

FAQ's updated October 2019

### **What is BLOC?**

BLOC (Bus Link Oxford Culham) is a parent cooperative, organising a school bus service between the Europa School at Culham and the Oxford/Abingdon area. All parents are members of the cooperative. The bus coordinators are parents, nominated by the whole cooperative, who deal with the administration. The buses have been operated by Charlton services, a family-run business situated in Charlton-on-Otmoor, for many years.

### **Types of subscriptions :**

Full-time membership is given priority, but half-time subscription (5 mornings only or 5 afternoons only) or occasional use is possible, depending on availability.

Any change in membership should preferably be announced before the start of any new term.

### **Can my child take the Wednesday lunch time bus:**

If your child has a full time subscription or a PM only subscription, they are welcome to ride on the Wednesday lunch time bus (Please notify the coordinator of your usage of the Wednesday lunch time bus). If your child has a BLOC AM only subscription, or is not a BLOC rider please contact BLOC ([blocbus@gmail.com](mailto:blocbus@gmail.com)) for a Wednesday lunch time bus subscription.

### **Can I buy individual tickets for occasional rides if I am not a regular user?**

Yes, for children in primary years 4/5/6, secondary students and adults. Tickets (£4 each) can be ordered via the e-mail address [blocbus@gmail.com](mailto:blocbus@gmail.com). Once payment has been received (via electronical bank transfer), tickets will be sent by email. Please note that spaces can only be guaranteed for regular users carrying a bus pass.

### **Payment - What are the fares and how to pay?**

Fees are calculated per term. They are calculated by dividing the total cost of all five buses by the number of users. Invoices are sent out at the beginning of each term.

Note that the fees are calculated according to the type of subscription (full time and part time) on the basis of 5 days, even if the child rides less than 5 days.

By confirming your place(s) on the bus you commit for the term and to settle the fees promptly. Payment by bank transfer, please. BLOC Bank: SANTANDER ACCOUNT NUMBER; 47543286 SORT CODE: 09 01 53 REFERENCE <your last name> bus number (e.g. Smith BLOC 1)

### **For two or more children it is possible to pay in instalments?**

Please consult BLOC ([blocbus@gmail.com](mailto:blocbus@gmail.com)) to arrange this.

In the event of non-payment, the Service reserves the right to refuse access to the transport service (following notification) until the amounts due have been received.

In the event of late arrival of two consecutive payments, the Transport Service reserves the right to bill the amounts due for the following year in advance.

### **Deposit and rates:**

For a new school year, we are asking a £100 non-refundable down payment for each place reserved on the buses. This will be counted towards the autumn term fee. Currently, the cost for a full-time subscription is around £4.30/day (return ticket). Half time seats (mornings or afternoons only) are charged at half that price. Individual tickets are currently £4 each.

### **Bus passes**

As of September 2019, after getting several rounds of feedback on the usefulness of the bus passes, we are testing a more centralised system of keeping track of the bus passengers. Instead of bus passes, we will keep a central passenger list and conduct random attendance checks. We will report on our experience with the new system at the upcoming AGM in October.

### **Can my child use other BLOC buses as well?**

Payment of fees entitles users to a seat on the bus that they have requested. Space-permitting, it is also possible to use any of the five BLOC buses, either on certain days or as a one-off. However, you must check with the bus coordinator beforehand and, in the case of primary age children, inform the school.

### **What are the bus routes, stops and timetables?**

Current bus routes and stops have been negotiated with the bus company with a view to covering as large an area as possible and at the same time ensuring that the journey is not too long.

Wherever possible, we adjust bus stops to make it easier for families using the service. For various reasons, we prefer to have stops with more than one user. For young children up to and including year 3, it is a must that there are at least two families per stop.

Drivers endeavour to respect the timetables. But it is important to understand that times are approximate as traffic is unpredictable. Please arrive at the bus stop a few minutes early in the mornings and afternoons (if you collect your child).

### **Communication between parents:**

We strongly recommend that parents using the same bus stop liaise with each other and exchange telephone numbers. Each bus has its own WhatsApp chat created, in order for parents to check and inform about the whereabouts of the bus.

The bus driver cannot wait for parents who arrive late to pick up their child, and should you be delayed, please arrange with a fellow parent to receive your child off the bus. Coordinators are happy to facilitate introduction of families at different stops to each other (e.g. further down the route). Just ask!