

Faith Schools Admissions

1. We make this submission on behalf of members of Labour Humanists. It is our firm belief that state-funded faith schools (about a third of all schools) should be inclusive: we believe that is a Labour value too. We believe that discrimination in admissions by state-funded faith schools is unnecessary, unjust, disastrous for social cohesion, and completely against Labour values. We therefore ask for a commitment to inclusivity and opposing discrimination in admissions by faith schools to be included in Labour's manifesto for the 2015 general election.
2. Labour principles mean that whichever family you are born into, whatever your background, you have the right to high-quality and inclusive education. A young person's religious or non-religious beliefs, or those of their parents and wider family, should have no bearing on whether they can attend their local state school.
3. [All types of state-funded schools with a religious character are permitted to select in their admissions by discriminating on religious grounds.](#) This even includes those whose admissions are controlled by the local authority if that authority allows it, faith Academies and Free Schools.

4. Table: Admissions policies by type of school

Type of school	Admissions
Community schools (cannot have a religious character)	Determined by local authority; cannot discriminate on religious grounds.
Voluntary Controlled faith schools (legally registered with a religious character)	Determined by local authority; a quarter of authorities let Voluntary Controlled faith schools discriminate on religious grounds.
Voluntary Aided faith schools (legally registered with a religious character)	Determined by governors 'in consultation' with local authority; can discriminate against all pupils on religious grounds if oversubscribed.
Foundation faith schools (legally registered with a religious character)	Determined by governors in consultation with local authority; can discriminate on religious grounds if oversubscribed.
Faith Academies and Free Schools (legally registered with a religious character)	Determined by governors; can discriminate against all pupils on religious grounds , and Free Schools can do so for up to 50% of intake.
Academies and Free Schools with no registered religious character (but may have a 'faith ethos')	Determined by governors; cannot discriminate on religious grounds.

[Information from 'Types of school with a religious character \('faith' schools\)', British Humanist Association \(BHA\) July 2012](#)

5. Many faith schools have strict selective admissions criteria, restricting possible admission only to those from one religion or a particular sect within that religion. Some faith schools apply religious selection criteria to favour not only those who profess to be of the religion of the school but those of other denominations and other religions too, leaving few if any places available for those from non-religious families. This can often lead to non-religious parents feeling they have to be dishonest about their beliefs in order to get their child into their preferred school.

6. The available evidence demonstrates that religious selection criteria tend to be heavily weighted in favour of middle-class families. Schools selecting pupils on the basis of the professed faith of the parents are segregating children and young people along religious, socio-economic, cultural, and even ethnic lines. This is hugely divisive and self-evidently bad for social cohesion.
7. Many religious and non-religious people and groups – especially within the Labour party and including the affiliated Socialist Educational Association – oppose selection in admissions, including on religious grounds. A recent YouGov poll commissioned by the Accord Coalition for inclusive schools also found nearly three-quarters of the British public (73%) agree that [‘state funded schools, including state funded faith schools, should not be allowed to select or discriminate against prospective pupils on religious grounds in their admissions policy’](#).
8. Labour should guarantee that children will not be turned away from their local school on the basis of their parents’ beliefs. We firmly believe this would be a popular policy and likely vote winner.

Policy options

9. We would like Labour to consider the following policy options which we believe would be broadly supported and, if adopted, would be a significant step forward.
 - A. No new faith school allowed to discriminate in its admissions**
 - B. No existing faith school allowed to discriminate in admissions in the future**
10. It is vital that a commitment to inclusive admissions with no religious discrimination by faith schools permitted is in Labour’s 2015 manifesto.

Labour Humanists & Tom Copley, London Assembly Member

About us

Labour Humanists is affiliated to the British Humanist Association (BHA) and we aim to become an affiliated society of the Labour Party. Our supporters come from across Labour, and include many elected representatives.

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