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campaigning for inclusive education
and against religious discrimination

Testimonies and media reports of discriminatory and exclusive practices by faith schools (August 2015)

Introduction

The Accord Coalition campaigns to ensure that all state funded schools are made appropriate for all children, regardless of their or their family's beliefs, and that rather than helping segregate children and creating environments where mistrust between groups can more readily grow, that schools play an inspiring role in improving mutual understanding and preparing children for life in our increasingly diverse society.

Since the Accord Coalition was launched in 2008, we have been contacted by a range of people seeking advice and bringing to our attention their first hand experience of narrow and exclusive practices by schools, and almost always schools with a religious character. Over time Accord has also come across a variety of news stories that have highlighted similar conduct by schools.

Although these media reports and personal testimonies are highly subjective and not subject to academic scrutiny, we have produced this document to help show that exclusive practices by schools is not dry or hypothetical, but a real issue that negatively impacts many people in the education system.

Some faith schools do not operate in narrow and exclusive ways, and we commend these establishments. Meanwhile, some non-faith schools can and should do more to make reasonable accommodation for the religious needs of some pupils, which is less likely to happen if children from different religious or philosophical backgrounds are encouraged to attend separate schools. However, due the various legislative freedoms and exemptions from equality and human rights law, state funded faith schools are (unlike non-faith schools) able to operate in a wide range of narrow and discriminatory ways that fail to respect those with beliefs different to that of the school.

This includes faith schools being able to discriminate against children and their families in their admissions and in the employment of teachers on religious grounds, as well as to provide a narrow education about the beliefs of others in their curriculum.

For example, faith schools may teach their faith as objective truth in RE classes and assemblies, while presenting other major belief systems in a cursory way, and avoiding some altogether, even though the beliefs of pupils and their family, plus the wider community that the school draws its pupils from may be diverse. The RE taught and assemblies provided at some non-faith state funded schools can also be narrow and confessional in nature, and Accord wants this changed, but it is generally more inclusive and appropriate than that provided in the faith school sector.

The power that faith schools have in the employment of teachers is remarkable, and (in our view) totally unjustified. Not only can faith schools discriminate on religious grounds when appointing most teachers, but once employed these teachers can then be treated differently, reprimanded or ultimately even dismissed because of conduct that the school itself considers to be "incompatible with the precepts, or with the upholding of the tenets"¹ of the school's religion.

This drives a coach and horses through employment protections that staff in the rest of economy enjoy, leaving most teachers in faith schools in England and Wales with fewer legal safeguards than would apply to even the chief executive of a religious charity or business. The mind boggles to imagine what forms of conduct could be considered cause for reprimand or dismissal.

We have had difficulty getting individuals to agree to let us reproduce their statements, for fear of causing them or their children further problems or stress. More generally, we have also found obtaining information about the treatment of teachers very hard to come. This is not surprising; staffing matters are generally dealt with behind closed doors, and in more extreme cases may involve a confidentiality agreement. Meanwhile, individual teachers have a clear incentive to not create publicity about their different treatment on religious grounds, including because of conduct incompatible with a school's faith, as this may undermine their current position at a school, or/and risk undermining their future career prospects.

Consequently some of the testimonies in this document have been anonymised upon request by the author, but we have included people's name whenever we have been able to, and we extend our thanks to all those who has let us reproduce their testimonies.

We have divided the media reports and personal testimonies into the three following categories:

- 1. [Discrimination in pupil admissions](#)
- 2. [Discrimination in staff employment](#)
- 3. [Inappropriate, narrow or exclusive practices in the curriculum](#)

Contact us about your experiences

Over time we will update this portfolio with new reports and testimonies, and if you discover a news report that you think Accord might be interested in, would like to tell us about your own first hand experiences, or have any queries, then please contact us via the details at the top of this document.

¹ Section 60 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/section/60>. Last accessed on Aug 9th, 2012.

1. Discrimination in pupil admissions

Parent that could not provide required record of Church attendance due a change of Church minister and illness wins school place, but only after losing two admission appeals

From: <http://bromsgrovestandard.co.uk/news/council-urged-to-act-over-lack-of-places-in-bromsgrove-11380/>

Council urged to act over 'lack of places' in Bromsgrove

Jul 31, 2015

A MUM who claims there are a lack of middle school places in Bromsgrove is calling on the county council to put the situation right.

