



Bus Service Information and Policies

The Marist bus service is run by Ambassador-Line Southern Ltd. We are an experienced transport operator and run the school routes from our office in Blackwater which we refer to as **'the office'**. The school office is referred to as **'the school'** encompassing both Senior and Prep schools.

We hope you find all information you need below, but if not please do get in touch with us and we will be happy to answer any queries.

How to contact us

You can contact Ambassador-Line Southern by calling: **01276 600362**

or emailing: **marist@ambassador-line.com**.

Our office hours are Mon to Fri, 0900hrs to 1800hrs.

Our **duty manager**: Will receive all calls out of office hours from the number above.

You can also call, text or WhatsApp the duty manager on **07593 320964**, 7 days a week, 0600hrs to 2100hrs.

Families new to bussing

Please contact us to register your interest in the bus service. You can start bussing at any point during the school year but we will need to receive a completed booking form at least 3 working days prior to the required start date.

To register you will need to provide:

- Your name
- Contact number
- Email address
- Your postcode
- Child's name
- Child's school year

We will advise you of your nearest stop and email the current booking form or add you to our list for future forms.

Eligibility for booking

As a rule, bus seats are only offered to students in Year 3 and above. However, younger students can be considered on a case-by-case basis. We will take into consideration a number of factors including:

- If there is an older sibling using the bus
- How many prep school students are already on the route

Please contact the office to discuss this.

Interest list

If you are on the interest list but do not require the bus for the next term, we would appreciate it if you can please email us and let us know, and also indicate if you wish to remain on the interest list. If we receive no reply from the booking email, we will assume you have withdrawn your permission to be sent forms. You will need to contact us to be readded to the interest list.

Route and Stop Policy

We aim for the majority of students to access a stop within approx. 1-2 miles of their home.

All stops are situated in the best mutually convenient location and have been risk assessed.

There is a limit to the number of stops on each route in order to keep to schedule and to ensure that no journey is regularly over 1 hour.

We often receive requests for stops to be moved/added; however, we cannot accommodate all requests and have to be mindful that the stops are published and parents may base their decision to attend the school and use the service on these locations. That said, we are happy to consider requests if there is sufficient demand and no significant detrimental effect to others using the service.

We are always keen to know if you would find an alternative stop/new service beneficial and hold an interest list for all routes, including the late bus. A new route can only be introduced if there is sufficient demand to make it viable, so we appreciate families keeping us up to date with their ideal requirements. It may be that we can't accommodate them now, but that may change in the future.

Some routes have been very popular to the point where we find we have more requests than capacity. In this instance we will first look at whether adjustments can be made by switching stops between routes. This may delay the publishing of the routes.

The routes are subject to change, particularly at the start of a new academic year, however changes are unlikely to be viable if they are only for a small number of journeys or if they are too far away from any existing route and there is insufficient demand for a new route.

We are always happy to discuss your requirements and we can keep you updated on the prospect of a new route or stop.

Re-booking process

2-3 weeks before end of term

We will contact all parents of students currently using the bus and those on the interest list 2-3 weeks before the end of each term signalling the rebooking window open.

We aim to send the forms shortly after you have received the co-curricular programme for the new term and should have some idea of your bussing requirements.

All rebooking forms will be sent, on the same day, to the email address of the primary contact given by parents. If you have not received a form 2 weeks before the end of term you should contact us at the earliest opportunity. Late forms mean that we are unable to complete the routes in a timely fashion and confirm seats.

Deadlines

The deadline for forms is usually the last day of term. The deadlines will be clearly stated on the email and booking form.

Due to demand, we will be strict with the deadlines. We understand that many families rely on having school transport and will need to know if they have a seat for their child so we need to be able to process and confirm all seats ASAP.

Reminders

We will send 2 text reminders to parents from whom we have not received a form, one a day or two before the deadline for completed forms and a second on the deadline day.

The following week we will send a final text reminder to all primary and secondary contact UK mobile numbers we hold and an email to all contact email addresses that we hold, with a last call for any outstanding forms.

At the end of this week, we will send a final email advising those that have not replied, that the rebooking window has closed. After this we will not accept any late forms.

