

Sandwell Academy

Headteacher: I J Williams

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March 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

I write with information about coach provision from September 2018. Since we opened, the Academy has provided a subsidised coach service for students. As school budgets have tightened, the Academy has needed to pass on more of the cost to parents. Sadly, we have now reached a point where we can no longer run coach services in the same way without taking away funding from crucial educational areas.

We recognise the popularity with parents of the coach service run by Academy and so considerable time and energy has been spent in investigating alternative arrangements. Following numerous discussions with a range of coach companies, the Academy has agreed for Thandi Executive Coaches to run a service that would drop off and pick up students from the Academy. Details of their service have been included with this letter for your information.

Please be aware that there will be a number of differences from the service run by the Academy. The following points are given as examples:

- Parents purchase a place on a coach directly from the coach company
- Parents enter into an agreement with the coach company not the Academy
- The coach service by Thandi will not have Stewards on board

Thandi Executive Coaches have set their price for the academic year 2018/19 at £685 per student, this includes the provision of late coaches for Session 3.

Following agreement by the Academy's Governing Board, the Local Authority and Thandi Executive Coaches, we are able to provide funding to lower the cost to parents based on distance from the Academy. Students who live within 3 miles of the Academy will be charged £600. Students who live more than 3 miles from the Academy qualify for additional funding and will be charged £500.

Parents should note that to be eligible for this reduction, they must complete the enclosed Travel Assistance form (pale green). Please be advised, the Academy cannot guarantee that this level of reduction will be available in future years.

Parents entitled to Free School Meals or Welfare Support, should contact Miss Baker for further information about available support by email at wbaker@sandwellacademy.com.

Free Bus Pass (for students who live more than 3 miles from the Academy)

Please be aware that **all** students who live more than three miles from the Academy are eligible for a West Midlands termly bus pass, provided **free** by the Local Authority. This enables students to access public bus services as an alternative to the Academy Coach Service. Please note that this pass is not valid for train or metro services and it



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does not cover evenings and weekends. Parents may wish to consider this as an alternative to the coach service. If you choose this option, you will still need to complete the Sandwell MBC Travel Assistance Form and return it to the Academy and indicate that you wish to receive your free pass instead of using Thandi Executive Coaches.

If a student purchases their own pass for use on the train or metro, they can obtain a reimbursement every term up to the value of a West Midlands Travel Pass (currently £95.50 per term) towards this. If you wish to apply for this, please complete the Sandwell MBC Travel Assistance Form and state on there **in bold** that you require reimbursements. Once the application has been assessed Sandwell MBC will contact you direct to explain the procedure.

Alternative Public Transport

For those students not wishing to travel by coach or who live less than 3 miles away from the Academy, there are a range of public transport alternatives. To assist parents, I enclose a document which gives details of the current costs of various travel passes from National Express. The Academy is also well served by tram and train links.

Expressing interest in the September 2018 coach service

Parents should express their interest in their child using the Thandi Coach service from September 2018 by completing the Expression of Interest form and returning it to the Academy by Friday 27 April 2018. Parents wishing to receive an Academy reduction to the Thandi price must complete the Travel Assistance form and return this at the same time. Hard copies of these forms will be sent to parents by post in due course. Parents are asked to complete these and **not** print out their own versions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'I Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr I Williams
Headteacher