Travelling to School
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Acknowledgements

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Thanks also go to all of the parents and pupils who participated in the focus group discussions and all of the pupils, teachers and head teachers who participated in the survey. We would like to mention and thank Balfron High School in particular for piloting the on-line questionnaire for us.

The Scottish Consumer Councils Food, Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee oversaw the work for this report. The members of the Committee are Heather Brash (ex officio), Liz Breckenridge (chair), Ann Clark, Martyn Evans (ex officio), Mukami McCrum, Graeme Millar (ex officio) and Drew Ratter.
1. Context and research methods

1.1 Introduction

The SCC wanted to conduct research into the views of the users of school transport services to investigate whether these services are meeting the needs of school pupils in Scotland. The research follows on from earlier research that we conducted on the provision of school transport by local authorities, published in February of this year.¹

The aims of the project were to:

- Gather the range of views of parents and pupils on their school transport service.
- Undertake a wider scale survey on specific aspects of travelling to school to gather the views of pupils across Scotland on whether the transport service is meeting their needs.

1.2 Current government policy on school travel

Recent Scottish Executive policy has attempted to increase walking and cycling to school, as alternatives to car use. While walking and cycling offer many benefits to pupils, and are particularly important in urban areas, bus services are the only realistic alternative to being driven by car for many pupils.

The proportion of school children being driven to school is increasing rapidly, from 6% in 1986 to 20% in 2004.² Although levels of car-based travel are lower in Scotland than England, it still represents a worrying trend because of implications on pupil health and safety, the impact on the environment, and the consequence of creating additional peak time congestion on the roads. These concerns exist in relation to wider car use in general and the Scottish Executive has stated its commitment to the reduction of the private car in favour of an accessible integrated transport system that is safe, reliable and sustainable.³ The Scottish Executive has also sought to reduce car use for school journeys in particular.

A particular emphasis of school transport policy has been in developing ‘safer routes to school’.⁴ The Scottish Executive is committed to a 50% reduction in child road casualties by 2010. Dedicated funding of nearly £38 million is being provided between 2000 and 2006 for cycling, walking and safer street projects, including safer routes to schools. It is

¹ Scottish Consumer Council (2005) A review of school transport contracts in Scotland, February. This can be downloaded from the SCC website at www.scotconsumer.org.uk
⁴ Scottish Executive (1999) Guidance on how to run successful safer routes to school.
also providing funding to enable local authorities to introduce 20 mile per hour speed limits outside schools and in residential areas.5

In 2000, the Scottish Executive established the Scottish School Travel Advisory Group (SSTAG) whose objective is to increase the proportion of non-car travel to school. Their report rejected setting of national targets for reduction of car use in school journeys due to diversity of geography and social circumstances across and within local authorities and because they suggest that 'encouraging a modal shift on the school journey will depend on local action in identifying and removing local barriers to walking, cycling and bus use'.6 Instead, the report set out 20 recommendations, which included the creation of school travel coordinators within each local authority.

### 1.3 Duty of local authorities

It is a parent’s responsibility to ensure that their child gets to school. However, local authorities have a duty to provide free transport or transport facilities for children who live outwith the statutory walking distance to school7 – two miles for any pupil less than eight years old and three miles for any other. Local authorities also have a more general duty to ensure that transport provisions are in place to allow pupils to attend school. This can be with or without charge and allows authorities greater autonomy regarding suitable transport provision.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1996 amended section 51 of the previous Act, adding the requirement that local authorities consider the safety of pupils when making decisions regarding the provision of school transport. This includes instances where a private company provides the service on behalf of the local authority.

In 2003, the Scottish Executive issued Circular No. 7/2003, which provided updated guidance to local authorities about the provision of school transport.8 This covered the statutory duties of education authorities, including provision of free school transport.

Almost one-fifth of Scottish school pupils received free transport to school in 2000-01.9 However, this figure varies considerably for individual authorities, with some areas providing free school transport to 60% of pupils. The highest entitlement was in rural and island areas and the lowest in city areas.

Overall, for about a fifth of school pupils in Scotland, the bus is the usual method of travel to school, and of these 14% travelled by school bus and 8% by service bus.10 Walking is the most popular method of travel to school, with over half of school pupils usually walking to school.

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6 Scottish Executive (undated) Scottish School Travel Advisory Group.
7 under sections 50 and 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980
1.4 SCC involvement in school transport

In February 2005 the SCC published *A review of school transport contracts in Scotland*. This report outlined the results of a survey that the SCC had conducted with local authorities. It examined the policies and practice of local authorities in Scotland in relation to school transport contracts to determine whether the needs of pupils and parents were being met.

The key finding of the research was that although there was some very good practice in some local authorities, there is not a consistent quality of service across Scotland, and that there are unacceptable variations in local authority practice, even accounting for necessary local circumstances. This report made a number of recommendations to local authorities and the Scottish Executive relating to ensuring a more consistently good service across Scotland. These are reproduced at Appendix 2.

The Scottish Parliament Education Committee examined the subject of School Transport in various meetings from April 2005 and stated in a letter to the Minister for Education and Young People that ‘the existing legislative framework appears not to be based on issues of children’s health and safety or environmental concerns.’ The Education Minister gave evidence to the Committee on 26 October and a commitment was made to issue best practice notes to address some of the issues and recommendations highlighted in our earlier report.

The SCC wanted to expand on the 2005 publication to examine the views of the users of school transport services – namely parents and pupils.

1.5 Report layout

There were two stages to the research project. The first involved the commissioning of Carole Millar Research to carry out the qualitative element of the research project. This is based on a series of focus groups with pupils and parents in relation to school transport to examine their views of the service they use. These were conducted in February and March 2004 and the results of this are presented in section 2.

The second element of the research project involved undertaking a large-scale quantitative research project. The research was conducted by using an on-line questionnaire of secondary school pupils to gather their views on the transport they use to get to and from school. This includes travel by bus, but also the range of different ways pupils’ travel to school. The results of this are presented in section 3.

The final section of the report presents the conclusions and a discussion of the main messages emerging from the research. The report makes no new recommendations; rather this research re-affirms the validity of the recommendations make in our research published in February 2005.

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11 letter to Peter Peacock MSP, Minister for Education and Young people; dated 10 May 2005 - www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/papers-05/edc05-0510.pdf
2. Focus group research

2.1 Introduction

The SCC wanted to explore the views of both pupils and parents about the school transport service provided to them by their local authority.

This section of the report outlines the main results from the qualitative research undertaken in February and March 2004. The SCC commissioned Carole Millar Research to conduct the pupil groups in this stage of the research as the SCC’s in-house researchers did not have prior experience of conducting focus group research with young people. The subsequent report from Carole Millar Research forms the basis of this section.

2.2 Research method

The views of both pupils and parents were explored using focus groups. This research method allows for an in depth discussion of the experiences of the users of the service and an exploration of the strengths and weaknesses associated with the school transport service.

Eight focus groups were conducted at 4 different locations across Scotland. The locations were selected to capture differences, and similarities, that exist based on urban, accessible small towns and rural locations across Scotland.

The locations were:
- urban focus group: Glasgow
- accessible small town focus group: West Kilbride (North Ayrshire)
- rural focus groups: Insch (Aberdeenshire) and Selkirk (Borders)

The SCC wanted to explore general views on the school transport services in these areas, and look at issues around the journey, safety, pupil behaviour or misbehaviour, methods for getting information to pupils and parents, and views on making complaints.

Two focus groups were undertaken at each location. One with parents of pupils in S1 and S2 who travel by school transport under local authority contract and one with pupils who were currently in S1 and S2 and who travel by school transport under local authority contract.

The focus group members all either received free school transport themselves (the pupils) or had children who received free school transport (the parents).

The participants were all recruited through the consultant and a small incentive payment was made for taking part. Focus groups were audio taped and transcripts made for most of
the groups. Topic guides were prepared in advance to give some degree of structure to the discussions. However, these were flexible to encourage an open discussion and to capture all the relevant views as well as allowing individual interests to be explored. Each group was conducted with an experienced facilitator familiar with the background to the issues. They lasted approximately 1 hour, with an average of 6 in each group. Quotes are made from the transcripts of the groups but are not attributed to individuals.

2.3 Focus group results

As with any qualitative research, the findings aim to represent the range of views given in the course of the discussions. Common themes are pulled together in this section to give a summary of the issues that emerged.

Satisfaction with school transport service

At an early stage in the discussion participants were asked to identify the aspects of the school transport service that they felt were good as well as those aspects that they thought were poor or needed to improve.

The overall perception by parents in the focus groups of the school transport service is generally a positive one, albeit that problems do occur from time to time in all of the locations. In the cases where problems arise, parents appeared to get more involved or learn more about how the school transport service operates in their area. Parents in rural areas appeared to be better informed about the bus services than parents in Glasgow or in the more mixed environment of West Kilbride.

The pupils from rural areas tended to regard their bus service more positively than those in Glasgow or West Kilbride, where more problems are highlighted.

The range of issues highlighted in the focus groups is set out in the following section. It should be noted that few specific positive aspects of the transport service were identified. It could be that aspects of the service that were good were largely taken for granted and not discussed. For example, there was an assumption that the bus would turn up each day and be there at the end of the day and so few would praise reliability as a feature.

The main positive aspects that were discussed were drivers, pick up arrangements and standard of coaches.

Parents and pupils praised drivers, more so in the rural areas than other areas. Parents generally felt it was beneficial for the children to get the same drivers or contractor, as there is a greater opportunity for the driver to get to know pupils and to get to know who lives where.

Some pupils in Insch spoke of the benefits of having the same drivers, for example they said that the driver would usually wait a few minutes in the morning if someone were not at their bus stop.
The majority of pupils were content with the place that they were picked up from and dropped off at the end of the day and the standard of the coaches was thought to be quite good in the more rural areas.

While the general perception is that pupils get to and from school fairly reliably, and that in this respect there is a satisfaction with the service, there were failings identified in the study. Often these were the same across the locations, but there were also different concerns specific to the different locations and the main issues that were discussed are summarised below under four headings.

- The bus environment – quality and safety
- Getting to school and back – about the journey
- Behaviour and discipline
- Information, communication and complaints

2.4 The bus environment – quality and safety

The SCC was interested in views about the bus service that pupils use to get to and from school.

The range of school transport services

There was a range of different school transport vehicles provided at the 4 locations – including coaches, buses (school or local service bus) or minibuses. Local service buses are not restricted to school pupils and are available for any passenger to use. Pupils typically started to get a school bus at secondary level, although some did take a bus throughout primary school. Catchment areas widen at secondary school and pupils are expected to travel greater distances.

