

### ABOUT WALES HUMANISTS

Wales Humanists is a part of Humanists UK. At Humanists UK, we want a tolerant world where rational thinking and kindness prevail. We work to support lasting change for a better society, championing ideas for the one life we have. [Our work helps people be happier and more fulfilled, and by bringing non-religious people together we help them develop their own views and an understanding of the world around them. Since 1896, our work has been helping people be happier and more fulfilled. By bringing non-religious people together we help them develop their own views and an understanding of the world around them. Together with our partners Humanist Society Scotland, we speak for 150,000 members and supporters and around 120 members of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group.] Through our ceremonies, pastoral support, education services, and campaigning work, we advance free thinking and freedom of choice so everyone can live in a fair and equal society.

#### **Question 1 – Do you agree that the updated guidance aligns with and amplifies legislative developments that have taken place since the guidance was originally published in 2014?**

Local Authority (LA) funding of travel to faith schools supports a parental choice over education, not a necessity. If travel is to continue to be funded to faith schools, then it needs to fund all travel to the not-nearest school where that is for reason of religion or belief: if someone's nearest school is a faith school and they reject this in favour of a school without a religious character, then if the LA funds faith travel, it must under the Human Rights Act fund that person's travel too.

In 2014, the UK Government consulted on the issue of learner travel and amended its position to require LAs who fund faith travel to also fund all travel to the not-nearest school where that is for reason of religion or belief.

More generally, where discretionary transport is provided, such as is the case with faith schools, it disproportionately benefits parents from better-off backgrounds, as those from poorer backgrounds are already eligible for compulsory free transport, including to nearby faith schools. And the evidence shows that religious schools are often also socio-economically selective<sup>1</sup>. Providing discretionary transport to children from better-off backgrounds specifically so that they can attend schools that are socio-economically selective is, we think, likely to exacerbate that socio-economic selection and so perpetuate segregation between schools on these grounds as well.

#### **Question 2 – Do you agree that the guidance provides clarity on transport provision for learners with additional learning needs?**

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<sup>1</sup>Fair Admissions Campaign research maps

<https://fairadmissions.org.uk/groundbreaking-new-research-maps-the-segregating-impact-of-faith-school-admissions/>



<b>Agree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Question 3 – Do you agree that the guidance on Section 10 (promoting access to education and training through the medium of the Welsh language) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 has been strengthened?**

<b>Agree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Question 4 – Do you agree that the guidance on Section 11 (promoting the use of sustainable models of travel) of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 has been strengthened?**

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Question 5 – Do you agree that the guidance reflects some of the good practice that has been identified across Wales to encourage collaboration and partnership-working between delivery partners?**

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Question 6 – Do you agree that the inclusion of a general guide on maximum journey times will help increase consistency across local authorities?**

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Question 7 – Do you agree that the guidance has been strengthened to embed the 4 general principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

<b>Agree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Disagree</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The current guidance provides a benefit for families choosing a faith school that is not available for families choosing a school without a religious character and as such, does not support the UNCRC in respect of freedom of religion or belief. Wales is a mostly non-religious country<sup>2</sup>. To provide a benefit of free transport to faith schools – something that is a personal preference rather than a right – is unnecessary. Funding for transport to faith schools should be withdrawn by all Local Authorities. Those that continue to provide it must also provide funding for those where a faith school is their nearest school, but who choose a school without a religious character as they do not wish to attend the faith school.

<sup>2</sup>Humanists UK report on 2021 census data

<https://humanists.uk/2023/01/30/2021-census-most-people-in-wales-under-74-tick-no-religion/>



We strongly recommend that any guidance that continues to allow learner travel benefit relating to faith includes support for people also wanting to avoid faith schools, with references to examples such as humanism, atheism and agnosticism.

**For more details, information, and evidence, contact Wales Humanists:**

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