

**P-05-716 Free School Transport for all Children in Wales -
Correspondence from Arriva Trains Wales to the Committee**

Kayleigh Driscoll
Deputy Clerk – Petitions Committee
Chamber and Committee Service
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

24 April 2017

Dear Kayleigh

Thank you for enabling me the opportunity to respond to the Petition p-05-716 regarding free train transport for school pupils attending Treorchy Comprehensive school.

We have been very clear in all of our communication about the change from the previously free to a paid arrangement that we are having to manage platform safety differently due to an updated risk assessment. We introduced safety officers from our security contractor with pupils now being held behind barriers until the train has come to a stand in the platform. This operation has a cost and we are therefore bringing Treorchy School in line with all other schools on our network where scholar tickets are paid for.

It may be helpful if I remind readers of this response that in January 2007, a pupil of Treorchy School died as the result of impact with a train on Treorchy station. The pupil was looking in the opposite direction from where the train was approaching, wearing headphones and had moved very close to the platform edge leaning over the side. His head was hit by the arriving train, despite the train horn being sounded. That dreadful and tragic incident has remained with all of us and influences our regular engagement with schools on the importance of railway safety across our network.

Since that incident we have had a number of safety measures in place at Treorchy station based on the risk assessment. They have included educational sessions at the school on rail safety, trains approaching the platform at a reduced speed whilst sounding their horn, the retiming of the train to arrive earlier into the platform and a yellow line painted on the platform as a guide

to where to stand safely. British Transport Police (BTP) officers also regularly attended to review and monitor the situation along with review of the platform by our CCTV monitoring team. Despite all of those measures and with increased numbers using the train service, our employees and the British Transport Police raised new concerns of platform crowding and behaviour by pupils that pointed to a lack of awareness of the risks of being on an operational train platform. This required a further risk assessment as a matter of urgency. The results of that risk assessment warranted immediate action and we arranged for security staff to be present to ensure pupils remained behind the yellow line until the train was at a stand. That has made an enormous difference and reassured me that this was an important course of action to have taken.

The CCTV images below come from footage taken on a typical day after school. In the moving images, pupils can be seen touching the side of the train as it approaches and are exceptionally close to the moving train and platform edge.



The educational season ticket arrangement brings Treorchy School in line with all other schools on our network and has also been successful in spreading the modal shift, particularly as RCT Council continues to provide free bus travel for pupils within the catchment area.

The petitioner asks Arriva Trains Wales to maintain free school transport for the following reasons (in black) with our responses to the point made in bold:

1. Buses are limited, so train represents the best travel option for many although it is only the bus service that is provided for free

We had seen pupil numbers grow enormously over the years of the free arrangement. We re-iterate that the introduction of the paid season ticket is a consequence of the updated risk assessment and the requirement to staff the platform to manage pupil safety. The introduction and images above set that point out in more detail.

2. Pupils that have to buy tickets often miss trains due to the queue at the ticket office

We have tried to make this process as easy as possible by offering the scholar season ticket which is a discounted product and eliminates any queue time at the ticket office. Putting an educational season ticket arrangement into place brings Treorchy School in line with all other schools.

3. The good name of the school draws in pupils from a wider catchment area

We are proud of our longstanding relationship with Treorchy School and our actions are solely about ensuring pupil safety at Treorchy station. We have a very positive and constructive relationship with the school which continues to this day. The school understands the rationale for our decision and has valued the free travel arrangement which they recognise has been an exceptional benefit for a number of years.

4. Some trains are only two carriages

Passenger counts taken by conductors shape train formations used on specific schedules on the ATW network. The key train that leaves Treorchy after school is always a 4 car train, unless there are exceptional operational issues that have made that impossible to deliver. However, it's important to remind the petitioner that our key safety concern has been on the platform rather than on the train

5. The barriers put pupils closer to the platform edge

Pupils are not able to get to the platform edge until the train has come to a stand in the platform. The introduction of this additional safety measure ensures pupil safety from the previous issues we had seen of pupils close to and touching the train on its approach into the platform

6. Perception that safety has got worse as pupils are standing on the trains

I can assure the petitioner that our safety specialists are reassured that the key safety risk was that of the interface with the train at the platform edge. This has been satisfactorily mitigated through our actions. Safety on board remains high, even when trains are busy with people standing. Trains are built to robust industry standards that ensure this situation.

7. The cost of the tickets should be spent on improving safety

That is exactly what the cost of the ticket is contributing to – the costs of stewarding and barriers

8. The cost of the ticket is expensive, even with a 55% discount

The discount makes the ticket as affordable as we can make it. In addition we have given a commitment to the school that pupils in receipt of free school meals will continue to receive a free travel ticket and a number of pupils are taking advantage of that offer

9. As stated in petition ‘because the passes are provided through ATW, the school is unable to help parents with the funding’

If the school wishes to support parents with the funding of season tickets, we would facilitate a way to make that happen

I do hope that my responses enable the petitioner to understand the rationale for our decision and I will be happy to clarify or provide any further information as required.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Milligan
Customer Services Director

Camera 4 : Camera Post 2 - 22/04/2015 15:16:59



Camera 2 : Help Point - 22/04/2015 15:16:59



Camera 6 : Shelter - 22/04/2015 15:16:59



Camera 5 : Platform - 22/04/2015 15:16:59



22-Apr-15

22-Apr-15