In Glasgow, the pupils in the focus group received a bus pass, which allowed them to access local service buses at certain times of the day and on an identified route. The pupils in West Kilbride used double decker school buses. In Insch, some pupils used a local service bus, but the majority had access to a school bus used only by the pupils. Pupils in Selkirk also had a school bus dedicated to pupils. In the rural areas of Selkirk and Insch some minibuses were used for some children but the trend appeared to be moving to larger buses.

The descriptions given in the rural areas, suggest that vehicles are of a generally good standard, more so than the descriptions in the more urban areas.

The buses in West Kilbride were the most criticised and were described by pupils as being very old and very dirty. They were reported to leak, were wet inside as well as cold. Some parents in this area felt that the poor quality of the buses contributed towards poor behaviour by pupils.
Overcrowding

Overcrowding appeared to occur on school transport from time to time. For example, on the West Kilbride buses it was reported that there were occasions when pupils were asked to sit three to a seat. Most parents objected to this arrangement. Overcrowding appeared to be a particular issue at the start of the school year when there was more uncertainty about the numbers of pupils who were using the service.

Borders pupils also described the buses as being busy.

*You get 3 people to 2 seats*

*We sit on the floor sometimes, jammed between the seats*

*Borders pupil*

Overcrowding on the service bus was a concern of some Glasgow parents. The buses were reported to be commonly overfull in the mornings resulting in pupils having to stand. This results in safety concerns by parents.

*They’ve got something that says 45 sitting and 17 standing but that’s too many people standing on a bus. The drivers just pile them on.*

*Glasgow parent*

There are also instances when service buses pass the children by, leaving them to wait on the next bus. It was reported that this could happen a number of times resulting in the journey being longer than necessary.

Seat belts

The SCC was interested in the views of pupils and parents in relation to seat belt availability and use on school transport. Scottish Executive guidance on this states ‘Coaches and minibuses are legally required to be fitted with seatbelts when carrying 3 or more children aged 3 or over but under the age of 16 on organised school trips’.12 ‘Organised school trips’ in this context include home to school transport as well as school outings. On smaller minibuses, seatbelts, when fitted, must be worn and the driver is responsible for ensuring that pupils under the age of 14 years wear them. Importantly, the legislation does not apply to single and double-decker buses, which are commonly used for journeys to school.

No seat belts were available on the service buses, but they were reportedly available on others. However, seat belt availability does not equate with use and pupils at secondary level typically reported that they do not wear them. Parents say this is because they will be teased if they put one on.

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12 Scottish Executive (2003) op. cit
The problem with seat belts is that if one wears it – a lot of the kids laugh at the kid. That’s what they come home and say – that they won’t wear their seat belt because everybody will laugh at them.

*Insch parent*

There were particular concerns from parents of children travelling in rural areas where it was thought that there are increased dangers due to the narrow roads and consequently an increased need to wear seat belts.

There was some discussion as to whether pupils should be encouraged or even made to wear seat belts when they were available. It was felt that regular checks might encourage better seat belt wearing behaviour, but conversely at secondary level it was felt that pupils were old enough to take responsibility for this themselves.

There were mixed views from the pupils about wearing seat belts. Some said they were likely to be made fun of if they did put their seat belt on, while others said that no one asked them to put their seat belts on.

Pupils were aware that public buses do not have seat belts and so there was a perception that seat belts on a bus are less important than in a car. That said, when pupils were on a school trip they reported that they were made to wear their seat belts.

*If you go on a school trip they make you wear them. They come up and check.*

*Insch pupil*

There appears to be conflicting messages about the need for seat belts and these pupils typically choose not to wear them. It was evident that many pupils did not wish seat belt wearing to be enforced.

### 2.5 Getting to school and back – about the journey

The SCC were interested in views on the schedule and the journey.

**Bus schedule**

As expected, the bus schedules varied for each location, but did not appear to cause much concern for either parents or pupils. Some comments were made that the bus arrived too early (West Kilbride), or too close to school starting and finishing (the Borders) or was too unpredictable (Insch).

In Glasgow, where the public bus is used, there are different issues, typically caused by the high demand for buses at peak time, by both school pupils and the public travelling to work. Whilst these buses operate a 10-minute schedule at peak times, pupils report that
they can wait considerably longer as they are often too full to board. This can result in them being late for school despite leaving home on time.

*I think it is a bad time in the morning for the kids going to school. There are people going to work as well so they’re going to get on the bus first. They’re going to let an adult on to go to work rather than a bunch of rowdy kids.*

_Glasgow parent_

The bus schedules and lengths of routes in rural areas can make for a long day and parents in both the Borders and the Aberdeenshire groups acknowledge this, but they also accept that this is a consequence of rural living.

*Because X has a mini bus to catch before she gets the next bus…. In the winter time she’s going out with a torch because it is so dark.*

_Borders parent_

It was felt that consultation with pupils and parents on slight adjustments to the schedule might help address some of these issues.

**Shelter**

There were some concerns about the lack of shelter for pupils while they wait on their school bus. This appeared to be more of a concern for pupils from the rural areas, when they have to wait in cold weather.

**Alternative ways of getting to and from school**

Pupils do occasionally miss the bus in the morning or evenings, either by accident or for example by taking part in after school activities. In these cases there appears to be no other provision made for pupils, and parents generally collect their children.

Pupils in Glasgow have the option of waiting for the next public bus. Those in West Kilbride can access a public bus or a train but they have to pay to use these. However, and more importantly, West Kilbride parents report that the timings of alternative transport home are infrequent and pupils generally have to wait unsupervised for the next bus. This appeared to be a bigger concern.

*I don’t let my son stay after school. I don’t like him hanging around Ardrossan.*

_West Kilbride parent_

Lack of transport for pupils participating in after-school activities was raised as an issue in the West Kilbride group:
I think if the school have after school activities, they should have a school mini bus to take them back home.

West Kilbride parent

However, parents in rural groups generally accepted that having to pick children up was a consequence of living in a rural area.

Pick up arrangements

Most pupils in the focus groups got on the bus to school at a relatively short distance from their homes and there were few comments about the distances that were required to travel to get to the pick up points. It was the exception where a child needed to walk any significant distance to get to where the bus picked them up. In general there was satisfaction with the places that pupils were picked up from and dropped off at night.

2.6 Behaviour and discipline

One of the key issues to be discussed across all focus groups was the issue of pupil behaviour whilst travelling to and from school. This was noted as an increasing problem on school buses by the Scottish Executive Discipline Task Force Group report Better Behaviour – Better Learning.\(^{13}\)

Is behaviour a problem?

There were reports of problems with behaviour at all the focus group locations although behaviour appeared to be less of an issue in rural areas. It is a concern for both parents and pupils alike, albeit that pupils appear more accepting of it.

Parents perceptions of behaviour

Parents in Glasgow reported that behaviour was a major problem on the buses and they cited examples ranging from incidences of violence, of throwing things out of the window, to verbal abuse and a lack of manners.

In West Kilbride, parents again spoke of behaviour as an issue and put this down to a lack of supervision, despite being the only group for whom supervision was provided. They linked the poor behaviour with safety, and felt that some of the misbehaviour was dangerous.

You see them playing with the fire exit at the top of the bus.

Parents in the rural areas had less concerns but were aware that behaviour could be a problem. The potential difficulties that can arise when pupils come out of school to the relative freedom of a bus without adult supervision was recognised. Others, both in Insch and the Borders, spoke of their concerns about bullying, particularly on younger pupils.

**Pupils perceptions of behaviour**

Pupils’ descriptions of the behaviour that occurs on school buses was always much worse than that described by parents. It is unknown to what extent this is exaggeration within the group or based on direct experience.

Pupils from West Kilbride described examples of misbehaviour including throwing things, carrying on and shouting.

In the Borders, pupils described fights as the worst thing to happen on their bus journey and also mentioned incidences of taking others belongings and threatening to throw them out of the window and ‘slagging matches’.

> People mucking about and fighting and everybody just jumps on top and people underneath get hurt.

*Borders pupil*

Another mentioned opening doors prior to the bus stopping.

> They open the doors before the bus has stopped – you can do that from inside. Not the driver. They jump off before it has stopped. It’s going really slowly like 10mph.

*Borders pupil*

In Insch, pupils described behaviour on the bus as noisy, but did not particularly consider the behaviour to be that bad.

**Bullying**

Some parents raised the specific issue of bullying, and there were some concerns that the unsupervised nature of the bus journey may exacerbate this.

When asked how bullying on the school bus should be addressed, parents in Insch were clear that the school should be contacted in instances of bullying and that the school would deal with this problem. In West Kilbride, parents were less sure whether the school takes responsibility for bullying that occurs on the bus.
In Glasgow, one parent spoke of the tensions that can arise between children from schools of different religion.

...because the children are at different schools on the bus there are slagging matches. Because she is at a Catholic school and they are Protestant and they are all on the one bus. All hell breaks loose.

Glasgow parent

The pupils did not discuss bullying to any great extent but they did recognise that the bus journey could be difficult for the younger children.

Some people get bullied on buses and the driver just doesn’t do anything.

Borders pupil

All Scottish schools are officially encouraged to develop anti-bullying policies and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) examines these. However, it is legally unclear where the responsibility for dealing with bullying occurring to and from school lies. Generally, it is viewed that there is a shared responsibility between the school, parents, transport providers and members of the community.

Awareness of rules of behaviour

Scottish Executive guidance in relation to behaviour, endorses the Scottish School Board Association information called A Safe School Travel Pack. The pack suggests ways in which school staff can assist in the operation of a safe and efficient transport service. This includes ‘Ensuring that pupils understand the rules for safe travel on buses, including the consequences of misbehaviour and banned activities such as smoking, vandalism, fighting moving about the vehicle and tampering with the emergency doors and windows’.  

When asked about notification of rules of behaviour, the response was similar throughout the focus groups. Pupils themselves did not appear to know if there were rules of behaviour. Some spoke of rules that the drivers had and some felt these were made up (and lacked credibility). Some pupils in Insch thought that there were rules about no smoking and no standing up, but again felt that few paid attention to these rules.

Parents in West Kilbride and Glasgow spoke of bus passes provided by the school, which outlined expected behaviour. However, it was felt that these had little impact.

There appears to be low level of awareness and a lack of communication to both parents and pupils on rules of behaviour that pupils are expected to follow whilst travelling on school transport.

14 http://www.antibullying.net/staffwhole.htm
Attendants

There is no statutory requirement for education authorities to provide supervisors on school transport. However, the Scottish Executive does suggest ‘Supervision on transport can help to maintain good behaviour amongst pupils and this in turn can contribute to more positive behaviour within the classroom. Supervision contributes more generally to greater school transport safety.’\textsuperscript{16}

Focus group participants highlight that an attendant was present on the school buses from West Kilbride to Ardrossan, and on one route in Insch.

