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## Local News in Reading

10/12/2007



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### 'Bus driver joined bullies taunting me' - schoolgirl

A 12-YEAR-OLD girl has claimed a bus driver joined in with children who were bullying her on the bus on her way home from school.



Bethany Clift says children started calling her names and stabbing a pen in her back and when one of them hit her the driver did nothing.

She was travelling on the 38 bus after leaving Denefield School in Tilehurst on Tuesday last week.

Bethany says she went to stand by the driver to protect herself from the bullying.

But when the taunts carried on she said the driver joined in and even egged the children on.

Bethany Clift says a bus driver did nothing when another child hit her in the face

Bethany told the Evening Post: "When he started picking on me too I didn't say anything because I thought he would kick me off the bus but I was really upset."

She also said that while she was standing near the driver another pupil on the bus hit her in the face but the driver did nothing to deal with the incident.

Bethany's mother Sarah Clift, from Elm Park Road, West Reading, said: "I'm absolutely disgusted by the driver because they have a responsibility to look after the kids.

"Bethany gets the bus home every day and I always tell her go and stand with the bus driver if anything happens.

"She is generally quite a happy child at school so I was very worried by seeing her crying."

Mrs Clift called the police, Reading Buses and the school to report the incident.

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She went on: "The police came round the next morning to take an interview and it turned out that Bethany had been rude to the driver a couple of weeks ago and he had had to put her off the bus. The police decided to hand the matter over to the school."

Since the incident, Bethany has not been back to Denefield School because her mother does not want her to make the bus journey any more.

Chief executive of Reading Buses James Freeman said: "The issue has been reported to us, and we have investigated it as far as we are able to.

"We managed to track the driver down and have a chat with him. He has a strong record of intervention where anything like this happens at all, but he is not aware of this incident.

"I'm not saying the girl isn't telling the truth, and we would welcome more information from another party whether that's from the family or the school."

Adrian Thomas, associate head of Denefield School, said: "I am aware of it, it didn't happen in school and obviously we deal with all incidents of bullying very seriously. The victim is always supported and the bully punished, and both are given counselling, which will depend on the nature of the bullying."

He said the situation would be monitored closely.

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Which plan to replace Reading Civic Centre and The Hexagon do you prefer?	
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Broad Street Mall's 70%	<input type="radio"/>
Neither 10%	<input type="radio"/>
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The Web

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