

Kennington Parish Council community grant for Oxford Bus Company 35A Kennington to Matthew Arnold School Service

Impact Report

Background

On behalf of the community, and with the assistance of Scott Powles, Lou Sumner and Helen Forey requested a grant from Kennington Parish Council (KPC) to help fund the 35A Oxford Bus Company (OBC) service to Matthew Arnold School. From September 2020 the standard public service that had previously operated was forced to run as a closed-door private bus service for children at a considerably higher cost. The cost of the service was prohibitively high for many and the grant sought to enable both sufficient places to be offered (a second bus was in doubt) and reduced prices to be offered for those most in need.

Council members voted to award £2,000 of the £4,000 requested, which was transferred directly to OBC. These funds were a significant part of enabling the discount provision, and we are most grateful for the support.

This report details the impact of that grant, updates members on the service since September, and plans for the remainder of the academic year. The original request is detailed in full below but in summary, the grant was requested to:

- Subsidise £100 discounts on the full pass price of £700 for both pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium Grant, and/or second and subsequent children from the same household;
- to enable a second bus to run as the first was oversubscribed by 20 places.

Use and Impact of the KPC grant (all data supplied by OBC)

- 115 passes issued
- 7 pupil premium claims (£100 discount on full year price)
- 31 additional child claims (£100 discount on full year price)
- Some families benefited from both discounts and received £200 off the annual price
- Therefore £3,800 discount was given at the beginning of the academic year
- Following Jan/Feb school closure on government orders, the service was suspended, all passes refunded in full, and the resulting actual discount given was £3,135
- KPC grant monies therefore funded 64% of all discounts Kennington families were able to avail themselves of
- The service will resume on 8 March, when most pupils will return to Matthew Arnold.

Conclusion and thanks

The £2,000 community grant awarded by KPC contributed directly to the provision of discounts totalling £3,135. Very many messages of thanks have been received directly, and posted on the public Kennington Connected Facebook page. Without such support many families would have been even further impacted at an extremely difficult time. While the cost of the pass remains high, even with discounts, KPC's support has helped to make the collaboration with OBC viable this year.

We sincerely thank Kennington Parish Council for the award of the grant.

Best wishes,
Helen Forey and Lou Sumner

Request September 2020

We are seeking support from the Parish Council to help offer subsidies to parents/carers of students where:

- The student qualifies for the Pupil Premium (Free School Meals, is in Care or from a Service Family).
- There is more than one child attending Matthew Arnold from the same household.

The cost of supporting each subsidised place is £100. The families who are eligible for this subsidy will be households with low income (below £16,190 per year) for whom finding the extra £30 per child monthly increase in transport costs will be extremely damaging to household budgets and will be forcing some families to choose between sending their child to school or paying for essentials like food and rent/mortgage. Many keyworkers also fall into this category with low-paid NHS staff like cleaners who have continued to do their bit, like so many others throughout the crisis.

The demand for places is high – the first bus sold out within 17 minutes of the website being live and there are roughly 20 families who had expressed an interest for a second bus. We may also need to use some of the funds raised to subsidise the provision of a second bus – as the service is being run at cost price without any profit for Oxford Bus Company they aren't able to run a second bus that isn't full. This will again be key to helping at least 20 families in Kennington who otherwise would find themselves and their children marginalised and facing challenging barriers to accessing education.