The parents of those who did not have a supervisor (for example in Glasgow) did feel that one would be beneficial.

However, the effectiveness of attendants in controlling behaviour was debated. For example, West Kilbride pupils reported that the supervisor rarely ventured upstairs on the double decker, unless he had to, for example if he suspected that someone was smoking.

Another parent commented that the supervisor was unhelpful and just stood and talked to the driver.

\begin{quote}
I thought the supervisors were paid to look after them and if they see any trouble they should be able to take their names and say well I have to report this to the school and the school have to notify the parents and they don’t.
\end{quote}

\textit{West Kilbride parent}

One parent described the supervisors as lacking authority with the children who were likely to ignore them.

\begin{quote}
Some of the supervisors are terrified to say anything because they get abuse or whatever.
\end{quote}

\textit{West Kilbride parent}

Parents in Insch felt that a supervisor would help ensure that the children complied with seat belt wearing.

The role of school prefects as supervisors was raised, however, most parents felt that this level of responsibility was more suited to an adult. It was recognised that the cost of transport provision may increase by the increased use of attendants.

An alternative suggestion for controlling behaviour was the wider use of CCTV on school buses. While it was recognised there may be cost implications, it was felt this would be a useful source of evidence if an incident took place and may also act as a deterrent in preventing poor behaviour.

\textsuperscript{16} Scottish Executive (2003) op.cit
The views of pupils were not always the same as the parents and some were more accepting of the behaviour on the buses than their parents were. Pupils in Insch said that there was one bus that did have an attendant because of poor behaviour, but they felt that the behaviour was not so bad as to merit a supervisor. Again, they had concerns that the supervisor did not do anything. Pupils also felt that they would have less fun if there were an attendant present.

**Dealing with poor behaviour**

Parents felt that it was difficult for the driver of the bus to maintain discipline on their own and needed to concentrate on driving without distractions. There was concern that poor behaviour can become a safety issue and not just a nuisance.

> Obviously you have the driver of the minibus who has to drive and if the kids are stealing shoes and flinging them around and pulling people’s hair, there’s not a lot he can do about it. It has been a problem.

*Borders parent*

While there was praise for the drivers, particularly in the rural areas, there were also concerns about the role of the drivers on the bus. As would be expected, some drivers were reported to take a more proactive role in managing behaviour on their buses than others. For example in the Borders, parents report that one driver has allocated seats to children so that he can identify the source of any trouble; whereas in Glasgow a parent described one incident where the driver did not intervene.

> Last week my daughter who is in first year, she had hockey and she got the later bus and she said she was terrified. The bus was full so she had to go up to the back and sit and somebody was smoking wacky baccy and she said she felt sick. She was white when she came home and I’m sure it was from that.

*Glasgow parent*

Pupils are largely accepting of the behaviour on the buses although some do acknowledge that it can go too far and that some can feel intimidated by this.

> It’s a shame for the wee folk – but they just need to take it.

*West Kilbride pupil*

**Responsibility for pupils on the journey**

Responsibility for travelling to and from school lies with the local authority. The Scottish Executive states ‘Authorities have a common law duty of care for the safety of pupils under their
charge and this duty extends to pupils using school transport.\textsuperscript{17} However, (and subject to the caveat that interpretation of the statutes is the prerogative of the Courts), the Scottish Executive states that it does not consider it likely that local education authorities would be held responsible for the behaviour or safety of passengers on public transport who happen to be school pupils, whether or not they are holders of bus passes and whether or not the purpose of their journey is to go to or from school. There could well be an expectation that schools will promote positive behaviour among pupils generally, including when travelling on local service buses to or from school, but this is quite different.\textsuperscript{18}

The focus groups highlighted a general uncertainty amongst parents on who was responsible for their children on the way to and from school.

\textit{Who actually is responsible for those kids leaving your house for the school and from the school to your house?}

\textit{West Kilbride parent}

This led to concerns that the school, which many assumed have responsibility, were not fulfilling their obligations.

\textit{If you phone the school about any carry on on the bus, they say it’s not their responsibility after they leave the school gates. So who is actually responsible for them from leaving the school gates to getting home?}

\textit{West Kilbride parent}

However, the school was reported to intervene in certain situations, for example one group spoke of a complaint about bullying which was made to the school and did result in some improvement to behaviour.

While it is important that poor behaviour is reported if a solution is to be found, how this happens was a matter of some debate. Most supported the driver, in the need to attend to driving, but equally parents felt that pupils themselves could not be expected to report poor behaviour.

There was a general uncertainty amongst parents as to who was responsible for their children on the way to and from school and there is a clear need for better information in this respect.

\textbf{How could behaviour be improved?}

The issue of how to improve behaviour of pupils on school transport was explored. In Glasgow, parents felt that a dedicated school bus might help as they felt that having members of the public on the bus was not seen as a positive influence on the children’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Scottish Executive (2003) op. cit
\item \textsuperscript{18} Personal Communication, Scottish Executive (17 June 2005).
\end{itemize}
behaviour. Borders pupils noted that behaviour could only be improved if there was someone there to monitor it.

2.7 Information, communication and complaints

Parents and pupils were asked what information they received about the school transport service, and how they received this. Communication of information about the school bus services appeared to be poor. Comments were made particularly in relation to appointment of contractors, bus scheduling, the management of bus passes, and the arrangements for transport in adverse weather conditions.

Information relating to contractual issues

Parents appear to lack input into who is selected to operate the school transport service. It was noted that contract changes generally happen in April, and were not aligned with the school year. It was felt that this was poor timing, because changes in buses can cause confusion to some pupils because it can lead to alterations to routes and timings. Parents would prefer contracts to be awarded to align with the academic school year.

Parents appeared to receive no information about how the contractors are selected and some would like to have more information on how decisions are made, for example whether they are based purely on price or whether other factors are also taken into account.

Information about schedule

Some parents felt that there was a lack of detailed information about the bus schedule. Few had been given a bus timetable, although most did seem aware of the time that their child was to be at a bus stop.

_Last year we got a card, but we didn’t get them this year._

_Insch parent_

Information about bus passes

Most pupils had been issued with bus passes to allow them to use school transport. However, a parent who had recently moved to the area was unaware of the process of applying for one. Parents felt that they should be notified at least annually of the process for accessing bus passes. This may help in the planning of school transport, which can be hindered by a lack of knowledge of the number of pupils that will be using the service at the start of each year, commonly resulting in overcrowding.

_If parents don’t apply and their children just go, then they are on the bus so it takes up space that has been allocated._
West Kilbride parent

Information about travel in adverse weather

Arrangements for school transport in poor weather appeared to be an issue particular to the more rural areas. Pupils estimated they missed between 5 and 10 days schooling a year because of cancellations to school transport. Parents in Insch described how the bus would not run unless it can reach all parts of its route, so some children miss school when it is still open. The use of large 50 seater buses on small rural roads was felt to exacerbate the problem, as they were felt to be less able to access parts of the country that the smaller buses could.

If it was smaller buses, they could go to places that are a bit harder to get to in weather like this and they could get to school. The school’s not shut it’s the transport that’s been stopped.

Insch parent

Parents were asked how they are informed when their children are being sent home from school under these circumstances and the consensus was that little information comes to them directly, but that parents are likely to suspect when this might happen. Together with the increased availability of mobile phones amongst young people, it is rarely viewed as a problem.

A number of different sources of information were cited for finding out if buses are operating in poor weather (including the bus contractors, the school, the school website, the Post office and the local radio), however, there appears to be no consistent means of communicating this information to parents.

Complaints

The SCC asked about complaints procedures for parents. A complaints procedure is part of good customer service; it can be indicative of wider problems or as a mechanism to help improve services in the future. It is also important that parents know a complaints procedure exists, and that if they do complain, it will be acted upon.

There appeared to be uncertainty in relation to who to contact in the event of a complaint about the school journey or whether a clear complaints procedure existed. As with issues relating to who is responsible for their children on the school journey, there is some confusion over who has responsibility for the transport service itself.

Parents spoke of being unsure who they should approach to make a complaint – the school, the transport operator, the local authority or in the west of Scotland, Strathclyde Passenger Transport.

They school say sorry but it’s independent contractors and we have nothing – no jurisdiction over them.
**Borders parent**

The typical view from parents is that the school will not get involved in any issues relating to the bus journey.

_I would like to have a complaints procedure… I said [to the school] – what is the procedure? – and it was being made up as it went along._

_Borders parent_

There were varying accounts of how complaints had been dealt with. Issues relating to seating and serious issues relating to behaviour were felt to be more likely to be dealt with but issues relating to cleanliness were not. A number of complaints from different parts of the country focused on the lack of seats – some resulted in changes, others did not.

Few pupils mentioned having made a complaint. On the odd occasions when they had complained, for example about damage to clothing due to the dirtiness of the bus or about poor heating, pupils reported no action had been taken.

From these comments, there appears to be a general lack of awareness from parents on who has responsibility for school transport services and a clear lack of knowledge of a published procedure that parents can follow in the event of being dissatisfied with the service.

### 2.8 Focus group conclusion

Whilst school transport in most parts of the country seems to get pupils reliably to and from school, and in this regard most are quite happy with the service, there were failings identified in the course of this study.

Perhaps the most pressing of these is the behaviour of pupils on school buses and the lack of discipline to control this. Whether or not parents were concerned about the poor behaviour on the buses, all were concerned that their child’s journey to and from school should be a safe one. There was concern that the misbehaviour by some pupils could be a significant distraction to the driver as well as a danger to other pupils and passengers using the vehicle.

Pupils viewed the behaviour, as might be expected, differed from that of their parents – their description being always much worse. However, they seemed less concerned about it. Pupils to a large extent accepted travelling on school transport and any problems associated with it. They did not expect much to be done about it. However, there were a few pupils who acknowledged that poor behaviour could become excessive and would like this to be more controlled without losing the freedom to be with their friends and enjoy themselves.
Surprisingly, there was little knowledge or awareness of rules of behaviour that pupils should observe when travelling on school transport. Mention was made of rules written on the back of bus passes, but it was felt that these had little impact on behaviour. The role of the driver appeared significant in relation to behaviour, with some drivers imposing their own rules, while others being more reluctant to become involved. It was recognised that it was difficult for the driver to drive the bus and supervise behaviour at the same time.

Although attendants were only available on a few buses most notably in West Kilbride, behaviour remained a problem on these routes. There was criticism over the passive role taken by attendants, who were often viewed as lacking authority. However, in areas where there is no supervision, parents felt that their use would help improve behaviour. Other suggestions included making use of prefects or installing CCTVs.

