

# Sheffield Council to reconsider plan to scrap free bus travel to religious schools

Posted: Mon, 4th Mar 2013

Sheffield City Council is to postpone scrapping free bus travel for pupils attending religious schools after parents threatened legal action over what they consider the inadequacy of the initial consultation.

The Council will now set up a new round of consultation.

Parents had warned they could have to pay up to £350 a year if their children no longer had the passes, and the council's strategy also resulted in widespread opposition from staff and the local Catholic community. It was criticised as discriminatory, hasty and badly-organised.

The Labour council is looking to save £250,000 a year to help meet a £50m budget gap it blames on 'draconian' Government cuts.

Jayne Ludlam, executive director of the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio, said: "In light of issues raised in a legal challenge regarding the decision to stop funding discretionary denominational transport, and having fully reflected upon the consultation process and the potential impact on some children already in receipt of passes, it has been decided to consult further on the proposal.

"On balance it is better to allow a period of time for further consultation to consider the implications of the representations. This also represents an opportunity to manage financial, legal and reputational risks."

As part of the consultation process, the authority will review the impact on pupils at All Saints in Granville Road and Notre Dame in Fulwood Road.

Labour cabinet member Coun Jackie Drayton said the changes were being considered "with a heavy heart", but there was no choice given the scale of Government cuts.

"We have re-opened consultation on discretionary free school transport to give families the opportunity to have their say before the final decision is taken and also to look at how we can support those families who are just above the free school meals criteria and who have two or more children who are in their exam years.

"Many other local authorities have already withdrawn this provision, after the Government have targeted spending cuts at northern towns and cities with the highest levels of deprivation. Children who are entitled to free travel through statutory criteria will continue to receive it; this includes children in receipt of free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

"This decision is not we want to make but due to budget cuts we are left with little choice but to cut discretionary spending."

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said: "The provision of tax-funded subsidies to people on the basis of their religion is grossly discriminatory. No council should be doing it, economic crisis or no economic crisis.

"The state provides education for all children in this country. If parents want something other than their local schools, they should pay for the privilege of accessing it. They shouldn't expect other taxpayers to fund their religious choices."

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Faith schools](#)

## Related Campaigns

- 

### [No more faith schools](#)

We need inclusive schools free from religious discrimination, privilege or control.

[Read More](#)

## Related Articles

### [Faith school takeover proceeds despite overwhelming opposition](#)

NSS: Governors 'concealing' strength of feeling against Church of England ethos. [Read More »](#)

### [NSS announces major conference on protecting liberal values](#)

Kenan Malik, Joan Smith and more speaking at NSS Secularism 2024 conference in London. [Read More »](#)

## **Allowing more religious selection in schools would be a big mistake**

Abandoning the 50% admission cap would exacerbate the discrimination, disadvantage and division inherent with faith schools, argues Stephen Evans. [Read More »](#)

## **NSS joins open letter against faith school discrimination**

Education experts, politicians, religious leaders and public figures unite to call on Education Secretary to keep the faith school admissions cap. [Read More »](#)

## **Faith school found inadequate for ten years fails inspection again**

Jewish school where teachers slapped children criticised for poor secular education in latest inspection. [Read More »](#)