from the current and previous years for their valued custom and we wish you well for the future.

Kind Regards
Jonathan Hunt
Managing Director
Roberts Travel Group Ltd