The issue of who is responsible for pupils when they are travelling to and from school was raised in all parent focus groups with clear uncertainty by most on where this responsibility lies. There is a real need for better information in this respect. Similarly, this lack of awareness on who has responsibility is reflected in complaints, with parents being unsure who they should complain to when problems arise. The lack of a published complaints procedures that parents can follow in the event of being dissatisfied with the service serves to compound this problem.

The provision of information generally about school transport seems to be limited. For example some parents were unaware of the need for their children to get and carry a bus pass; there was uncertainty on what happened in adverse weather. Seat belts were another issue over which parents were generally poorly informed. In practice, where seatbelts were provided, there was a culture of not wearing them. There also appeared to be mixed messages in relation to seat belt wearing.

While some felt the standard of transport was good, some - West Kilbride pupils in particular, were not happy with the standard of the buses. Complaints included they leaked, were wet inside and cold and uncomfortable.

The main improvements centred on there being enough buses to end overcrowding. Others include:

- Improvements to the quality of buses in some areas
- Improvements in pupil behaviour
- Clear complaints procedures
- Improved compliance with seat belt wearing and monitoring of seat belt use

Whilst there were many negative aspects of the bus service highlighted by this study, it must be mentioned that praise was forthcoming for some bus drivers, particularly in the rural areas.
3. Pupil survey

3.1 Introduction

This section of the report outlines the main results from the survey of school pupils. The aim of this research was to examine the views of secondary aged school pupils about their journey to and from school. The focus group findings were fed into the development of the questionnaire.

Pupils in Scotland use a range of methods of transport to and from school, and the questionnaire was designed to gather views particularly on bus users, but also across the different modes. These typically include school bus, local bus, train, underground, ferry and taxi. Other pupils’ walk, cycle or travel by private car.

3.2 Method

The SCC contacted directors of education in August 2004 requesting permission to invite secondary schools in their area to participate in the SCC research. All 32 directors of education gave their permission to contact schools. Letters from the SCC were then sent to all state funded secondary schools in January 2005, outlining details of the survey and inviting head teachers to take part. We asked those willing to take part to identify one class in their school to undertake the survey. The survey was anonymous, and we asked only for the first part of the postcode to enable analysis by location. No questions of a personal or sensitive nature were asked. It should also be noted that the research was not based on random samples and that the respondent profiles do not match that of the general student population.

The SCC developed an on-line survey using the application, Quask. The survey consisted of nine parts, one for each of the usual transport options available to pupils to travel to and from school. In addition, some common questions were asked of all pupils, regardless of how they get to school. Pupils were asked early in the survey to identify their usual method of travel and were then automatically routed to the appropriate section within the survey.

The survey remained on-line during January and February 2005. The survey itself was designed to ensure the questions used language and graphics appropriate for school pupils. It was piloted at Balfron High School in December 2004 with a class of 20 S2 pupils and changes were made to reflect their comments. Paper copies of the questionnaire were available on demand, and two schools responded in this way.

The main focus of the research is with the provision of transport to and from mainstream state secondary schools. School transport provision specifically for pupils attending special schools or attending private schools is outwith the scope of the study.
3.3 The results

The survey achieved a good response rate with 892 useable responses across 25 local authority areas. See Appendix 1, table a for frequency of respondents by local authority area.

Gender

Fifty-three percent of respondents were male and 47% were female. This is skewed compared with Scottish Executive figures, which showed an even male to female ratio.\textsuperscript{19}

Age of respondents

Responses were received from all six secondary year groups, although two-thirds came from S1-3, see table 1. This is skewed with 10% more respondents from within the lower year groups compared with the Scottish pupil population.\textsuperscript{20}

Table 1: Respondents by year group and by Scottish pupil population

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{table1.png}
\caption{Respondents by year group and by Scottish pupil population}
\end{figure}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{l|c|c|c|c|c|c}
\hline
Year Group & S1 & S2 & S3 & S4 & S5 & S6 \\
\hline
Survey Responses (n=899) & 20 & 22 & 25 & 19 & 19 & 19 \\
Pupils in Scotland 2003 (n=318,427) & 6 & 8 & 15 & 14 & 15 & 19 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{19} Scottish Executive (2004) \textit{Pupils in Scotland 2003}

\textsuperscript{20} Scottish Executive (2004) op.cit.
Urban rural mix

The postcodes from respondents were analysed using the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics to typify each response according to the Scottish Executive’s Urban Rural Classifications. The Urban Rural Classification identifies how rural a location is based on its size and drive time to a settlement of 10,000 populations or more. The classifications range from large urban areas to remote rural. The results show that half the respondents came from large or other urban areas. See table 2. Fourteen per cent came from accessible small towns and seven per cent from remote small towns. Sixteen percent of respondents were from accessible rural areas, while 14% came from remote rural areas. When the respondent data are compared with the Urban Rural Classification, the results indicate an over-representation of respondents from rural areas, by just under a fifth.

Table 2: Respondents by Urban Rural Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Survey responses (n=873)</th>
<th>Scottish Executive figures 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Area</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban Area</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Small Town</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote Small Town</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Rural</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote Rural</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main way of travelling to school

Slightly over half of respondents indicated they usually travelled to and from school by bus: either the school bus (36%; n=318) or local service bus (16%; n=144). See table 3. Walking was the next most common form of travel, with 35% (n=315) indicating that they walked to and from school, followed by the car (11%; n=99).

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Small numbers of pupils indicated that they use other modes of travel to and from school: nine cycled, and six travelled by taxi. Due to the very small sample size in each of these groups they are not analysed separately. However, they are included in the common questions directed at all respondents.

The response rate for school bus use and walking appears to be skewed when compared with the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) results for 2003. The SHS results on usual method of travel to school for pupils in full-time education showed 53% of pupils walked to school compared with 35% of survey respondents. Conversely, 36% of survey respondents indicated that they used a school bus service compared with 16% in the SHS results; and 16% of respondents using local bus services compared to 6% of SHS respondents.

While the results indicate a higher proportion of pupils using the bus than for the SHS, this is not too surprising, given that there are a higher proportion of rural respondents who are generally higher bus users. Eleven per cent of respondents travelled to school in a private car, compared with 22% in the SHS results.

Table 3: Usual method of travel to school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journey time</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycle</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School bus (for pupils only)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bus (for pupils and general public)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Journey time

For almost two thirds of pupils the travel time from home to school was less than twenty minutes, while a further fifth reported a travel time between 21–30 minutes. See table 4. Fourteen percent of respondents had a journey time of thirty-one minutes or more.

---

Table 4: Journey time from home to school

When analysed more closely, the method of travel to school that was used most frequently on short journeys (of ten minutes or under) was the car (42%) and walking (47%). Bus journeys were most frequently between 11-20 minutes (40% of school bus journeys and 38% of local bus journeys).

We were particularly interested in any significant differences between journey times based on urban rural classifications and analysed the results for differences. There was no significant difference found, however, this may reflect the mode of transport used rather than the distance travelled.

3.4 Analysis by mode of travel

The following three sections examine the responses to questions relating to the bus, walking and car. The results indicate these are the most commonly used modes of travel by respondents. There were also large numbers of respondents, enabling statistically significant conclusions to be drawn. While respondents do indicate that other methods of travel to and from school are used (including cycle, taxi, ferry and underground), the number of respondents in each of these categories is less than nine, and they are therefore not analysed separately. They are however included in the results of questions directed at all respondents where common questions are asked.
Travel by bus

The results indicate that bus travel is the most common way respondents travel to and from school. Thirty-six percent (n=318) travelled on a dedicated school bus, while 16% (n=144) used a local service bus. Local service buses are available for any passenger to use and not restricted to school pupils. The majority of respondents say they usually travel to and from school on single decker buses; with 75% of local bus services and 63% of school bus services being single deckers.

The survey asked for pupils’ views in relation to the service provided, behaviour and complaints.

The bus service

The SCC was interested in views about the bus service that pupils use to get to and from school. The focus group research highlighted that while most pupils and parents felt the standard of transport was good others were less happy and had concerns about standards.

This was explored in the survey with questions on:

- reliability,
- breakdowns,
- service standards,
- missing the bus,
- arrival at school,
- overcrowding,
- seatbelts and
- perceptions of safety.

Reliability

We asked questions on pupils’ views in relation to reliability of the bus service: whether the bus service they got to school had run on time over the past year and whether the bus had broken down. Only 12% of school bus users and 7% of local bus users stated that the bus service always ran on time. See table 5. The majority of respondents reported that the bus service usually ran on time (school bus – 66%; local bus – 62%). However, almost one fifth of school bus users and nearly one quarter of local bus users responded that the bus rarely ran on time.
Table 5: Reliability of bus service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Breakdown</th>
<th>School Bus (n=316)</th>
<th>Local Bus (n=144)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is always on time</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is usually on time</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is rarely on time</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is never on time</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bus breakdowns

The SCC asked whether the bus that pupils’ usually used to travel to and from school had broken down in the last year. About two thirds of both school bus and local bus users responded that the bus had broken down over the last year. See table 6. School buses (40%) were found to have been slightly more likely to break down more than once compared to local buses (35%).
Table 6: Has the bus has broken down in the last year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School bus (n=307)</th>
<th>Local bus (n=137)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, just the once</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, more than once</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service standards

Pupils were asked for their views on both how modern and how clean they felt the buses in which they usually travel to and from school were. Unfortunately, there were problems in the coding structure of the questionnaire, and some of the data was lost or not reliable. However, we can be sure that some of the responses are robust; these are in relation to whether the buses were quite or very modern, and quite or very clean.

Few respondents suggested that the bus they usually travelled on to and from school was very modern: 4% of school bus users and 9% of local bus users. Just under one third responded that the bus was quite modern, with 30% of those using a school bus and 32% of those travelling on local buses choosing this option. See table 7. Therefore, 34% of school bus users and slightly more, at 41%, of local bus users felt that the bus they used to and from school were very or quite modern. The results from the remaining respondents could not be reported with certainty, however the responses were either not modern, or respondents answered don’t know.

Table 7: Views on age of vehicle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How modern</th>
<th>School bus</th>
<th>Local bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very modern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 Responses for quite and very dirty were coded as the same value
Quite modern | 30 | 32

The findings for how clean respondents felt the bus usually was appeared to be similar: with 9% and 6% of school and local bus users respectively indicating that the bus was usually very clean. See table 8. Thirty-four per cent of school bus users felt that their bus was usually quite clean compared with 45% of those using local bus services. The total usable responses show that 43% of school bus users and just over half of local bus users felt the bus to be very or quite clean. Again, the remaining respondents could not be reported with certainty, but were either not clean or respondents answered don’t know.

