



7 March 2024

Dear Parents,

We are writing to advise you of increased charges for the Joint Bus Service (JBS) for the 2024/25 academic year.

We appreciate that any news of increased costs is unwelcome, particularly with the current financial pressures being felt by many of our families, and we want to reassure you that we have worked hard to try and keep prices as affordable as possible. We would also like to reassure you of our commitment to operate the JBS on a cost neutral basis and deliver a high quality, safe service.

Our contracts with the coach operators behind the JBS are long-term in nature and were signed before inflation took hold. As a result, and in a similar way to fixed term mortgage deals or long-term electricity or gas contracts, the coach operators have had limited ability to pass on to us the inflation cost pressures in their businesses. This meant that the JBS fare increase in September 2023 was 'only' 3%. It was 5% the year before and 2% the year before that. These increases were much lower than the prevailing inflation rates at the time.

Inevitably, however, long-term contracts come to an end and the prices charged by coach operators have had to be renegotiated. The result is that zonal fares for next September will be increased by 12%. This is, of course, a large increase, but it needs to be seen in the context of several years of much lower increases than might have been expected.

Whilst writing, we would also like to take the opportunity to advise you that you will shortly receive an email from Vectare (our service provider) with details about how to rebook a JBS seat for September. Unlike previous years, when current JBS travellers were assumed to 'roll over' their seat to the next year, this year we need all travellers, current and new, to rebook their seat as part of an important data cleansing exercise. Please look out for the email from Vectare and take action by the deadline as appropriate.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us or the Vectare help desk via jbs@vectare.co.uk. It is monitored 7 days a week between 6am and 10pm.

Yours faithfully,

Justin Hodges
Director of Finance & Operations
Abingdon School

Nicola McAvoy
Director of Finance & Operations
St Helen and St Katharine