

Focus Meeting St Gregory's held on February 20th at 7pm
re: Denominational Transport Review.

About 80 present both parents & teachers

The Head, Raymond Friel, started by giving a presentation which covered a number of points. He explained how the Catholic faith had an underlying impact on the life of each pupil, some of the activities were part of the school as it was Catholic eg the School Chapel available for pupils, but he also stressed the importance of the School ethos which meant all St Gregory's pupils were valued & taught to think about others feelings always.

Slide 1 below clarified information the Review Panel had asked questions about.

SLIDE 1 - Highlighted pupils numbers, whether they were Catholics & where they were from, the change between 2005 & 2006 was when the last change was made to School Transport.

Trends in Numbers of Catholic and Other Students at St. Gregory's, 2005-2012

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Students	790	788	814	806	831	814	808	797
Catholic Students	687	660	644	640	642	634	569	554
Non-Catholic Students	103	128	170	166	189	180	239	243
Bath only Students	436	455	467	484	521	527	531	542
Catholic Outside Bath	321	250	297	286	250	250	242	228

SLIDE 2 & 3 - Highlighted points relating to Ethnic minority groups & the impact on them.
SLIDE 2

Possible Future Impact of Removal of Subsidy on Children from Ethnic Minority Families

Eligible for denominational subsidy (>3 miles from St. Gregory's)

Numbers from ethnic minority groups (Polish, Filipino, Kerala Indian)

	Pupils eligible for transport.	Numbers from ethnic groups
St. Gregory's Catholic College, Bath	170.	41
St. John's Primary School, Bath BA2	47	30
St. Mary's Primary School, Bath BA1	142.	41
St. Benedict's Primary School, Midsomer Norton.	63	3

SLIDE 3

Equalities Impact

- Disproportionate impact on children from ethnic minority groups
- St. Gregory's has highest proportion of EAL students in B&NES – mostly Filipino and Polish communities, growing Kerala Indian community

- We are set up to meet their needs – translators, TAs, tracking, B&NES EMAS links
- If they live more than three miles away they mostly rely on subsidy to travel to St. Gregory's
- If subsidy is removed and they don't come here, they will be scattered throughout the Authority in their second or third preference schools which are less able to meet their needs
- All Catholic families who live more than three miles away will struggle to get their child to the faith school of their choice if subsidy is removed
- A relatively small saving for B&NES will cause significant damage to the 'social contract' and loss of faith among many families

Following the Head's presentation there were a number of speakers who raised the following points:

- o Transport was already quite pricey.
- o Had fair consideration been given to -EIA. Human rights. Minority groups..??
- o Way of life - Catholic, family & community feel, discriminating against faith, promise made bring up in Catholic faith at child's baptism. Some children not taking first communion as families felt they may not be able to fulfil these promises.
- o Bus (50 pupils) through Shepton Mallet, Wells was running picking up pupils - had the impact on Somerset CC of a decision to cut the transport been considered? Would it set a precedent?
- o Fair Pay Scheme – clarification about the scheme was sought.
- o MSN area low income, no spare money for paying for transport
- o St.Gregory's would end up as a Bath school.
- o If pupils changed school many would still get free transport, so what's the gain to B&NES ? 1% savings
- o All school transport should be free.
- o From the Bathford area it was stated pupils had a subsidised bus pass, if charges were increased or transport withdrawn more cars on the roads as more parents drive pupils to school.
- o Some parents with younger children were waiting to move depending on decision made by Cabinet, e.g. from Bath to Paulton.
- o One parent said their child had said they would walk from PSJ – problem of no pavement & time made this impossible.
- o St Gregory's is a safe brilliant education; would any change be saving or costing LA money??
- o Director of Education in Clifton Diocese stated they good partnership with LA, parents already paying for the school/education through Church, so why would the Diocese support a Catholic school which pupils can't attend?

I attached these points as an Appendix to the original report, as promised, so those making decisions are aware of points raised with me as Chair of the Panel.

SALLY DAVIS.

March 15th 2013