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To: Parents/Guardians of pupils attending faith schools in Middlesbrough

17 October 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE PROVISION OF FAITH SCHOOL
TRANSPORT**

As a result of the nationwide reduction in public sector funding, Middlesbrough Council is required to make £38 million of savings over the next three years. Alongside other Council departments, Children, Families and Learning is therefore reviewing the discretionary services that it provides, including parts of the home to school and college transport service.

For many years, Middlesbrough Council has provided free home to school transport to pupils who attend a school on the grounds of religion or faith. Under the current Home to School Transport Policy, pupils are eligible for this service if they live over the statutory walking distance from the school. This is two miles for primary-age pupils and three miles for secondary-age pupils. The Council is under no obligation to provide free transport in these circumstances and does so on a discretionary basis, costing in the region of £100,000 every year.

Since the adoption of this policy in 1996, many more parents now choose to send their children to a school other than their local or normal school and do so for a variety of reasons. However, where this choice is made on grounds other than religion or belief, the parents have to pay for home to school transport themselves. The current faith school transport policy therefore gives additional entitlements to some children that others do not enjoy.

With this in mind it is proposed to remove free home to school transport for new pupils admitted to faith schools from September 2013 onwards. Pupils who already have a place in a school and enjoy free home to school transport will continue to benefit from this service while they remain at their current school or until they change address. The proposal will have no effect on pupils who are statutorily entitled to free transport on the grounds of being from a low-income family.



Middlesbrough Council is eager to receive as many views as possible on the proposed changes. A number of consultation events have therefore been organised which you are more than welcome to attend, to seek further information and discuss the proposed changes. The details of these meetings are:

6:00pm on 30 November 2011 at Trinity Catholic College, Saltersgill Avenue

6:00pm on 1 December 2011 at Trinity Catholic College, Saltersgill Avenue

A full consultation document is available upon request by calling 01642 728722. The document can also be found alongside an on-line response form on the Council's website at <http://consult.middlesbrough.gov.uk>. Comments can also be sent to Gary Maddison using the address given above or by email to gary_maddison@middlesbrough.gov.uk.

Please take the time to read the consultation document and send us your views. **The closing date for comments is 16 December 2011.** All responses received by this date will be considered by the Council's Executive Member for Children Families and Learning before a decision is made early in the new year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Cordiner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Julie Cordiner
Assistant Director of Commissioning and Resources
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