

# More local councils to cut “faith school” transport spending

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More local authorities have announced proposals to cut free and subsidised transport for pupils attending "faith schools".

In Redcar, the council wants to save over £25,000 per year by ending the transporting of children from miles away to attend Loftus St Joseph's RC Primary school.

Local Independent councillor Mary Lanigan said the proposal threatened the future of the school.

At a consultation meeting where parents and staff have also slammed council proposals to cut free transport for faith school pupils, head teacher Alison Toward said: "We're a small family school at the centre of the community. We offer a Catholic education to all children and pride ourselves on the standards we achieve. Parents will lose the opportunity to choose the education they want for their children."

Foundation governor Marie Arger said: "These proposals represent discrimination against the rights of Catholic parents to send their children to a Catholic school. We're an easy target."

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, commented: "It will not, as the headteacher claimed, stop parents choosing a Catholic education for their children. It is just that they will have to pay for them to get to the school of their choice. If they choose a school that's miles away from where they live, it's difficult to understand why they think the general taxpayer should fund that choice. And as for the idea that removing a discriminatory subsidy is itself discriminatory – well, that's special pleading at its most blatant."

Similar cries of "discrimination" have been heard in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, where the council is to cut 250 of the 330 bus passes it issues to pupils attending St Bernard's Catholic High School. The consultation on the proposals will go on until 20 January.

In the ongoing debate in Wakefield, in Yorkshire, reader Gary Kirkham wrote in a letter to the local *Express* newspaper:

"Parents who would like their children to be educated at a specialist college which is outside their area (a language college, for instance, for a student living in Hemsworth), do not get a transport subsidy unless they belong to a low income group. The parents have to foot the bill. Why, then, should a family benefit from subsidised transport just because they subscribe to a particular belief system when a family which chooses a school for sound educational reasons is denied this privilege?"

See also: [\*Poll shows that 80% of parents think children should go to their nearest school\*](#)

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