

Transport from West End of Dundee to St John's High School; Statement from the Parent Council Chairperson Katy Dundas and from Mgr Ken McCaffrey, Church Representative on the Education Committee

Katy Dundas says, "As Chairperson of St John's RC High School Parent Council, I would like once again to draw attention to the unsatisfactory situation with regard to the removal of the 4S bus.

Many families are affected by this, and these families have a growing sense of frustration, and a sense that, despite their pleas for help, no effort is being made by Dundee City Council to resolve the situation.

These children live in the catchment area for St John's and their parents chose this school, knowing of, and subsequently using, the 4S bus service.

We find it completely unacceptable that this service is being removed simply for a money-saving exercise.

Many buses in this city run at a loss, but are subsidised by Dundee City Council, because they provide a much-needed "service" for local communities.

Surely, the continuation of this school bus, should also be considered a "service"? Our parents are not asking for a free bus service, they are quite happy to continue to pay for it.

At the moment, many of the children who are using the recommended alternative bus services, arrive at school late every morning, despite leaving home half an hour earlier than they did previously.

We find this unacceptable. We urge Dundee City Council to make a commitment to continue to support Catholic Education as an integral part of parental choice, by reinstating this bus service immediately.

It is our view that, unless this happens, educational choices for families in the West End of the city will become restricted and ultimately our school roll will suffer."

Backing Mrs Dundas and the Parent Council, Mgr McCaffrey said, "The Church fully supports the efforts of St John's Parent Council to have this situation addressed as a matter of urgency.

At a recent meeting of the Education Committee, discussing the standardising of the school day, I was ruled out of order by the Education Convenor, when I raised the subject of school transport. Despite that, I was eventually given an assurance that the Parent Council would be involved in discussions on the provision of school transport in the city.

However, we are also concerned that Mrs Dundas was told by the Convenor there is no money to subsidise transport to St John's, yet the Parent Council has learned there is apparently a substantial amount of cash sitting in the Transportation budget [unspent and not legally committed] that would pay for a tendered service many times over.

We feel the delay in addressing this issue is unacceptable. The October break is upon us, the clocks are changing, and this issue needs to be dealt with as soon as possible.

We feel the provision of Catholic Education for children in the west end of the city is being undermined, ultimately restricting educational choice for families who wish to have their children educated in a Catholic school.

The Diocese urges the Convenor to address this matter in a positive way thereby reassuring parents and pupils alike over their concerns on this issue.