**Table 8: Views on cleanliness of vehicle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How clean</th>
<th>School bus</th>
<th>Local bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very clean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite clean</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Missing the bus**

The focus group research had raised concerns about pupils’ ability to get to and from school if they miss the bus either by accident, or through taking part in after school activities. The general feeling from parents and pupils was that there was rarely alternative transport provided, and that parents generally transport their children under these circumstances.

This was explored further in the quantitative research. The results show that under half the respondents using school or local buses (both 41%) found it quite or very easy to get to school in the morning if they missed the bus. See table 9. Similar numbers found it quite or very difficult to get to school if they missed the bus in the morning (47% of school bus and 43% of local bus users). No local bus users indicated that they could not get to school if they missed the bus, but seven per cent of school bus users reported that they would be unable to get to school if they missed the bus.
Table 9: How easy is it to get to school if you miss the bus in the morning?

The findings for the return journey indicated a similar pattern, with 47% of both school bus and local bus users finding it quite or very easy to get home if they miss the bus after school, and just under half finding it quite or very difficult to get home if they miss the bus in the evening. See table 10. Five per cent of school bus users stated that they could not get home after school without alternative transport if they missed the bus, but all local bus users could.
Table 10: How easy is it to get home if you miss the bus after school?

Arrival at school

The focus groups identified concerns from parents about their children arriving at school too early because of lack of shelter in adverse weather and uncertainty about who had responsibility for their children’s safety between them leaving the bus and before school started.

The SCC asked how long pupils had to wait at school after being dropped off by their bus. See table 11. Fifty-nine per cent of pupils who travelled by school bus usually had ten minutes or less to wait between arriving at the school and registration. For those using local bus services the percentage was similar, with 57% usually waiting ten minutes or less. For both groups, over one fifth reported waiting more than fifteen minutes.
Table 11: Length of wait between arriving at school and registration

![Bar chart showing length of wait between arriving at school and registration for school bus and local bus users.](chart)

**Overcrowding**

The problem of overcrowding on school transport was raised as an issue from the focus group research. Two aspects of this appeared to be a problem, the availability of a seat for each pupil on school transport, which appeared to be a particular issue at the start of the year, and the availability of a seat on local buses, due to the volume of peak hour demand. The SCC pursued this issue and asked pupils the question ‘do you generally get a seat on the bus?’ See table 12.

The results indicate that 70% of school bus users always get a seat on the bus. This is significantly higher than local bus users, where 49% of pupils responded they always get a seat. A further 48% of local bus users reported that they usually or sometimes get a seat on the bus. A small percentage of both groups indicated that they never get a seat on the bus journey to and from school.
Table 12: Availability of seat on the bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School bus</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local bus</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Seatbelts**

Pupils were asked whether the bus they usually travel to and from school on have seatbelts fitted. The focus group research highlighted the question of seatbelt availability and use as an issue particularly with parents, and especially those in rural areas: the road network and potentially greater speeds are perceived to lead to less safe journeys in rural areas than in urban areas.

As explained in the focus group section, Scottish Executive guidance on seatbelts states ‘Coaches and minibuses are legally required to be fitted with seatbelts when carrying 3 or more children aged 3 or over but under the age of 16 on organised school trips.’ 24 In this context organised school trips include transport from home to school. Importantly, the legislation does not apply to single and double-decker buses, which are commonly used for journeys to school.

Respondents indicated that school bus users were more likely to travel on buses with seatbelts fitted than local bus users: with over half of school buses always or usually having seatbelts (52%) compared to just over a quarter of local buses always or usually having seatbelts (27%). See table 13.

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24 Scottish Executive (2003) op. cit
Seatbelt availability was found to be more common on buses operating outside of urban areas. Seventeen per cent of respondents from large urban areas always had seatbelts on their school bus compared with 72% of those from remote rural areas. No respondents using local bus services in large urban areas ever had seatbelts on their bus.

**Are seatbelts used?**

Respondents who reported that there were always, usually or sometimes, seatbelts available on the buses they travelled to and from school on were asked whether they used the seatbelt when provided, and if not, why they did not. See table 14. Due to technical problems the data from local bus users was not recorded for these two questions and the results relate only to school bus users.

Fifty-nine per cent of school bus users indicated that they never use a seatbelt on the school bus when one is available. One fifth sometimes and 13% usually used a seatbelt. Only 7% of school bus respondents say they always used one.
Table 14: Do you use seatbelts when they are provided?

A further question was asked for reasons for not wearing seatbelts. See table 15. From a list of options given, the most common reason for not wearing a seatbelt by school bus users was simply that they did not think about it (38%). Seventeen per cent responded that they were not made to while a further 17% felt that they were not comfortable.
Table 15: Main reason for not using seatbelt

Pupils who reported that the bus they got to and from school never had seatbelts were asked whether they would use one if it were provided. See table 16. The answer given by both school and local bus users were fairly similar. Just under half responded that they would not use a seat belt if one were available, while around one quarter would.
Perception of safety

Pupils were asked whether they agreed that the bus felt safe to be on. A five point scale was provided to guide their response:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to whether respondents felt buses were safe to be on, pupils’ views appeared to be split. See table 17. Just over one third of respondents using both school and local buses agreed or strongly agreed that their bus felt safe to be on. Thirty-one per cent of school bus users and 28% of local bus users did not agree that their bus felt safe to be on.
Table 17: Respondents view on whether the bus to school feels safe to be on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School bus (n=299)</th>
<th>Local bus (n=132)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Behaviour and discipline**

The behaviour of pupils while travelling on the bus to and from school was one of the key issues to be discussed across all of the focus groups by both parents and pupils alike. The SCC pursued this theme in the survey.

**Perceptions of behaviour**

Pupils were asked their views on the behaviour of pupils on the bus they travel to school on and were asked to rate behaviour using a thumb emoticon that could be raised or lowered.

**Thumb Emoticons:**

![Thumb Emoticons](image)

Responses were categorised into a five-point scale:

- Fully up – very positive
- Partially up – quite positive
- Flat hand – neutral
- Partially down – quite negative
• Fully down – very negative

The results suggest that views were split among respondents with 36% of school bus users and 40% of local bus users giving a thumbs up (fully or partially up), indicating the behaviour was regarded as positive. See table 18. Around one quarter of school bus users and a fifth of local bus chose the flat hand, indicating a neutral view of behaviour. However, thirty-nine per cent of both groups gave the behaviour on the bus a thumbs down (either fully or partially) indicating their view of the behaviour of pupils’ on the bus to school was negative.

Table 18: Respondents’ views of behaviour of pupils on the bus to school

Range of misbehaviour

Drawing on types of misbehaviour identified by pupils in the focus groups, respondents were then asked how the often any of the following incidents occurred on the bus in the past year:

• Fighting
• Physical bullying
• Verbal bullying
• Verbal abuse to the driver
• Pupils throwing things
• Moving around on the bus while it is moving
Those using local bus services were also asked about hassle with pupils from another school or other passengers.

The most frequently reported incident of misbehaviour was ‘moving around the bus while it is moving’. For detailed results see Appendix 1, table b and c. Over two thirds of school bus users and over three quarters of local bus users responded that this had happened either very often or often over the past year. See table 19.

The next most common incident observed was ‘pupils throwing things’; with just under two thirds of both school bus users and local bus users suggesting this happened either very often or often (62% of school bus pupils and 60% of local bus pupils).

The third most common incident, again for both sets of pupils, was ‘verbal bullying’ which 44% of school bus users and 45% of local bus users felt occurred often or very often in the past year.

In each type of incident, other than pupils throwing things around, pupils using local bus services responded that these happened more often than those travelling by school bus.

One quarter of local bus users felt that hassle occurred often or very often with pupils from other school or other passengers. Just under half said that it never occurred.

Table 19: Response for incidents of misbehaviour that happened (either very often or often) in the last year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>School bus %</th>
<th>Local bus %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving around bus when it is moving</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils throwing things</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal bullying</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse to the driver</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical bullying</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening fire door on bus</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dealing with poor behaviour

A common response from parents in the focus group research was that it was difficult for the driver of the bus to maintain discipline on their own – the driver needed to concentrate on driving without distractions. Although there is no statutory requirement
for education authorities to provide supervisors on school transport, the Scottish Executive does suggest ‘Supervision on transport can help to maintain good behaviour amongst pupils and this in turn can contribute to more positive behaviour within the classroom. Discipline problems which start on the journey to school, can spill over into the classroom. Supervision contributes more generally to greater school transport safety.’

Pupils were asked whether there is an adult supervising behaviour on the bus other than the driver. See table 20. The majority of both school buses and local buses never had an adult supervising pupil behaviour on the bus other than the driver. Almost three quarters of school buses were found never to have an adult supervisor and this figure rose to 85% of local bus services. Fourteen per cent of school bus services always had adult supervision compared with just 3% of local buses.

Table 20: Adult supervision on buses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School Bus (n=220)</th>
<th>Local Bus (n=136)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Supervision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-five per cent of double-decker school buses always had a supervising adult while just 3% of single-deckers had an attendant.

Pupils who travelled by school bus were asked which of these statements was most true of their school bus service:

- We always have the same bus driver
- We have two or three regular drivers
- We have different drivers all the time

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25 Scottish Executive (2003) op.cit
One third reported always having the same driver on their service, while almost half (47%) had two or three regular drivers. Just under one fifth responded that there are different drivers all the time.

**Behaviour of the driver**

The focus groups raised issues about the role of the driver, which was felt to be significant in relation to behaviour on journeys to school. One of the main positive aspects of school transport that was mentioned in the focus groups were drivers, with praise from both pupils and parents, particularly in the more rural areas. However, not all viewed the drivers in the same positive light. The SCC wanted to examine aspects of driver behaviour that was not condoned, to determine the extent to which pupils observed it. Referring to the SPT’s *Code of Conduct for Drivers of School Transport*\(^{26}\), we asked pupils’ a number of questions about behaviour in relation to the driver.

We asked how often any of the following had occurred in the past year:

- A pupil has been put off the bus for misbehaving
- Driver has refused to let on pupil who has forgotten their travel pass
- Driver has used offensive language
- Driver has smoked on the bus

The results suggest that the most frequent response reported by pupils was the drivers’ use of offensive language, with fairly similar responses for both school and local services. For detailed results see Appendix 1, table d and e. These were reported to happen very often or often by 26% of school bus pupils and 28% of local bus pupils. These are summarised in table 21.

