



Go North West
Boyle Street
Manchester
M8 8UT

gonorthwest.co.uk

Dear Head Teacher,

As schools prepare to re-open to all pupils, you may be aware that bus drivers are taking industrial action at Go North West.

I'm aware that travel disruption will be the very last thing that pupils, parents and teachers need at this very challenging time. So I'm writing to reassure you that we've made contingency plans to ensure that a comprehensive service operates on all routes.

Unite has called its members out on strike over a package called RESET introduced by Go North West in an effort to stem unsustainable losses of £1.8 million annually. The package comprises £5,000 upfront payments, guarantees of no redundancies and two years' inflation-linked pay rises in return for a variation in employment conditions. I am sorry that we have been unable to reach agreement on this.

Given the very specific circumstances we face during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have specifically appealed to Unite to suspend this industrial action and for drivers to return to work in time for the re-opening of schools. Regrettably, our request so far has gone unanswered.

To ensure that pupils are able to get to school, we have therefore made arrangements with third party bus operators from around the region to operate services. All are experienced operators, which have carried out a full COVID-19 risk assessment, and the usual protocols apply to keep passengers and staff safe. I am confident that a comprehensive network will be able to run.

Our advice to customers is as follows:

- Check up-to-date service information before you travel
- Be aware that your bus may be a different colour, with different branding
- Wear a face covering and observe social distancing

I've had scores of conversations with our 474 bus drivers over the last few weeks and many of them are deeply uncomfortable with striking at a time when our priority should be to facilitate the safe, efficient return to school for thousands of young people across Greater Manchester.

I do hope to be able to write to you again soon to tell you that this dispute is over. In the meantime, please rest assured that our replacement services are safe, COVID-secure and can be relied upon, and please feel free to pass on this message to your staff and students.

Sincerely,

Nigel Featham
Managing Director
Go North West