

# Faith school transport subsidies set to be axed by Lancashire Council

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Lancashire County Council has come under fire from the Church of England over plans to remove transport subsidies for children attending faith schools. The Council currently spends £1.1m on transporting pupils to faith-based schools, despite having no legal duty to do so.

The Council [has said](#) it will cut discretionary financial assistance to parents who send their children to a faith school which is not the nearest school to the family home.

The council, which needs to make savings of £262m over the next five years, says rising costs and increasing demand for key public services means it has "no choice" but to cut the funding.

However, Reverend Alex Frost, who has a child at one of the schools affected, called the proposal an "attack on faith education".

"Family choices could be affected because of financial constraints forcing children to attend schools that may not have the same Christian ethos", he said.

National Secular Society campaigns manager Stephen Evans commented: "If parents decide against a local school and choose to send their children to a more distant religious school because they adhere to a particular faith then they should fund the cost themselves. Taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidise transport on religious grounds when closer schools exist.

"Councils up and down the country are being forced to make tough decisions and it's only right that vital services are protected rather than discriminatory and unfair subsidies to parents insisting on a faith-based education for their child."

Councillor Matthew Tomlinson said: "We've continued to provide this subsidy for as long as we could, even though this provision hasn't been available for children attending non-faith schools. The proposed change will mean all schools are treated equally."

He added that Lancashire was one of the last local authorities in the UK to cut the fund, "which councils are not legally required to provide."

The Council will continue to provide free home to school transport for pupils from low income backgrounds to attend the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief.

When Kirklees Council consulted on ending free travel to faith schools 72% of 926 respondents [supported](#) the measure.

*Parents in Lancashire can [take part in the consultation here](#).*

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