Lorraine Weinans, 43, said she had to go to appeal twice before her son got into his first choice school and, due to the lengthy process, she added her son even missed his induction day and meeting his new teacher and school friends.

Mrs Weinans, of Cooper Close, said she was ready to home-school her eldest son when, after also missing out on his second choice school, he was given a place at a school more than four miles away.

...

Mrs Weinans needed a 12-month letter of faith to get into St John's and, although she had five letters proving 35 years of her faith from various ministers, they were rejected.

Mrs Weimans said while she went to the church every week to pray, health problems and undergoing four major operations meant she had been unable to attend many Sunday services in the two years prior to her son's enrolment.

She added her minister leaving in 2014 and a new one not being appointed until March this year, meant she had no one to vouch for her.

Despite arguing this at two appeal hearings she was still rejected until she met with the school's headteacher who decided there was more than enough proof of her faith and her son was admitted...

Proposed ban on the mother of pupils driving vehicles - at two Ultra-Orthodox independent schools

From <http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/136878/stamford-hill-sect-bans-women-drivers>.

Stamford Hill sect bans women drivers

It is believed to be the first such formal directive in the UK

By Simon Rucker, May 28, 2015

The British leaders of a major Chasidic sect have declared that women should not be allowed to drive.

In a letter sent out last week, Belz rabbis said that having female drivers goes against “the traditional rules of modesty in our camp” and against the norms of Chasidic institutions.

It added that, from August, children would be barred from their schools if their mothers drove them there.

According to the letter — which was signed by leaders from Belz educational institutions and endorsed by the group’s rabbis — there has been an increased incidence of “mothers of pupils who have started to drive” which has led to “great resentment among parents of pupils of our institutions”.

They said that the Belzer Rebbe in Israel, Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rokeach, has advised them to introduce a policy of not allowing pupils to come to their schools if their mothers drive.

Dina Brawer, UK Ambassador of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, said that “the instinct behind such a draconian ban is one of power and control, of men over women. In this sense it is no different from the driving ban on women in Saudi Arabia. That it masquerades as a halachic imperative is shameful and disturbing.”

While many Chasidic women do not drive, this is thought to be the first formal declaration against the practice in the UK.

In response to coverage of the story, the local Belz's women's organisation Neshei Belz issued a statement to say that they felt "extremely privileged and valued to be part of a community where the highest standards of refinement, morality and dignity are respected. We believe that driving a vehicle is a high pressured activity where our values may be compromised by exposure to selfishness, road-rage, bad language and other inappropriate behaviour."

They added, "We do, however, understand that there are many who conduct lifestyles that are different to ours, and we do not, in any way, disrespect them or the decisions they make."

One Stamford Hill rabbi said that it had "always been regarded in Chasidic circles as not the done thing for a lady to drive".

But although some Chasidic sects discourage women from driving, others such as Lubavitch have no such policy. The wives of some senior non-Chasidic strictly Orthodox rabbis drive.

One local woman said that the policy “disables women. The more kids they have, the more they need to drive.” But she believed that some women would take no notice of the policy. “They say one thing, they do another,” she said.

The Belz, who originated in Ukraine in the early 19th century, are one of the most prominent Chasidic sects and re-established their headquarters in Israel after the war. When the Belzer Rebbe celebrated the wedding of a grandson in Israel two years ago, some 25,000 guests attended.

Compared with some of the most conservative Chasidic sects, Belz are seen as relatively moderate and while some Charedi schools in London have struggled with inspections, both their main boys and girls schools, Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass and Beis Malka, are rated “good” by Ofsted.

Inspectors at Machzikei Hadass noted last year that there was a “very effective British values policy, and display throughout the school demonstrates the high priority that the school puts into this important area”.

Abuse of admissions criteria that reward Church attendance

On April 28th 2015 Friar Martin Hislop of the Parish of St Luke's in Kingston in South West London spoke to BBC Radio 4's Today programme about why he supported the parish primary school having moved away from selecting pupil by faith. A transcript of the interview is below - bold Accord's emphasis:

James Naughtie: What led you to finally take this step and decide that the provision in the school rules for admission that stipulated church attendance would be helpful or perhaps obligatory - should go?