The only exception to this will be for families who are new to the school, who were not enrolled and therefore not included in the rebooking email list. These families will be given priority based on journeys booked as if they had returned the form prior to booking closing as long as the routes have not been issued.

Priority of booking

We expect that some of the routes will be full on at least one day a week. In the case of busses being oversubscribed, priority for seats will be as follows:

- Those booking at least 7 journeys a week, who returned the completed form before the deadline will be guaranteed a seat (unless the stop requested is not on an existing route).
- After this priority will be given by the number of journeys requested each week. (Those that returned the completed form before the deadline have priority over late submissions.)

If the entirety of the request cannot be granted, an offer will be made to the family. If they accept, they can choose to be added to the waiting list for a seat on the journeys currently unavailable. If they do not accept or do not reply within 3 working days then the seat will be offered to the next eligible student.

Once you have been allocated a seat on the bus it will not be withdrawn during that term even if a student who would have had higher priority joins the route.

Seat allocation will be based solely on the new term forms submitted and no reference will be made to the previous term's booking. Prior booking will not automatically give any entitlement to or priority for a seat for the following term. Priority will only be based on the number of journeys booked and if deadlines are met.

No guarantee of availability can be made for any changes received after the booking deadline.

Confirmation of seats booked

Once all forms are received it usually takes us 2-3 weeks to process them all.

We will email all parents the final routes with pick up points and times as soon as possible. This will be during the holidays but at least one week prior to start of term.

If you need to have confirmation of a seat but have booked 6 or fewer journeys a week or are awaiting approval of a new route/stop then you can contact our office from 2 weeks after the booking deadline. Seats are confirmed on the proviso that payment is received by the due date.

Booking form

A new form is required for each school term, per student.

At the top of the form are the instructions for where and when to submit the completed form and payment details.

The booking form has 4 parts for you to complete:

Part A – Giving your permission for us to continue sending you forms each term

Part B – Your child’s details and bus route and stop selection

You may leave the stop and route blank if you do not know which route you require or are requesting a new route/stop.

You can use more than one stop as long as you provide details of which days each is required. In this case provide details in the email you send us.

Late bus stops can only be one of the 5 stops on the published route (see Late Bus below).

Part C – Your contact details

The primary contact will receive all booking forms, queries and general communications from the office relating to your child.

The secondary contact will be used if we cannot make contact with the primary contact.

Part D – Booking table and fee generator

The form requires you to select which journeys you would like a seat on the morning, evening and the Late bus. The selection applies for the whole term. Next to the booking table you will notice a grey box. This shows the number of days during the term (as not all school weeks are mon-fri) the differing amounts are taking this into account.

Part D.
 Please add a Y below on the days you require a seat on the bus.
 You can book any combination of sessions in the orange boxes. This will apply to every week of the Autumn Term.
 The form will automatically calculate the term fees to pay in the white box below.

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday				
Morning	£6.50	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	13	13	14	
Evening (1615hrs)	£6.50		Y		Y		£84.50	£84.50	£91.00	
Late bus (1730hrs)	£6.50			Y			£0.00	£84.50	£91.00	
Total to pay		£682.50								

The white box shows the amount due for the full term.

Part E – Confirmation that you have read this document.

If you have an irregular pattern of travel please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Cancellations/Changes Policy

Cancellations

The fees paid ensure a seat for your child on the bus. No discounts, credits or refunds will be given for sickness, holidays or any other absence, snow days or school trips.

If you need to cancel part or all of the bus service for any reason, please give at least one weeks' notice to the office. Refunds will only be given for any entire half terms bookings not required.

Swaps

We frequently have parents ask if they can swap a day/journey. Due to the administration involved this is limited to 3 free swaps per child, per term. This must be arranged in advance so we confirm there is a seat on the bus and the swap must take place in the same week.

Changes

We understand that sometimes changes need to be made to your schedule and that affects your family's bussing requirements.

We will allow one permanent change to the schedule during the term without charge. This change needs to be regular and cover the remainder of the term. This will enable changes to be made in line with the school club changes at half term.