Although the incidence of pupils being put off a bus for misbehaviour is not frequently recorded, (mentioned by 11% and 16% of school and local bus pupils respectively) it is a serious issue, and against Scottish Executive guidance, which states ‘*Operational staff are briefed on issues involving pupil safety and behaviour, and that they know never to eject a pupil from a school transport vehicle.*’\(^{27}\)

**Table 21: Response for incidents of driver conduct that happened in the last year (either very often or often)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School bus</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Local bus</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offensive language</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Offensive language</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver smoked on bus</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Refused to let pupil on who has forgotten their travel pass</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to let pupil on who has forgotten their travel pass</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Driver smoked</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil put off bus for misbehaviour</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pupil put off bus for misbehaviour</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{26}\) Adapted from Strathclyde Passenger Transport (2002) *Code of Conduct for Drivers of School Transport.*

\(^{27}\) Scottish Executive (2003) op.cit
A driver refusing to let on a pupil who has forgotten their pass, pupils being put off the bus for misbehaving, and the driver smoking were all more common for local bus services than school bus services. These are all against the Code of Conduct for Drivers of School Transport by SPT and Scottish Executive guidelines.

Complaints

Pupils were asked whether they had ever made a complaint about their journey to school. See table 21. One fifth reported having made a complaint, while a further 35% stated that they have had reason to complain but had not done so. Forty-five percent of respondents indicated they had not had reason to complain about their service.

Table 21: Complaints made

Those pupils who had made a complaint were asked to identify whom they had complained to. See table 22. The school was found to be the most common route taken by complainants. One third had complained to their head teacher, while a further 19% had complained to another teacher. Twenty per cent reported complaining to a parent and 8% to the driver. A small number indicated that they had taken their complaint to the police or to the local authority.
School bus users were more likely to have complained to school staff with 57% having complained to school staff compared with 40% of local bus users.

The majority of those pupils who had made a complaint about their school transport service did not feel that their complaint had been taken seriously: sixty-two percent gave this response. See table 23. Just over one quarter felt that their complaint had been taken seriously.
Table 23  View on whether complaint was taken seriously

Walking to and from school

The following section examines the responses to questions relating to walking. This was the second most common form of travel by respondents, with 35% (n=315) indicating that they walked to and from school.

Safety on route

A particular emphasis of the governments school transport policy has been in developing ‘safer routes to school’ and dedicated funding has been provided to local authorities for walking, cycling and safer street projects, supported by the creation of school travel coordinators.

Using the following set of emoticons, pupils that walk to and from school were asked how happy they were that the route they took was safe:

Responses were categorised into a five-point scale according to the expressions:
Almost three quarters were found to be happy or very happy that the route they took to school was safe, while 12% responded that they felt unhappy or very unhappy. See table 24.

Table 24: Perception of safety on route to and from school

We asked for their views on the behaviour of the pupils on their route, and the majority of respondents who walked rated the behaviour of pupils on their route positively. See table 25. Almost one fifth gave a “fully-up” thumb rating and a further 38% gave a “partially up” rating. Under one fifth set the thumb emoticon to partially or fully down indicating they viewed it negatively.
Table 25: Respondents’ views of pupils walking to and from school

Pupils were asked how often incidents of verbal bullying, physical bullying and fighting occurred on their route to and from school in the past year. Verbal bullying was found to be the most common incident with over 40% indicating that this occurs often or very often. Physical bullying and fighting were seen to be less common occurrences. Fifty five percent indicated that fighting was a rare or very rare occurrence, while a further 18% stated that it had never occurred in the past year. Over a quarter felt that there had been no incidents of physical bullying in the past year, and a further 39% reported it happening rarely or very rarely. One fifth did not know how often physical bullying had taken place.

**Travel by car**

The following section examines the responses to questions relating to the car. Respondents indicated that this was the third most popular method of getting to and from school, at 11% (n=99).

In Scotland the proportion of school children being driven to school is increasing, and represents a worrying trend because of health, safety, congestion and the consequential environmental impacts associated with this mode of travel. Two issues are pursued in this research, that of seatbelt use and congestion.
**Seat belt use**

The law states that passengers must wear seatbelts or appropriate child restraints if available. Up to age thirteen this is the responsibility of the driver, and over thirteen the responsibility of the passenger.

The results indicate that the majority of pupils who travel to school by car report that they always wear a seatbelt (69%), a further fifth reported usually wearing a seat belt, while 10% responded they sometimes used one. One pupil reported that they never wore a seatbelt on the journey to and from school.

The pupils who did not respond that they always wore a seatbelt were asked to give the main reason for not doing so. Thirty-nine per cent responded that the main reason for them not wearing a seatbelt was that they forgot to put it on. The second most common answer was that the journey was too short (22%). Just under a fifth reported that they did not always think about putting their seatbelt on (17%), while 11% responded that it was not comfortable. See table 26 below.

**Table 26: Main reason for not wearing a seatbelt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey is too short</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not made to</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not comfortable</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forget to put it on</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not think about it</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No seatbelt in car</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the data was examined further, it was found that over half the respondents who indicated that the journey was too short for them to wear a seatbelt, had a journey time of over 10 minutes.
**Congestion**

One concern relating to the increasing volume of traffic on our roads is the level of congestion around Scottish schools. The SCC was therefore interested to know where pupils who travel to school by car were dropped off. See table 27. The results indicate that over one quarter were dropped off in the school car park and two-thirds on a street directly outside the school grounds. Only 7% indicated that they were dropped off some distance from the school grounds.

**Table 27: Drop off point for car journeys**

![Bar chart showing drop off points for car journeys]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drop off point</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the school car park</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the school grounds on the same side as the</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the school grounds - across the road from</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some distance from the school grounds</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.5 General views on school travel**

The SCC pursued a number of issues relating to travel to school with all pupils who responded, regardless of how they travelled to school. These include congestion relating to the school run, guidelines on appropriate behaviour and overall perception about their journey to school.

**Congestion**

The SCC wanted to find out the perception of secondary pupils on the level of traffic around their school. Table 27 shows almost one fifth of respondents felt that there was a lot of traffic outside their school when they are arriving or leaving. One third indicated that there was quite a lot of traffic, while a further third felt there was some. Only 14% reported there being very little traffic outside their school when they are arriving or leaving.
As expected, traffic levels were felt to be higher in urban areas; 22% of pupils from large urban areas and 28% from other urban areas indicated that they felt there was a lot of traffic outside their school. Even in less built up areas respondents indicated there was still quite a lot of traffic outside of their school. Over one third of pupils from remote small towns and a quarter of those from both accessible and remote rural areas felt there was quite a lot of traffic outside their school.

Guidelines on travelling to school

Previous SCC research on school transport contracts had shown that the majority of authorities provided parents with guidelines on pupil behaviour.28 We wanted to find out whether pupils had received guidelines on travelling to and from school safely, or on what is acceptable behaviour while travelling to and from school.

The results indicate that around half of pupils had not received guidelines on safety and half had not received guidelines on behaviour, while a further 16–21% did not know. See table 28. Thirty-one per cent had received guidelines on safety, and slightly more (40%) had received guidelines on behaviour.

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28 SCC (2005) op.cit
Table 28: Received guidelines on safe travel and behaviour

We were interested to see whether the provision of guidelines differed within local authority areas. The results indicate that the distribution was not even across areas, with some pupils having reported receiving guidelines while others in the same postcode area had not.

**Best and worst thing about travel to and from school**

The SCC wanted pupils views on what they liked and disliked about travelling to school. They were asked to rank a list of nine factors relating to their school journey in order of importance. These were being with friends, cost, environmental issues, getting to school on time, health/exercise, length of journey, risk of accident, stranger danger and weather. Table 28 shows the overall importance placed on each factor based on the mean score given by pupils (where 1 is most important). This shows that pupils perceived being with friends as the most important factor relating to their school journey, followed by getting to school on time and the cost. The least important factors were the weather, ‘stranger danger’ and length of journey.

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29 Factors are drawn from Scottish Executive Social Research, Derek Halden Consultancy (2003) *Children’s Attitudes to Sustainable Transport*. 
Table 28: Importance of each factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Being with friends</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Getting to school on time</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Environmental issues</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Risk of accident</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Health/Exercise</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Length of journey</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Stranger danger</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>6.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was followed up by pupils being asked to type in the best and worst things about how they travelled to and from school, each in ten words or less.

The findings for the best thing mirrored the factors ranked as most important by pupils. Seeing friends was the most commonly given answer, followed by convenience factors such as getting to school on time. A range of comments is outlined below:

**Best things about school travel**

- *Fresh air and you can leave when you want to.*
  Walking respondent

- *It’s the easiest way and keeps me fit.*
  Walking respondent

- *The good thing is that it is quite safe.*
  Walking respondent

- *Going with people I know and can drive safely.*
  Car respondent

- *The best thing about how I get to school is that it’s quick and efficient.*
  Car respondent

- *It doesn’t cost a thing and I am near to the bus stop.*
  School bus respondent

- *Friendly, helpful driver.*
  School bus respondent
• I am with my friends and the driver waits for me when we’re late.
   School bus respondent

• I always get a seat.
   Local bus respondent

The worst aspect of travelling to school most commonly identified by pupils related to comfort and convenience. Behaviour and safety were also raised as issues of concern by a large number of pupils. A range of their comments is given below:

**Worst things about school travel**

• I have to cross a dangerous road whilst I am on my way to school.
  Walking respondent

• Bad weather is worst because it is sometimes freezing or raining.
  Walking respondent

• It stops me getting exercise.
  Car respondent

• Polluting the environment.
  Car respondent

• The busy traffic and too many road works.
  Car respondent

• I don’t get to see my friends in the morning before school.
  Car respondent

• Bus leaves early sometimes leaving people at the stop.
  School bus respondent

• Not getting a seat on the bus because our bus is too small.
  School bus respondent

• The behaviour of the pupils on the bus it’s awful!
  School bus respondent

• The buses are usually uncomfortable or have broken seats.
  School bus respondent
• We get here too early and after school the bus is late.
   School bus respondent

• The bus is always late or full.
   Local bus respondent

• It costs a lot of money.
   Local bus respondent

The journey overall

The final question asked pupils to assess their overall rating of their journey to and from school using the five-point thumb scale described earlier in the survey. Over half of respondents gave a positive rating with 58% setting the thumb emoticon to fully or partially up. Just over one quarter rated their journey with a thumbs down, (either partially or fully) indicating a negative perception of their journey. See table 29.

Table 29: Overall rating of journey to and from school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you rate your journey to and from school overall?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very positive</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quite positive</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quite negative</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very negative</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6 Survey conclusion

The results of the survey are based on 892 useable responses from pupils of secondary schools across 25 local authority areas. Respondents are slightly biased towards males from the lower year groups. They are also slightly biased towards rural areas and based on more pupils using the bus than the Scottish average, with less walking and car use. However, the response rate was good, and the results give a good general picture of the views of school pupils on their journey to and from school.

The overall perception of pupils on their journey to school appears to be generally positive, with over half giving it a thumbs up and almost one fifth not having a strong view. However, the converse is true for a quarter of pupils who rated their journey overall as a negative experience.