Friar Martin Hislop: Primarily it was because of a desire for us to return to the core mission of the church, which is to serve its local community. My view was that as a primary school we were not doing that and that the criteria, as you indicated, in some cases was being abused.

James Naughtie: In what way - people moving in and then just attaching themselves to the church deliberately to get their kids in and then abandoning it, coming from one section of the community?

*Friar Hislop: Well, primarily of course it was the fact that we rarely applied distance as a criteria for anyone, so people living in council flats immediately next to, to my school, rarely found a place at the school. But yes, **we kept a register over four years, and I regret to say that the evidence is clearly there that, over time at least four fifths of those who signed the register and attended worship twice a month for a year, stopped within a month of submitting their admission form.***

James Naughtie: And you thought that was, a pretty poor show?

*Friar Martin Hislop: Oh, very disappointing. There were some people who freely admitted that they came to church solely to get their child into my school, and then enjoyed the fellowship of our parish and then remained, and I am grateful for that. **But the evidence is quite clear that large numbers of people were just using it, and in fact in the school itself, my head teacher reports that less than 10% of families regularly worship at any church.***

James Naughtie: ... Father Hislop, let me bring you back in here, and just looking at that statement from the Church, which I read out, 'Our schools are not faith schools for Christians, but Church Schools for all', and I assume that is a statement that you agree with. When people talk about faith schools they often mean schools that are dominated by the practice of, you know, a particular strand of religious belief. What's your definition of a faith school - a school that does what the Church should be doing in a community?

Friar Martin Hislop: Well in the case of my own school, and I call only speak for my school, the ethos of the school is, is totally anchored in the Christian faith, as expressed through the Church of England. But the Church of England exists to be open and serve its community, and therefore the ethos of the school, is, promotes inclusiveness, it seeks to promote respect and cultural diversity. And the faith element is there through our daily worship, which we have, we have non-Christian families at St Luke's who have never objected to the worship life of the school. So I see no contradiction at all and, in fact, the quote you've made is, is just reflective of the long tradition of the view that the Church of England has always held. That it's not there solely for the members of the congregation.

James Naughtie: What does your congregation at St Luke's think about the change that your glad to see coming from the governors at the school?

Friar Martin Hislop: Well, the Parish Council has supported it. I only had one parishioner who's a parent at the school bother to come and see me and ask me my reasons. So I think there's support of it because they have total confidence in the staff of the school to uphold the ethos of the school and, and I'm a ex-officio foundation church governor. The church appoints three other foundation governors. So the idea that this change to a membership - of an admission criteria is suddenly going to sweep away all that the school stands for is, is an insult to my teaching staff and the ethos of the school.

James Naughtie: And presumably you hope it is something that other places where people are concerned about the trend that you saw do the same thing?

Friar Martin Hislop: Well I think it is something for other schools to consider - and in fact I know that they are.

Religion or belief in the workplace and service delivery: Findings from a call for evidence, by NatCen Social Research for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (March, 2015)

Attending Church to gain access to a local school

In 2014 the Equality and Human Rights Commission conducted a public consultation into how the laws around religion and belief were working, to which it received hundreds of responses in regards to education. It found a range of problems with the way matters of religion and belief were negotiated in British schools, and some the issues found were emphasized by way of releasing some anonymised testimonials. One related to admission is reproduced below - an atheist parent spoke of the incentive to attend Church so as help a child attend a popular local school:

'We felt compelled to go through the ridiculous charade of joining a local church, attending regular Sunday services, and getting our children baptised for no other reason than to improve our ranking on the selection list for our local Grammar School ... We are playing their game.' (p78)

From:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/RoB%20Call%20for%20Evidence%20Report.pdf

Non-adherents allotted a place at a local faith school they didn't choose

From <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/10745673/Row-as-atheist-pupils-are-sent-to-vegetarian-Sikh-school.html>.

Row as atheist pupils are sent to vegetarian Sikh school

Children have been allocated places at a Sikh free school in South Bucks despite failing to name it on application forms.