One-off/Ad-hoc journeys Policy

One-off journeys

Any one-off journeys must be booked in advance.

The school does not sell tickets for ad hoc travel.

If you would like your child to travel on the bus as a one off you must contact the office to complete a registration form. Payment will be due at the point of booking.

If you would like a friend to travel home with your child on the bus, you must contact the office to give us the student's name(s) and check if there is a seat available. We will add the extra journey to your account fees due, unless the student is already booked to travel that day on another bus.

The parent making the request will have responsibility for any children travelling with their child.

Ad-hoc Journeys

Any ad-hoc journeys must be booked in advance.

Rather than paying for individual journeys at the time of travel, these bookings will be recorded and we will advise parents of any balance that requires settling prior to the end of the term half. Payment for ad-hoc journeys will be due on the last day of the term half.

Due to the administration involved an admin fee of £10.00 will be charged per student at the point of making a fourth ad-hoc booking during any term half.

All weekly registers are checked by the office to ensure they match the bookings made.

Fees

The bus fees for academic year 2023/2024 are £6.50 per journey.

Payments Policy

The bus service is subsidised by the school, who set the journey fees. However, payments are made directly to Ambassador-Line Southern Ltd. They are separate from the school term fees and have a separate payment deadline which may or may not be the same as the school fee deadline.

The payment amount is generated by your booking form. You will not be sent an invoice.

Payment is by BACS transfer only with bank details on the booking form. Please pay promptly and ensure you use your postcode and child's surname as reference so we can attribute payment to you.

If you are booking at least 5 journeys a week on an existing stop then you should pay as soon as possible. If you are booking 4 or less journeys a week or you are looking to book on condition of a new or changed stop you should not pay until we have confirmed your seat(s).

The due date for payments will be three weeks after the rebooking form deadline for the Spring and Summer terms and by 1st September for the Autumn term.

Budgeting

Please contact us if you would like to discuss the option of splitting your payment for the term into 2 or 3 instalments. We are very happy to do this, but any arrangement must be agreed in advance and the payment deadlines must be met.

Late Payments

Where no payment is received before the start of term the seat may be withdrawn and be offered to another family.

Although the majority of parents settle their accounts promptly this is not always the case. Due to the administration time involved in chasing payments there will be an administration fee charged for those who fail to pay on time without contacting us. We will advise you of an outstanding balance due by email and text sent to the primary contact. These reminders will be issued at least every fortnight until payment is settled.

A £10.00 administration fee will be added for each period of 14 days entered following the missed payment deadline.

e.g. If the payment deadline is 31/08/23 and the bus service fee is not paid until 30/09/23 the charges would be as follows:

£10.00 for period 01/09/23-14/09/23

£10.00 for period 15/09/23-28/09/23

£10.00 for period 29/10/23-30/10/23

Total due at payment date in addition to bus fees = £30.00

Administration Fees

There is no additional administration fee to register for the bus service.

However, due to the additional administration work involved an admin fee of £10.00 will be charged per student per request actioned in the following circumstances:

- More than one change to days booked in per term
- More than 3 swaps of days per term, per student
- More than 3 ad-hoc bookings per term, per student

Routes

Drivers

There is a regular driver for each route, however there will be appearances from other members of the team from time to time to cover sickness or driver holidays.

We do not give families the contact details for the driver and the drivers are not given your details. Any communication with the drivers should be in person, or otherwise through the office or duty manager. They will ensure the message is passed to the relevant driver.

Each driver has a weekly register which details the students travelling for the week.

Drivers cannot change stops or the route taken without specific instruction from the office.

If a route is delayed

Sometimes the service can be affected by traffic, roadworks or some other incident.

If the bus is running late, we will endeavour to let you know ASAP. Where possible another bus may divert to collect from a stop if capacity allows and this will help students get to school on time.

The routes are timed to reach the school at approx. 0815hrs so there is a small margin to allow for delays without students being late to school.

If the bus is 10mins late to the stop and you want an update on where the bus is then you should call the duty manager.

The duty manager holds details of all the routes and families and can access our trackers.

