

Closing non-faith Wigan school may be unlawful, NSS warns

Posted: Tue, 14th Dec 2021

The [closure](#) of a community school in Wigan may be unlawful, the National Secular Society has cautioned.

Wigan council plans to reduce excess school places by closing either Abram Bryn Gates primary community school or Holy Family Catholic primary school.

In a [consultation response](#) on proposed school reorganisation, the NSS said the loss of secular provision resulting from closing Abram Bryn Gates may result in Wigan Council being in breach of their obligation to provide pupils with a suitable education.

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to provide schools sufficient in number and character to provide for all pupils the opportunity of "appropriate education."

The response also highlighted the significant risk of undermining human rights, particularly [Article 9](#) of the Human Rights Act which protects the right to freedom of thought, belief and religion.

[NSS research has shown](#) that 81% of postcodes in Wigan experience high or extreme restrictions on the choice of a non-faith primary school. This affects 90% of postcodes in the Abram ward – a figure that would approach 100% if Abram Bryn Gate were to close, as five of its nearest six schools are faith-based. This would leave many families with no choice but a faith school.

Comments

NSS head of education, Alastair Lichten, said:

"Far too many families in Abram and across Wigan, already have no choice but a faith school. Increasing this problem by closing Abram Bryn Gates would raise serious questions about the council's legal obligation to ensure adequate school provision.

"All pupils should have reasonable access to a local schools organised around an inclusive community ethos, rather than a religious belief that they may not share."

Local opposition

The NSS has been supporting families [campaigning](#) against the closure of the community school. One local resident told the NSS:

"Closing this school would not only devastate pupils and staff but rip the heart out of the community too. Choice of non-faith schools is already limited for parents."

Another parent commented:

"My children love this community school, the alternative options are miles away and are faith schools. I want my children to make their own decisions with regard to religion, rather than have it forced down their throats at a young age."

What the NSS stands for

The Secular Charter outlines 10 principles that guide us as we campaign for a secular democracy which safeguards all citizens' rights to freedom of and from religion.

- [Read the Secular Charter](#)
- [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

[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 »](#)

NSS urges PM to retain cap on faith-based admissions

Supporters of inclusive schools encouraged to tell MPs to protect the 50% cap. [Read More »](#)