By Graeme Paton, Education Editor

06 Apr 2014

Parents living in rural South Buckinghamshire have been angered after children were allocated places at a Sikh school that operates a strict 'no meat' policy and starts the day with prayers

A row has erupted in the heart of one of Britain's wealthiest villages after local children were allocated places at a controversial Sikh school despite failing to name it on application forms.

More than a dozen children living in rural South Buckinghamshire – mainly from atheist or Christian families – have been told to attend the Khalsa Secondary Academy in September.

The school promotes strictly vegetarian meals, prevents pupils from bringing meat or fish in packed lunches, provides lessons in Punjabi and Sikh studies, promotes meditation and begins the day with prayers from Sikh scriptures.

It was opened in the village of Stoke Poges last year under the Government's free schools programme – principally catering for large Sikh communities in nearby Slough and west London.

But a handful of local children from non-Sikh families whose parents who failed to name the school on application forms have now been allocated places for this September. It suggests the school failed to attract enough applicants in the first place – leaving spare places to be taken by local children.

In a statement, the school said it was run with a "Sikh ethos but inclusive to all", with non-Sikh pupils not required to learn Punjabi and allowed to worship separately in a multi-faith prayer room.

It insisted the Sikh community had a "long tradition of integrating and enhancing the communities in which they live".

But parents have been angered by the ruling which they claim will leave their children as a "lost" minority in the school. Some are reportedly considering using the European Convention on Human Rights to fight the ruling, backed by the National Secular Society.

It is the latest in a series of rows over the academy which has already provoked powerful local opposition from villagers.

They insist the village is too small to support an 800-pupil secondary school – particularly when large numbers of children are being bussed in from towns between four and 14 miles away.

Stoke Poges is best known for the exclusive Stoke Park estate which featured in the James Bond film *Goldfinger* and was once named as having the eighth highest concentration of £1m properties sold in Britain. One father, an atheist, who asked not to be named, told how his 10-year-old daughter had been allocated a place at the school even though he selected two other neighbouring comprehensives on an application form. "We are horrified," he said. "It's very much a Sikh school with Sikh values. I'm not religious and my daughter is just going to be lost in a school like this."

Another said: "We're not a religious family so it's clearly inappropriate for our children to be educated at a school with an overtly religious ethos."

Saera Carter, vice-chairman of Stoke Poges Parish Council, said: "In a school like this, it's inevitable that the culture of the faith will run right through it – affect everything that goes on – and that's something that not many non-Sikh parents would choose."

The Department for Education purchased a £4.5m office block in Stoke Poges for the school to open in 2013 after failing to find a suitable home elsewhere.

The school is sponsored by the Slough Sikh Education Trust, admitting 120 pupils a year.

But the local district council has refused to allow the academy to remain open beyond a temporary initial one-year agreement, citing concerns over traffic and noise. The DfE is appealing the decision.

According to Buckinghamshire County Council, 28 places have been allocated to county children at Khalsa Academy, but only 12 of these actually named it on application forms. The vast majority of applicants were from outside the county.

The school requires all Sikh pupils to take part in Punjabi and Sikh studies but allows non-Sikhs to learn an alternative foreign language.

It appeals for non-Sikhs to join in collective worship – citing the “universal nature of Sikhism” – but insists alternatives are found for those of other or no faiths who refuse.

The school principal, Rose Codling, has also insisted that the academy’s strict vegetarian policy was implemented on health grounds, not because of the Sikh faith, telling a local newspaper: “You only have to follow the publicity concerning scandals around cheap quality meat, horsemeat, BSC, chicken and salmonella, to understand many people’s concerns.”

Mike Appleyard, Buckinghamshire Council deputy leader, said nine-in-10 local children were “allocated their highest preference secondary school”, adding: “Where this hasn’t been possible, possibly because an application missed the deadline, we have allocated a place at the nearest school with an available place. The Khalsa Academy free school is included in the allocation process.”

Both the school and Slough Sikh Education Trust were unavailable to comment on Friday despite requests. A statement on its website says: “At Khalsa Secondary Academy, we value diversity and encourage religious leaders from all faiths in shared learning.

“Whilst the Khalsa School is a Sikh faith school, we provide an environment for those that wish to follow any faith as well as those that do not have a faith.”

But Stephen Evans, campaigns manager at the National Secular Society, said: “Leaving parents with no option other than to send their child to a school with a religious ethos they do not share clearly fails to respect their right to have their religious and philosophical convictions respected.”