Requests for changes

Any potential changes to the routes must be requested through the office only. Please do not ask the driver for an alternative stop or changes to the times, they can only take instruction from the office.

Late Bus (1730hrs service)

Currently there is only one late bus service. The late bus has a set route with the stops determined by the greatest demand. No further stops will be added to this late bus route.

There is an interest list for alternative late bus routes/stops, however there has been insufficient demand to make a second late bus viable. Please do let us know if you would use a late bus, where you would travel to for a stop and how often so we can keep this list up to date.

The late bus stops at:

- St Jude's Road, Englefield Green
- King Edward VII hospital, Windsor
- Dedworth Road, Windsor
- Grenfell Place, Maidenhead
- Bridge Road, Maidenhead

Please only indicate one of these existing stops on your form.

Late bus cancellations/changes

When you book a late bus seat, you are automatically reserved a seat on your usual 1615hrs bus, this is in case a club is cancelled, so you only need to put a Y in the late bus box, not both.

There is no charge or limit on switching between the 1615hrs bus and the late bus if you are already booked on one of them on the same day.

- You must contact us first to check there is an available seat on the late bus and book on.
- We don't need to know if you want to take the 1615hrs bus instead of the late bus but you should update the driver so they know to expect your child on the earlier bus.

Expectations for students using the bus service

- Students must ensure they get to the bus on time. The time given on the bus schedule is the departure time. We encourage everyone to be ready at the bus stop a couple of minutes before this. The morning bus will wait only 2 minutes at a stop if a student is missing, however this should not be a regular occurrence.
- The buses depart promptly from the Senior School at 1615hrs in the afternoon and 1730hrs for the late service. Students are responsible for getting to the bus on time as it will not wait for any seniors who are registered but don't turn up.
- All students must wear a seatbelt for the duration of their bus journey. This means they must keep them on until the bus has come to a complete stop. Any students not wearing their seatbelts properly will be reported to the office and parents informed. If there is a persistent problem, the student risks a temporary suspension from the bus service.
- Students are allowed to eat and drink on the bus. However, this privilege will be removed if there is any rubbish left on the bus or dirtying of the seats. We ask students to be respectful of both the driver and vehicle.
- Students must ensure that their bags do not block the aisles or the doors to the bus as these are emergency exits. Drivers will usually allocate an area of the bus for bags.
- Senior school students are asked to leave the seats immediately behind the driver free for any prep school students to use.

Expectations for parents using the bus service

- Please let us know if you do not require the bus in good time so we can avoid unnecessary delays.

You can text or call our duty manager on **07593 320964** between 0600hrs and 2100hrs. Please allow at least 30 minutes before your scheduled stop so we can pass the information to the driver.

- Please be mindful of where you park near the bus stops. We specifically request that parents do not park in the bus stop itself as this can prevent the bus being able to access the space and be clear of the road.
- Please let the driver know if anyone other than a parent will be meeting your child at the bus stop.
- Please let us know in advance if your child has any large luggage items they wish to carry on the bus. For example, a cello will not fit on if all 16 seats are occupied. We won't make any charge for seats taken by luggage but it is important for the office and driver to know so we can ensure there is a dedicated safe place to stow it on the journey.
- The office doesn't need to know if a senior school student will take the 1615hrs bus instead of the late bus but, you should update the driver so they know to expect your child on the earlier bus.
- You must contact us first to check there is an available seat if you want to travel on a day you have not booked on.
- Registers are usually printed on a Thursday for the week ahead so if changes for the following week can get to us before then we are always grateful!
- Please complete the bussing registration form in full, not just with any changes since the previous term.
- Please check the route when it is emailed to you at the start of each term for adjustments to pick up or drop off times or locations.
- If your child is a prep student please ensure you communicate any changes to the schedule with the office and the school.

Safeguarding

All drivers have completed an enhanced DBS check prior to starting a route and we will undertake safer recruitment checks. Drivers are given safeguarding training as part of their induction and regular refresher training.

Only registered students from The Marist School and DBS cleared Ambassador-Line staff will ride on the bus routes.