There were a number of failings identified from undertaking the research. We examined issues around the bus service, and while most pupils who use school and local bus services felt that the service was reliable and usually ran on time, almost a quarter indicated that the bus rarely ran on time (18% for school bus and 23% for local bus). Moreover, pupils suggested that buses breaking down more than once in the past year was not uncommon, with more school bus respondents answering that their bus has broken down than service bus users.

Pupils’ perceptions of how modern and clean their buses were varied, with local bus users indicating a more positive perception than school bus users.

The issue of overcrowding was examined, and although most school bus users appear to get a seat on the bus, this was not always so with local bus users. However, a small number of both school bus users and local bus users responded that they never get a seat on the bus.

Another issue examined was the availability and use of seatbelts. Seat belt availability was more common on school buses; particularly those operating outside of urban areas, however, large numbers of both school bus and local bus pupils say their buses never have seatbelts.

However, more importantly, even when buses do have seatbelts, pupils tend not to use them: just under sixty percent of school bus pupils reported that they never wear a seat belt when it is provided. Of those who could use one, the reasons given most frequently for not doing so were they didn’t think about it, they are not made to or it is not comfortable. Almost two thirds who do not use a seat belt cited reasons that related to not being asked to wear one (don’t think about it, forget and not made to). This suggests a more proactive approach is needed to encourage pupils to wear a seatbelt when one is available.
The issue of seatbelt use was also relevant to pupils who travel to school by car and the results show that almost one third of pupils travelling by car responded that they do not always wear a seatbelt.

The view of the behaviour of pupils travelling to school by both school bus and local bus was split with roughly two fifths giving it a thumbs up, indicating a positive view, and two fifths giving it a thumbs down, indicating a negative view. In contrast almost 60% of pupils who walk to school described their perception of behaviour as positive.

Misbehaviour appeared slightly more of a problem on local buses than school buses. However, both types of bus users described a range of misbehaviour that occurred on their bus over the past year. The most common problem reported could be described as being relatively minor (that is, moving around while the bus is in motion), however, even this can potentially be a problem by distracting the driver and a danger to passengers in the event of sudden breaking. More concerning was the antisocial and potentially dangerous behaviour that was reported by pupils, including throwing things around the bus, verbal bullying, fighting, verbal abuse to the driver and opening emergency exists on the bus.

Pupils reported that it was rare that an attendant was on board to supervise pupil behaviour. Few buses were reported to have supervisors, either on school buses or local buses.

The majority of all respondents reported that they had either not received guidelines on travelling to school safely or on acceptable behaviour standards while travelling to and from school or did not know whether they had received them. There appears to be a pressing need for pupils to be given guidelines on behaviour and travelling safely to school.

Pupils were asked about the conduct of the driver on the school to home journey. The majority of pupils appeared to have a positive experience with the drivers. However some issues have been identified. The most common negative aspect appeared to be the use of offensive language. More seriously, over 10% of pupils on school buses and 16% on local buses responded that the driver had put a pupil off the bus for misbehaviour, contrary to established guidelines.

While the research has identified a number of problem areas from respondents, few complaints had been made. Just over a fifth of bus users had complained about their bus service. Of those that had, two thirds suggested that they did not feel their complaint was taken seriously.

Of the pupils that travel to school by car, just over two thirds have a journey time of ten minutes or less, suggesting the potential for a modal shift. In terms of their perception of traffic levels around the school, more than half of respondents indicated there was either quite a lot or a lot of traffic outside their schools when they were arriving or leaving, with only 13% reporting very little traffic.
Finally, the results show that regardless of how good or bad different aspects of the journey to school is, in a range of options given, pupils rated being with friends as the most important factor in their journey.
4. Conclusion and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This report summarises the findings of research into school travel in Scotland. The SCC wanted to examine the views of pupils and parents on travelling to school. The research follows on from recent work that we conducted on the provision of school transport by local authorities, published in 2005.30

The aims of the project were to:

- Gather the range of views of parents and pupils on their school transport service.
- Undertake a wider scale survey on specific aspects of travelling to school to gather the views of pupils across Scotland on whether the transport service is meeting their needs.

There were two main elements to the research, focus groups made up of either parents or pupils to explore their views of school transport services that they use; and a survey of secondary school pupils to gather their views on issues around travelling to and from school.31 While our research primarily focused on travel by bus, we also examined the range of different ways pupils’ travel to school.

4.2 Overview

The overall conclusion from the focus groups was that pupils were generally getting a reliable service to and from school, and that in this respect most were quite happy with the service. However, there were a number of issues identified, which were of concern to pupils and parents.

This is supported by the quantitative research, which found that the overall perception of pupils on their journey to school appears to be generally positive, with over half giving it a thumbs up in the on-line survey (equating to a positive perception). However, a quarter of pupils rated their overall journey as a negative experience.

As could be anticipated, it was found that many of the issues identified by pupils in the focus group research are mirrored in the quantitative research.

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30 Scottish Consumer Council (2005) A review of school transport contracts, February. This can be downloaded from the SCC website.
31 The survey of pupils was conducted in February 2005 and the focus group research was conducted in February and March 2004.
4.3 Summary of key results

The key results of the research are summarised below with a discussion on each of the main issues.

Service standards

- Pupils’ perceptions of how modern and clean their buses were varied depending on whether they used local buses or school bus services, with those pupils who used local service buses indicating a more positive perception than pupils who used dedicated school buses.

- However, the overall perception of bus standards was fairly poor – only a third of school bus users and two fifths of local bus users indicated that they felt the buses they used to and from school were quite or very modern. In relation to how clean the bus was just under a third of school bus users suggested their bus was quite or very clean, compared with just over half of local bus users.

- The issue of overcrowding was examined, and although most school bus users appear to get a seat on the bus, this was not always so with local bus users. A small number of both school bus users and local bus users responded that they never get a seat on the bus.

- We asked questions on pupils’ views in relation to the reliability of the bus service: whether the bus service they got to school had run on time over the past year and whether the bus had broken down. Encouragingly, almost two thirds of both school and local bus users reported that the bus service usually ran on time. However, almost one fifth of school bus users and nearly one quarter of local bus users responded that the bus rarely ran on time.

- Of concern, is that just under two thirds of both school bus and local bus users reported that the bus had broken down over the last year.

- In relation to waiting at school after being dropped off by the bus, almost 60% of both school bus and local bus users reported having a wait of 10 minutes or less before registration. However, over a fifth of both had a wait of more than 15 minutes.

- In relation to whether respondents felt buses were safe to be on, pupils’ views appeared to be split. Just over one third of respondents using both school and local buses agreed or strongly agreed that their bus felt safe to be on; while just under a third of school bus users and just over a quarter of local bus users did not agree that their bus felt safe to be on.

- In contrast, almost three quarters of pupils that walk to school were found to be happy or very happy that the route they took to school was safe.
A recent Scottish Executive research report noted that young people are significant users of public transport, ‘but not considered to be valuable customers by providers (or their drivers/operatives), for reasons of mistrust or lower revenue potential’.32

This report also noted that school bus services tend to use older and less comfortable vehicles and this is likely to be as a result of the mistrust held by operators which may lead to a downward circle where bad behaviour and vandalism leads to even poorer services and less respect from young travellers.

The results of the survey of pupils in our research highlight that bus services used to transport pupils to school are commonly perceived as old, dirty, and can often be unreliable and break down. Many pupils also described them as being unsafe. This is however in the context that the overall perception of pupils on their journey to school appears to be generally positive, with over half giving it a thumbs up. This may suggest low expectations among pupils in relation to school transport service provision.

The recent SCC research on school transport contracts made a number of recommendations (which are reproduced in this report). We said that local authorities should ensure that regular unannounced safety spot checks of school transport vehicles occur either through their own inspections, Strathclyde Passenger Transport (where applicable) or through liaison with the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). We also recommended that local authorities should review the level of resources dedicated to monitoring school transport contracts to ensure high levels of vehicle safety and service standards are being met. Both of these earlier recommendations are supported by the evidence from this latest research.

**Seatbelts**

- Another issue of concern was the availability and use of seatbelts. Seat belt availability was more common on school buses than local buses, particularly those operating outside urban areas but many respondents said their buses never have seatbelts.

- Even when buses do have seatbelts, pupils tend not to use them; just under sixty percent of school bus pupils reported that they never wear a seat belt when it is provided. Of those who could use one, the reasons given most frequently for not doing so were they didn’t think about it, they are not made to or it is not comfortable.

The results indicate a low level of seatbelt availability in the buses being used to transport pupils to school and a general unwillingness by pupils to use them when they are supplied. Guidance from the Scottish Executive suggests that ‘education authorities will wish to consider

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how they might best encourage pupils to wear seat belts for their own comfort and safety’. The evidence from our research suggests a more proactive approach is needed to encourage pupils to wear a seatbelt when one is available.

The issue of seatbelt use was also relevant to pupils who travel to school by car and the results show that almost one third of pupils travelling by car responded that they do not always wear a seatbelt.

**Pupil Behaviour**

- The issue of the behaviour of pupils while travelling to school was a particular concern to parents in the focus group research, especially in relation to safety and whether the behaviour was potentially dangerous.

- Pupils in the focus groups viewed behaviour, as might be expected, differently from their parents – interestingly, their description of it being always much worse. However, they seemed less concerned about it.

- The quantitative research suggests pupils’ views of the behaviour on buses to school, regardless of whether they were local bus services or school bus services, are roughly split, with two-fifths giving it a thumbs up (equating to a positive perception) and equally, two-fifths giving it a thumbs down (equating to a negative view).

- While some of the types of misbehaviour that occurred were relatively minor (for example, moving round the bus while it is in motion was most frequently cited) others were more serious - such as opening emergency exits on the bus.

- However, the problem with all the types of misbehaviour cited is the potential to distract the driver and be dangerous to the pupil, other passengers, or potentially other road users.

The issue of behaviour on buses to school has received much attention in recent years. A Scottish Executive report *Anti-Social Behaviour on Buses* examined views of bus drivers in Scotland, and although the focus was wider than school transport, this formed part of it. In this report, bus drivers claimed anti-social behaviour was not a feature of all routes, but there were certain bus routes or parts of routes where anti-social behaviour was more prevalent than others. However, they suggested there was one ‘universal exception to this…the school run’. The research suggests that the bus drivers who had been involved in school runs claimed that many pupils on the bus would carry out acts of anti-social behaviour, although these were considered to be of a more minor nature.

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The recent SCC research on school transport contracts found that most local authorities suggested that behaviour on school transport was an issue, most commonly only occasionally on certain routes, but that for some schools and routes this is a continual problem. Many felt this was worsening over time. That research found evidence that local authorities are tackling the problem of behaviour on school transport. A recent Scottish Executive review of the School Travel Coordinator Initiative noted that one of a number of successful areas of delivery of School Travel Coordinators includes ‘co-ordinating partners to improve behaviour on school buses’. However, it also concluded that there is ‘some way to go before an efficient, healthy and inclusive approach to school travel is the norm within Scotland’.