Child denied place at a religiously selective school two doors from their home and attended by two siblings

From: http://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/local_news/10603670.Child_refused_place_at_school_2_doors_away/?ref=nt

Child refused place at school 2 doors away

9:00pm Sunday 11th August 2013

A CHILD has been refused a place at a faith school two doors away from her home – and she is a practising Catholic.

Angel's mum, Annabelle Taylor, now faces taking her three children to three different schools in September. Her eldest Cameron, 11, is starting at St Thomas More High School, in Westcliff.

Sapphire, seven, is a pupil at Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, in Windermere Road, Southend where they live.

But despite being a church attending Catholic and living so nearby, as well as – at the time of applying – having two siblings at Sacred Heart, Angel was refused a place.

The five-year-old will instead be going to Bournemouth Park Primary a mile away, in Bournemouth Park Road, Southend.

Annabelle said: "I'll have to take Sapphire in ten minutes early and leave her in the playground.

"I had to do that the last two terms with Cameron and Sapphire. Then I'll walk Angel down to her school.

"But Cameron will have to get the contract bus. I'd prefer to take him myself, at least for the first week. It's a big thing when you're 11 and he's not exactly streetwise.

"Angel is at the top of the waiting list for Sacred Heart, but we are waiting for someone to leave.

"It would make life less stressful, if she was there. She also has a lot of friends there as she went to nursery there."

Their situation is complicated by the fact Angel has recently had surgery to correct developmental dysplasia of the hip, which causes one leg to be shorter than the other.

She is only just beginning to walk again after being in restrictive casts for three months. The family go to mass at Sacred Heart Church at least every fortnight.

The application form asks parents if they attend church weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

Annabelle said: "I was being honest and said fortnightly, but we often make it more. It's disappointing.

There just aren't enough faith schools or places in Southend. Other schools are expanding, but faith schools aren't."

Annabelle appealed the decision, but lost.

Sacred Heart received 96 applications for 30 places.

James Courtenay, councillor responsible for children and learning at Southend Council, said: "There is a squeeze on primary places. We are very conscious of having primary places in the right areas.

"Year on year, the number of people getting their first or second choice school is going up dramatically. The admission criteria for local authority schools has a significant weighting on siblings already being in a school, but each school has its own criteria."

Family considering attending Church to gain access to local school

'St Bernard's Catholic Grammar in Slough has a oversubscribed admissions policy which give priority in the following order: 1. Baptised Catholics, 2. Other Christian, 3. Other religion, 4. No religion.

We have one child at this school, but due to increased numbers of Catholics applying it looks very unlikely that we will be able to send his siblings there, as we subscribe to no religion and are therefore bottom of the priority list.

We are considering joining a local church to improve our chances, but would like to have an alternative option.'

Anonymous, Windsor, July 2013.

Denied access to two nearest secondary schools

'I live about 300yds from two schools which are state funded and my child had no chance of attending either (St John Fisher Roman Catholic & St Aiden's Church of England). This was purely down to my religious beliefs and is doubly annoying when both schools will take pupils from up to 20 miles away.

I was so upset by this I wrote to my MP and had a meeting with him. He said there were no plans to alter the status quo, he agreed that this selective admission procedure was indeed unfair and discriminatory but as these schools are performing well there was no need to "rock the boat", so to speak. I pointed out that this procedure assessed my son on my beliefs and values and not his own. His overriding point was that these schools were the best performing and therefore should not be interfered with. I did say that it is easy to perform well when you can "cherry pick" the pupils you desire and this in turn leads to other schools performing less well with less academic and a lower social demographic.

I would point out that I am in no way anti-Church Schools – theological perspectives can be a valuable educational aspect to children's development. My point is that I simply want a fair percentage of places allocated to local children. Sorry for going on. I have felt a little like banging my head against a very thick, hard wall with this issue!'

Chris Plant, Harrogate, July 2013

Family considering attending Church to gain access to a local school

'Out of our eight closest state schools, five are faith schools. We cannot send our daughter to them because they discriminate on the basis of religion. Of the remaining three community schools, two are undersubscribed due to their poor reputation, and the only good school we are able to apply to has an effective catchment area of 0.5km (which we fall outside of). I believe this distance is low due to the number of people having to apply to that school as a result of the faith schools discriminating against them.