Drivers will report any incidences of inappropriate behaviour, possible bullying or anything of concern to the duty manager. The duty manager will either speak to the students concerned, contact parents or the school as appropriate.

If a driver is concerned at any point about the welfare of a child, they will report it as soon as possible to the duty manager or company safeguarding officer who will contact parents or the school designated safeguarding lead as appropriate.

Getting on the bus in the morning

The driver will record which students get on the bus in the morning. There will be no action taken beyond waiting the allotted time if a student does not turn up for the bus.

If you need to know if your child has got on the bus in the morning, please call the duty manager who will check with the driver.

Getting on the bus in the afternoon

The drivers keep a register so we know if a student has travelled. However, if they are booked on the register and do not come to the bus, the bus will leave at 1615hrs/1730hrs and no further action is taken by us.

For all senior students, you or your child should tell the driver if they won't need the bus at any time. This can be done directly with the driver and does not require the office to be informed.

For prep students we ask that you inform the office of all changes to your child's schedule. You can also inform the driver but this should be in addition to calling the office. We will liaise with the prep school so that we are certain at all times where your child is and when they will be on or off the bus.

If there is any discrepancy between the information given to the office and the school, then the school will contact you to double check.

Students should not get on the late bus without prior confirmation of a seat booked from the office. If the bus is oversubscribed those who have not booked will not be able to travel. It is particularly important that we know, that you are aware, that your child is on the late bus and where they are getting off, as they are not always the same stops. This is to ensure your children are safe and where they should be.

Getting off the bus in the afternoon

Students are registered against a specific stop and will only be dropped off at that specific location.

It is possible to use a different stop on the route but in the interests of safeguarding we ask that all requests are made by parents in advance via our office or duty manager.

If a student asks the driver for another stop, to travel with a friend or to get off the bus somewhere different the driver will say no unless given instruction from the office.

As it seems to be increasing difficult to identify the age of some students, we have specifically asked for this information on the booking form and also if your child is allowed to walk home alone from the bus stop. This is to both aid the drivers and safeguard the students.

If your child(ren) attend the Prep school or you have indicated that they are not allowed to walk home alone the driver will not let the student leave the stop until met by an appropriate person. This can be any person over the age of 14 but you should let the driver or office know in advance if it is not a parent who will be meeting your child at the stop.

Please make sure that you are there in good time to meet the bus. Timings may vary due to traffic and also the number of stops required each day. If you are delayed getting to the bus stop, please call the duty manager in good time so we can let the driver know, reassure your child and make arrangements for you to collect them.

If there is no one there to meet your child the driver will ask them if they know where you might be and if they can contact you. The driver will wait a couple of minutes at the stop before calling our duty manager.

The duty manager will attempt to make contact with you. If contact cannot be established, the driver will be instructed to keep your child on board the bus and continue the route so the other students are not delayed getting home. The duty manager will try to call and text to let you know what is happening and arrange for you to meet the bus. They will also contact the school.

In the event that the duty manager cannot make contact with either parent or if you cannot get to meet your child in a reasonable period of time the driver will be instructed to return your child to school.

If at any time you are concerned about where a bus is or where your child is you should call our duty manager on 07593 320964.

Data protection

The data gathered for our interest list and on the booking forms is specifically and only for use in relation to providing the bus service. This information may be shared with the school. The route drivers will only have the details of your child's names and age, bus schedule and authorised bus stops. Only the Ambassador-Line duty manager and office will hold your contact details. We will not pass this information onto any other party unless necessary and with your prior consent. The data will be held for as long as it is required to carry out the effective provision of the bus service and then securely destroyed.

Website

We are currently redesigning our website and hope to soon have all relevant information regarding the bus service on a dedicated Marist bussing page. We are also looking into enabling parents to register their interest in the bus service through this page and also hopefully linking the booking form for parents to use for the Spring 2024 term. We will keep you updated as to when and where this can be accessed.

Feedback

We welcome any feedback from you. Please let us know how you find the service and let us know if you would use any additional bus services.

If you require any further information or clarification on the policies and procedures above or there is anything else that you would like to discuss please give Kerry a call on 01276 600362.