

The Fair Admissions Campaign

www.fairadmissions.org.uk

Let's end religious discrimination in schools: The public agree

A November 2012 survey by ComRes for the Accord Coalition found 73% of British adults thought “*State funded schools should not be allowed to select or discriminate against prospective pupils on religious grounds in their admissions policy*”. Only 18% thought that they should.

A September 2010 survey by YouGov for ITV gave British adults a list of eleven factors that “*were important to you when choosing which school to send your child/children to*”, and asked them to pick their top three. Only 9% of parents picked “*religion of the school*”.

The party agrees

“*Allowing parents and pupils to choose schools, and not schools to choose pupils, by stopping the establishment of new schools which select by ability, aptitude or faith, and by introducing policies radically to reduce all existing forms of selection.*” - Adopted, Spring Conference 2009

“*We will ensure that all faith schools develop an inclusive admissions policy and end unfair discrimination on grounds of faith when recruiting staff, except for those principally responsible for optional religious instruction.*” - General Election Manifesto 2010

Nick Clegg agrees

“*I'm a huge supporter of integrated schools for the simple reason that they teach positive values to little children.*”

Four reasons to oppose faith-based selection

1. Religious selection amounts to legalised discrimination by the state on the basis of belief or practice.
2. Dividing children on the grounds of religion damages community cohesion. Allowing children to grow up with friends from diverse religious backgrounds promotes harmony.
3. Religious segregation leads to socio-economic segregation. Religiously selective schools typically admit a much smaller percentage of pupils on free school meals than others in their postcode or local authority.
4. Many faith schools choose not to select children by faith and yet are still able to maintain their ethos - proving that selection is not necessary in order to do so.

It's time for Lib Dems in government to end this inequality.

“*I want my children to go to a school where they can sit next to a Christian, play football at break time with a Muslim, do homework with a Hindu and walk home with an atheist – and with other children getting to know what a Jewish child is like. Schools should build bridges, not erect barriers.*”

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain MBE
Minister of Maidenhead Synagogue and
Chair of the Accord Coalition for Inclusive
Education

The Fair Admissions Campaign

The Fair Admissions Campaign wants all state-funded schools in England and Wales to be open equally to all children, without regard to religion or belief.

The Campaign is supported by a wide coalition of individuals and national and local organisations who hold diverse views on whether or not the state should fund faith schools. But they all believe that faith-based discrimination in access to schools that are funded by the taxpayer is wrong in principle and a cause of religious, ethnic, and socio-economic segregation, all of which are harmful to community cohesion. It is time it stopped.

The Fair Admissions Campaign's supporters include the British Humanist Association, the Christian Think Tank Ekklesia, The Liberal Democrat Education Association, Liberal Youth, The Hindu Academy, British Muslims for Secular Democracy and the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Churches.

Get involved

- Encourage your local party to discuss schools admissions and suggest they submit a motion to regional or federal conference
- Challenge discriminatory admissions policies in new or existing schools in your area. Visit the Fair Admissions Campaign website for help.
- Challenge your local authority. Voluntary controlled faith schools have their admissions policies set by the local authority; in 2011, 43 local authorities allowed some religious discrimination in admissions.
- Write to your MP and local newspaper
- All state-funded schools in England must comply with the entirety of the English School Admissions Code. If an English school's admissions criteria break the law or any area of the Code, then you can complain about it.

The legal position

More than one third of state-funded primary schools in England and Wales, and about one fifth of secondary schools, are designated with a religious character (commonly known as "faith schools"). Due to an exception in the Equality Act 2010, all of them are legally permitted to have an admissions policy that selects children on religious grounds when the school is oversubscribed, though a school's policy is set differently, depending on its type.

In 2010, the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights wrote that an *"argument is that discrimination is necessary in order to maintain the distinctiveness of religious schools and so maintain the plurality of provision... This argument is weakened by evidence which suggests, in relation to Church of England schools, that plurality of provision has been preserved even where those schools do not have faith-based admissions criteria."*

There is no requirement under the European Convention on Human Rights for the state to fund the provision of any faith schools, let alone schools that discriminate in their admissions policy on grounds of faith, and many countries, such as France, do not fund faith schools.

About Humanist & Secularist Liberal Democrats

HSLD is for all Liberal Democrats, of all faiths and none, who seek a humane approach to public ethical issues and an end to privilege and discrimination based on religion or belief.

We are an Associated Organisation within the party, and are affiliated to both the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society

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