In 2001, the Discipline Task Group report Better Behaviour – Better Learning noted there were concerns over the ‘increasing levels of indiscipline and anti-social behaviour’ on school buses. A whole school approach to behaviour has been recognised, however, this generally does not appear to extend beyond the school gates.

In our earlier review of school transport contracts, the SCC recommended that national and local strategies relating to positive behaviour should also embrace behaviour on school transport and this current research based on the evidence from pupils’ supports this recommendation.

Interestingly, pupils who walked to school rated the behaviour of pupils on their route positively, with over half giving behaviour a thumbs up, and a quarter having no strong opinion.

**Dealing with poor behaviour**

- A common response from parents in the focus group research was that it was difficult for the driver of the bus to maintain discipline on their own – the driver needed to concentrate on driving without distractions.

- Almost three quarters of school buses were found never to have an adult supervisor on the bus other than the driver and this figure rose to 85% of local bus services.

Although there is no statutory requirement for education authorities to provide attendants to supervise behaviour on school transport, the Scottish Executive does suggest ‘Supervision on transport can help to maintain good behaviour amongst pupils and this in turn can contribute to more positive behaviour within the classroom. Discipline problems which start on the journey to

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37 School travel coordinators were established following a recommendation in the report of the Scottish School Travel Advisory Group (SSTAG) to create school travel coordinators within each local authority area in Scotland.

school, can spill over into the classroom. Supervision contributes more generally to greater school transport safety.\textsuperscript{39}

The SCC research on school transport contracts made a recommendation that further research is conducted to determine whether there is a need for extending the use of attendants on school transport in Scotland. We suggested that the Scottish Executive should review practice amongst local authorities. Our current research has demonstrated that few pupils say attendants are present on their bus, despite a range of misbehaviour that could be potentially dangerous. The evidence from this current research appears to support the need for such a review.

Guidelines

- Rather surprisingly, the findings from the focus group research and the quantitative research indicate a low awareness of any rules of behaviour and safety by pupils when travelling to school, across all modes.

- The majority of pupils had either not received guidelines on travelling to school safely or on acceptable behaviour standards while travelling to and from school, or did not know whether they had or not (sixty nine percent for safety and sixty one percent for behaviour).

Our previous research on school transport contracts found that four fifths of local authorities said parents were provided with this information. This lack of awareness from pupils suggests a pressing need for pupils to be better informed about rules on safety and behaviour that should be observed while travelling to school.

Bus drivers

- One of the main positive aspects of school transport that was mentioned in the focus groups were bus drivers, with praise from both pupils and parents, particularly in the more rural areas.

- The survey findings appear to support this, with a positive response from the majority of pupils (using both school buses and local buses) in relation to aspects of driver conduct. For example, when asked how often the following had occurred in the past year, typically above 70% reported the driver has rarely or never used offensive language, failed to admit pupils if they had forgotten their bus pass, smoked or put pupils off the bus for bad behaviour.\textsuperscript{40}

However, this is not the view of all pupils.

\textsuperscript{39} Scottish Executive (2003) op.cit
\textsuperscript{40} List adapted from Strathclyde Passenger Transport (2002) \textit{Code of Conduct for Drivers of School Transport}. 
• Over a quarter of both school bus pupils and local bus pupils reported the driver had used offensive language either very often or often; around a fifth of local bus pupils and school bus pupils reported the driver smoked on the bus either very often or often over the last year; over a quarter of local bus pupils and 14% of school bus pupils reported that drivers had refused to admit a pupil who had forgotten their travel pass.

• More seriously, 16% of local bus drivers and just over 10% of school bus drivers were reported to have put pupils off the bus for misbehaving very often or often over the last year. This is contrary to Scottish Executive guidelines, which states in relation to responsibilities of the contractor the need to ensure that ‘operational staff are briefed on issues involving pupil safety and behaviour, and that they know never to eject a pupil from a school transport vehicle’. 41

Clearly while the majority of pupils have had a positive experience in relation to bus drivers, there are nevertheless significant numbers of pupils who have experienced problems.

Recent Scottish Executive research noted that when asked, the vast majority (93%) of bus drivers felt that they should have more training on dealing with anti-social behaviour. The research recommended there is an immediate need for such training. The report also notes that ‘some stakeholders suggest that where training on conflict management and resolution has been given to bus drivers, this has been effective in reducing the levels of anti-social behaviour’. 42

In the SCC’s earlier report on school transport contracts we suggest a need for standardised driver training that is quality assured. The evidence from this research supports this recommendation, and indeed, this would appear to be supported by bus drivers themselves.

Complaints

• The issue of who is responsible for pupils when they are travelling to and from school was raised in all parent focus groups with uncertainty by most on where this responsibility lies. There is a real need for better information in this respect. Similarly, this lack of awareness on who has responsibility is reflected in complaints, with parents being unsure who they should complain to when problems arise.

• Pupils generally make few complaints in relation to their journey to school. While the research has identified a number of areas where problems are evident, few complaints had been made.

41 Scottish Executive (2003) op.cit.
• Just over a fifth of pupils had complained about their journey to school; the most common route for their complaint was to a teacher or head teacher. Less than 10% complained to the driver and only 5% complained to the local authority.

• Just over a third of pupils felt they had reason to complain, but did not do so.

• Of those pupils that had made a complaint, importantly, two thirds suggested that they did not feel their complaint was taken seriously.

Complaints are an important way of improving the service, as well as alerting the local authority to potential safety and reliability issues. School transport related complaints should come under the local authority’s corporate complaints procedure to ensure that cases are recorded and monitored effectively.

However, as our research has demonstrated, there are potentially a number of routes which parents or pupil may use to complain, such as teachers or local authority staff. It is important that complaints should be dealt with at the most local level possible, but this should be combined with central monitoring of complaints. In the SCC’s earlier research we recommended that local authorities should ensure parents have full information on how to complain and that the outcome of complaints are fed back to help service improvements. This earlier recommendation is supported by the findings of this research.

4.4 Conclusion

The overall results of the research indicate that the general perception of travel to school by bus is positive. However, there are clearly some problem areas identified in our research. Several related to aspects of service standards, including the quality and reliability of vehicles, the lack of seat belts, and perhaps most importantly, the lack of use of seatbelts when they have been provided. Behaviour is a key issue and identified as a particular concern by parents, by pupils as a lesser extent and by drivers as evidenced by other research. Clearly there is considerable national emphasis on addressing this issue. The key finding perhaps of this study on this issue is that most pupils are unaware that rules or guidelines exist on behaviour or safety in travelling to school.

While pupils and parents in the focus groups were generally positive about drivers, especially on rural services, a number of issues about driver conduct have emerged. Previous research has highlighted that drivers themselves would welcome additional training, particularly on anti-social behaviour. Clearly greater training would benefit both the driver and pupils.

Finally, we found that while few pupils or parents did complain about services there was a concern that complaints were not taken seriously. There was often uncertainty about who to lodge a complaint with.

As we have indicated earlier the overall view of pupils in getting to and from school is generally positive. However, a number of significant issues do exist that need to be
addressed. One general concern is that there appears to be a low expectation of quality of service. Failing to address this will have both short-term implications for current users of the services, but this may well have long-term implications for the future attitudes and use of public transport by our young people, particularly in realising more sustainable transport in Scotland.
## Appendix 1, Pupil survey

### Table a. Frequency of respondents by local authority area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority Area</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen City</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeenshire</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyll and Bute</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Edinburgh</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNES</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries and Galloway</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkirk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverclyde</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlothian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moray</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Ayrshire</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Lanarkshire</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth and Kinross</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Borders</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shetland Islands</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Ayrshire</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Lanarkshire</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirling</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Lothian</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>892</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Table b. Frequency of incidents on school bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Very Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical bullying</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal bullying</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse to the driver</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils throwing things</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving around the bus while it is moving</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils opening fire doors on bus</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table c. Frequency of incidents on local bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Very Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical bullying</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal bullying</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal abuse to the driver</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils throwing things</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving around the bus while it is moving</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils opening fire doors on bus</td>
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<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassle with pupils from others school/other passengers</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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### Table d. Incidents by drivers on school bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Very Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offensive Language</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to let on pupil</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil put off bus</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver smoked</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table e. Incidents by drivers on local bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Very Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offensive Language</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refused to let on pupil</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pupil put off bus</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver smoked</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2, Recommendations in *A review of school transport contracts in Scotland*

As mentioned earlier, the SCC published *a review of school transport contracts in Scotland* in February 2005. The recommendations from this, relevant to this current research, are highlighted below:

1. The Scottish Executive and local authorities consider how a more consistent national approach to school transport can be achieved, particularly through revised guidance and the sharing of best practice, and if required, legislation.

2. The Scottish Executive undertake a review of the criteria used for free school transport provision in the context of current and changing travel patterns and the acceptability of existing criteria.

3. **Further research is conducted to determine whether there is a need for extending the use of attendants on school transport in Scotland. The Scottish Executive should review the practice amongst local authorities.**

4. All drivers responsible for transporting children to school (including bus, minibus, taxi and parental contracts) should have Enhanced Disclosure Scotland checks undertaken before a contract is awarded.

5. All attendants with responsibility for travelling with children to school should have Enhanced Disclosure Scotland checks undertaken prior to a contract being awarded.

6. Local authorities should liaise with the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency within the Traffic Commissioners Office prior to awarding contracts to obtain relevant information on maintenance and reliability records.

7. **Local authorities should ensure that standardised conduct training is provided for all school transport drivers and attendants and that this should be quality assured.**

8. Local authorities should ensure that regular unannounced safety spot checks of school transport vehicles occur either through their own inspections, SPT (where applicable) or through liaison with VOSA.

9. Local authorities should review the level of resources dedicated to monitoring school transport contracts to ensure high levels of vehicle safety and service standards are being met.
10. Local authorities continue to develop aspects of increased pupil safety in school transport, and in particular the need to share good practice and emerging experience in this area.

11. All local authorities should have contingency plans in place as recommended in Scottish Executive guidance. This will help to ensure that parents, schools and transport operators are better informed and able to effectively deal with situations as they emerge.

12. National and local strategies relating to positive pupil behaviour should also embrace behaviour on school transport.

13. Local authorities should ensure parents have full information on how to complain and that the outcome of complaints are fed back to help service improvement.

14. Local authorities should review the conditions set out within contracts and their arrangements for monitoring their school transport contracts to ensure that both value for money and improvements in quality are kept up to date.