

Jack Buses-It!

I'd been looking forward to Harry's birthday for weeks. We've been best friends since we met at nursery school when we were three. He used to live four doors down from me, but six months ago he moved eight miles away! We used to see each other every single day, but now it's just some weekends when one of our parents can drop us off in the car.

It was 3 o'clock and I was finally ready to go. I looked in the mirror and thought I was looking pretty good for an eleven year old boy who'd recently been given a very short hair cut – well, more of a scare cut actually! I jogged down the stairs (jumping the last three as always) and shouted for Mum.

No reply! I went out into the back garden and shouted again. Hmm...perhaps she was already in the car? I went out the front door and spotted her sitting in the driving seat. Phew, what a relief! I was beginning to think we'd be late.

As I got closer, I noticed Mum's head was resting on the steering wheel. What was she doing? I wondered. She looked up, smiled, shook her head and then wound down the window. "I'm really sorry, Jack," she said "The car's died! It's been seriously ill for a while now, but I think it's finally gasped its last breath! I know how much you've been looking forward to Harry's birthday....."

"What? You mean we can't go?" For a horrible moment, I thought I was actually going to cry! Just in the nick of time for my tough guy image, I remembered something we'd been doing at school last week. It was all about us starting our new secondary schools in September and how we could get there. We discussed how much better it was to walk or cycle to school if you could, or, if you lived further away, how it would be best to go by bus. Mrs Hammond, our teacher, was showing us where we could get different buses from and what time they ran. Hang on! She also gave us the address of a website where you can get all the information on buses, times, bus stops and routes! And, I suddenly thought, Harry's house isn't too far from our new school because when we were talking on the 'phone, he said he planned to walk and then meet me off the bus! Perfect!

I raced back inside the house, switched on the computer and dashed upstairs to get the handout Mrs Hammond gave us. Grabbing it from my bag, I ran back downstairs. There was a freephone telephone number to ring for travel information and a website address which I quickly typed in and got the webpage up straight away.

"Jack?" Mum shouted. "Jack! Where are you? I'm sorry about the car..... Ah, there you are! What're you doing?"

By this time I had typed in where I was coming from and going to and written down the information that had quickly appeared about the location of the bus stops and the times of the buses that stopped near Harry's house. There was one in ten minutes time – brilliant!

"Mum, we can get there by bus! Look at this!"

Schools GoSmarter

“Jack, that’s great! Clever old you! Let’s get a move on and get to that bus stop! Don’t forget Harry’s present!”

We walked to the end of the road, turned left and headed for the bus stop. We’d only waited for 3 minutes before the double decker bus came down the road. It was the no 56 – the one we wanted. Mum checked with the driver which stop we’d be getting off at, paid the fare and then we sat down and both breathed a sigh of relief!

It was nice just sitting there on the bus, looking out of the window as we travelled along. Mum pointed out loads of places that she used to go when she was young and even the house where Gran was born! As the bus followed its route, I suddenly realised that we were going to pass the leisure centre and the cinema which were two places I went to with Harry. Hmm, I thought to myself, I might just have an idea!

“Mum, I’ll be getting the bus to my new school, won’t I?”

“Yes, you will. It’s too far to walk and I won’t have time to drive you.”

“Do you think it might be a good idea for me to get some practice of getting the bus over the holidays? Harry could too as he might need to get the bus to football training.”

“Yes, that would be a good idea, I think.”

“What about if we start by each getting the bus and meeting for a swim at the leisure centre? In fact, we could start next weekend.”

“Well...I wasn’t really thinking of you starting that soon....but...well...I cant really see why not... if Harry’s Mum and Dad are OK about it, that is.”

Play it cool, Jack, play it cool...don’t sound too keen, I thought.

“OK then Mum, I wouldn’t mind doing that....if I’m not busy, that is.” I looked out of the bus window and couldn’t stop my face cracking into a grin as I realised that the car breaking down had just done me a huge favour! I’d found a way for me and Harry to meet up as often as we wanted! I couldn’t wait to get to Harry’s and tell him all about it.

I glanced back at Mum and she was smiling too! Hmm, perhaps I wasn’t the only one who was pleased at the thought of me becoming an independent traveller!

Questions

Please answer the following questions using full sentences.

- 1. If Jack has known his friend Harry since he was 3, how many years has he known him?**
Jack has known Harry for eight years.
- 2. Approximately how often do Jack and Harry meet up since Harry moved?**
Jack and Harry meet up on just some weekends since Harry moved.
- 3. What did Jack think about his appearance when he looked in the mirror?**
Jack thought he didn't look bad for an eleven year old who had recently been given a very short hair cut (or scare cut!).
- 4. Jack suddenly remembers doing something at school last week that could help him. What was this and why do you think his teacher wanted to do this with her class?**
Jack remembers they were looking at how to get to their new secondary schools at school last week. They discussed how it would be better to walk or cycle if you could, or get the bus if you lived further away. His teacher, Mrs Hammond showed them how to find out information on buses, times, routes and bus stops.
I think his teacher wanted to do this so that they would know how they could get to their new schools in September and that it was better to choose walking, cycling or getting the bus rather than going by car.
- 5. Describe what Jack has to do to get the information about the bus that he writes down?**
Jack gets the handout that Mrs Hammond gave them out of his bag. He finds the website address and types it into the computer to get the website with the bus information. He searches on the website by typing in where he is coming from and going to and writes down the information that it comes back with.
- 6. How long did Jack and his Mum wait at the bus stop and what was the number of their bus?**
Jack and his Mum waited three minutes for the bus. The number of the bus was 56.
- 7. What did Jack suddenly realise about the route the bus was following?**
Jack realised that the route went past the leisure centre and the cinema which were places he went to with Harry.

8. Why does Jack think that the car breaking down has helped him?

Jack thinks that the car breaking down has helped him because it meant he ended up getting the bus to Harry's house. On the journey, he found out that the route of the bus went past the leisure centre and the cinema. He then got permission from his Mum to get the bus on his own to meet up with Harry.

Follow up work

Pupil investigation

1. Find a website which provides you with bus travel information for your area. Use this website to help you with the task below:

It is Saturday morning and you need to get a bus to your nearest **swimming baths, large shopping centre or cinema**. Find out the number of the bus you could get, the nearest bus stop to your home, the time(s) it departs from the stop and the time(s) you could get it home after your swim, shopping trip or cinema visit.

Teachers' Note:

Choose a local venue(s) which is accessible by bus for most pupils in your class and delete or add as appropriate.

2. Ask the pupils in Year 6 at your school if they know how they will get to their new secondary school. If they are planning to take the bus, ask if they know the journey details. If they don't, explain how to find information about bus numbers and stops, times and routes. Or, alternatively, offer to help them find the information.

Teachers' Note:

Pupils could create a PowerPoint presentation to present to the Year 6 class which would demonstrate the better ways to travel to their new secondary schools and how they go about finding bus/travel information. Relevant information on under 16 journeys/bus fares/bus passes/scholars' transport could be accessed in advance from your local Passenger Transport Authority/Passenger Transport Executive and distributed to Year 6 pupils as part of this project.