

NSS urges council to reduce funding for transport to faith schools

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The National Secular Society has urged the local council in Telford and Wrekin to end discretionary funding for transport to faith schools in response to a consultation.

Telford & Wrekin Council is considering removing discretionary travel assistance which it provides to families who choose to send their children to faith schools instead of their nearest school – even when their income is not low.

Councils are legally required to make arrangements for secondary pupils from low income backgrounds to attend the nearest school preferred on grounds of "religion or belief", where that school is between two and 15 miles from their home.

Currently Telford & Wrekin is among local authorities which provide preferential treatment beyond the statutory minimum requirements.

Its plans would remove funding to transport children to attend faith schools if they are not on a low income.

It has justified its plans on the grounds that faith schools – along with grammar schools and schools which are not "the nearest or qualifying" based on children's address – are a "parental preference".

In response to the consultation the NSS welcomed this and said school travel assistance "should always prioritise genuine need and access to suitable education, rather than simple parental preference".

An NSS spokesperson said: "Expecting the public to fund transport for families who choose to send their children greater distances to attend faith schools is unfair and unsustainable."

"Telford and Wrekin should press ahead with plans to end discretionary funding. Funding faith schooling and religious segregation shouldn't be a priority for hard-pressed councils."

The council's education and skills director [defended](#) the policy at a meeting of the council's children and young people scrutiny committee last month, where some councillors spoke in opposition to it.

The consultation has now closed and its results are being considered.

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