

Pupil pays twice after pass fails to arrive

A KNOLE Academy student has been left out of pocket after having to pay twice for her bus travel.

Rachel Whitewood, 14, normally uses her freedom pass to get to school from Fairfield Road in Borough Green.

But, for four days last week, she had to pay for her bus fare a second time because her pass had not arrived.

Her mum, Carol, said she had sent in the application before the summer deadline.

Last week she finally received her pass after contacting Kent County Council.

By the time she received it, she had shelled out £17.20 in additional bus fares.

Mrs Whitewood said: "Rachel felt by telling her story she would help others get their bus passes."

Head of Transport and Development for Kent Highway Services David Hall said: "All children who applied by the published deadline received their passes at the start of term."

"Late applications for Kent Freedom Passes are being processed as quickly as possible and batches are being sent directly to schools each week."



NOT SO FREE: Rachel Whitewood's bus pass was late in arriving, meaning she had to pay an extra £17.20 in fares

'My sight was saved by test'

Optician spots partially detached retina

By **Harriet Cooke**
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AN OFFICE girl is thanking her lucky stars after a routine eye test saved the sight in one of her eyes.

Charlotte O'Callaghan, 22, a litigation assistant for Cabot Financial in Kings Hill, discovered she had booked her appointment at exactly the right time after her optician discovered her retina was partially detached.

She said: "I just went for a routine eye test to get some new glasses and I had no idea anything was wrong – the optician spotted it."

"It was awful – I didn't know what was going on."

"The optician sent me straight to the hospital and they did some tests there, but the hospital told me it wasn't a retinal detachment."

"But then the optician rang me

back and said he wasn't happy and I went back the following morning.

"It was very scary."

Retinal detachment is a disorder of the eye in which the retina peels away from its underlying layer of support tissue.

It normally occurs in people much older and there are obvious symptoms, including flashes of light.

In Miss O'Callaghan's case, the retina was attached at the top but had begun to detach at the bottom.

Tests

Following further tests, Miss O'Callaghan had an operation and is not expected to suffer any sight problems.

She said: "I can't really do anything for a couple of weeks. It's a bit sore."

"The optician said if I hadn't gone and if I played squash or

something I could have lost my sight in one eye.

"There weren't any symptoms. The optician did ask me if I had floaters or flashes of light, but I didn't."

"I am quite short-sighted, though, and there's a high risk if you wear glasses."

She added that she was unsure how the retina had detached because she had not suffered a head injury to cause the detachment.

Miss O'Callaghan, who lives in Meopham, said she would now have her eyes tested every six months.

Mr Satvinder Shoker, who runs the opticians in Maidstone Hospital and owns the Kings Hill Optician, recognised the problem.

He said: "She hadn't been in for contact lenses as she had been buying them online, so the test had been put off."

He added that regular eye tests were very important.

Dermatology unit moves to new site

HEALTH services in the area have been updated with a new state-of-the-art skin unit.

The west Kent dermatology unit, which is provided by Medway NHS Foundation Trust, has relocated from Pembury Hospital to modern facilities at Borough Green Medical Practice.

The new unit boasts two large consulting rooms, a treatment room and a minor-procedure room.

The service at Borough Green,

which caters for a number of skin conditions, is staffed by the same consultants and nurses.

Complex cases will still have access to hospital care.

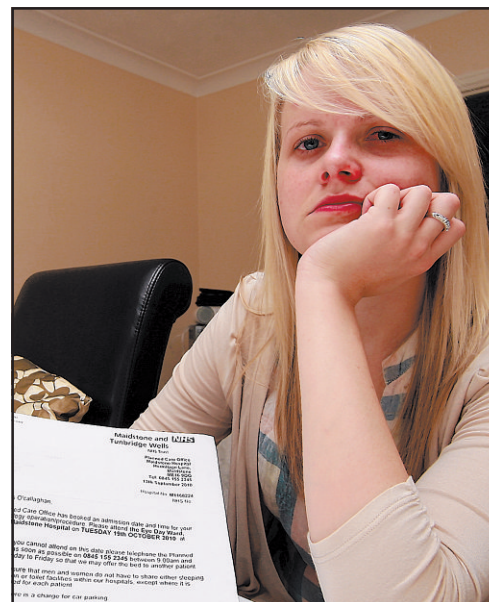
Chief executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust Mark Devlin said: "This is a very exciting time for us at Medway – to be working closely with our primary care partners NHS West Kent, to bring our patients the services they need, closer to home."

"It is as a result of this

successful collaboration that the people of west Kent and beyond will have access to a wealth of clinical expertise in the heart of their community."

Chief executive of NHS West Kent Steve Phoenix said: "We are really pleased with this facility."

"We are also working with the NHS Foundation Trust to explore the possibility of having additional outreach clinics in other areas, which would further benefit people in west Kent."



CLOSE CALL: Charlotte O'Callaghan nearly lost the sight in her left eye

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IN BRIEF

Have a cup of coffee and help cancer charity

BOROUGH GREEN: Coffee drinkers are being invited to take part in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning.

Borough Green Library is taking part in Macmillan's annual fundraising event to help improve the lives of people affected by cancer. The event takes place in the High Street venue from 10am to noon tomorrow (Friday). There will also be a raffle.

Last year, coffee mornings around the country raised £7.9 million for the charity.

Annual show a success

PLATT: The annual Platt show held in the memorial hall has been described as "a very successful day in all ways". The Challenge Cup winners were Jim Vinson, Jason Scott, Christine Majendie, Alison Vallance and Louise Green.

Lesley Penna won the two awards for photography and Annie Salisbury the children's cup.

The cups were presented by Sandy Mackay, the chairman of the Memorial Hall Trustees.

He said that as well as it being a very enjoyable and well-attended day, the show also managed to raise more than £500 for the New Build Hall Fund.

£19,500 in cash stolen

VIGO: A man from Highview has been committed to Maidstone Crown Court for allegedly entering a property in Gravesend and stealing cash to the value of £19,500.

Christopher Sims, 27, will appear at the court on October 22.

Plans for visitor centre

TROTTSCLIFFE: An application has been made by Kent County Council to replace the visitor centre at Trosley Country Park on Waterlow Road.

Tree tribute to fliers

KINGS HILL: A tree-planting ceremony will be held to commemorate the Battle of Britain tomorrow (Friday).

Malling Mayor Sue Murray will assist in the planting of a commemorative beech tree at Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council's Gibson Drive offices at 11am.



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