We are currently exploring our options which include: 1) going to church as this is a requirement of getting into the faith schools, 2) moving closer to a good community school so we are in the catchment area or 3) sending our child to private school.

I struggle to believe we live in a civilised society yet I am incentivised to consider the above options because of religious discrimination at state schools.'

Gareth C, Kingston upon Thames, June 2013

Religious selection dividing families as well as communities

'My family are active Christians and we wanted our children to be educated at a faith school so that our children could follow Christian ethics and morals, which we hope would be to their benefit in the future.

Unfortunately however the faith school our eldest daughter was accepted at has an admissions policy that favours children of families that attend the local church over the children of families who already have siblings at the school. As a result our second daughter was not accepted due to the recent high birth rate and large number of siblings (28) applying to the school. We were one of eight families whose children have been split across the borough to attend different schools.

We have found the whole process to be completely hypocritical. How can a policy that has the potential to split the family unit be promoted by a Christian faith based school? Surely they should be promoting and supporting the family unit not splitting it up!

As an already practising Christian family we feel the policy is open to abuse by those who turn up to church to 'get a form signed' for a short period to the detriment of families already at the school. This situation has caused no end of stress and dismay to the families who have missed out. It can't be right for families to have to endure a logistical nightmare of dropping their kids off at different schools, as well as having to buy separate uniforms and for young children to lose out on the support of having an older sibling when making the transition to a new school.

It appears from discussions with the school that we would have had to move house and changed churches in order to guarantee a place at our chosen faith school. However we are happy with where we live and the church we currently attend and consider it unethical to move on both counts.

In principle I believe in having faith schools, but the implementation, especially in our case, has been fundamentally flawed, is open to exploitation and by incentivising this behaviour goes against our Christian values.'

M from Walsall, June 2013

<http://fairadmissions.org.uk/wp-admin/post.php?post=730&action=edit>

Parent admission of feigning religious belief and observance so their child might gain access to a religiously selective faith school

From: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/9904282/The-parents-who-cheat-at-school.html>

The parents who cheat at school

With record numbers of school applications being investigated for fraud, Julie Henry reports on the desperate tactics being used to get children a decent education

Published on Sunday 3 March 2013

Every Sunday for at least two years before his son reached primary school age, Andrew Penman, an atheist, went to the service at his local Anglican church. As he sat in the packed pews and looked around, the 51-year-old knew that a sizeable proportion of the parents in the congregation were there for the same basic reason as he – to get his child into the popular Church of England school that was literally on the other side of the road from his house.

“There were lots of parents with children aged about two to five, but virtually none aged eight to 10, because by then they had got a place or hadn’t, so there was no point going to church unless you were religious,” says Penman, from Woking, Surrey. “I didn’t pretend to be a Christian for several years because I wanted to offend anyone, or because I thought it was fun. I did it because I wanted my son to attend the local state primary.”

The family is one of a growing number prepared to go the extra mile, bend the rules or even break the law to secure a place in a good school for their children.

On Friday – national allocation day for secondary-age pupils – thousands of parents found out that they had failed to get their first choice school. Families with primary-age children are still waiting to hear their fate. And it seems that the fear of rejection has been fuelling radical action.

Over the past five years, the number of investigations into suspicious school applications has risen almost elevenfold. Admission forms from more than 1,000 families in 91 councils were queried in 2012/13 because of concerns about fake addresses, bogus baptism certificates, and even families claiming, falsely, that a child already in a school was a brother or sister to get a place under the “sibling rule”.

A generation ago, such measures were unheard of. Until the Eighties, the majority of children attended their nearest primary, then moved up automatically to the local secondary. Then two legal judgments – which outlawed the automatic allocation of places to children in catchment areas and established the right of children to go to schools outside local authority boundaries – changed the education landscape. The concept of “parental choice” was born.

“The tremendous competition we are seeing is due to a number of factors,” says Prof Alan Smithers, an education professor from Buckingham University. “Fees for independent schools are so high, particularly in a recession, that fewer parents can afford them. We also have a much more qualifications-based society. You have to have the grades to get to a top university or get a job, so it makes sense that parents are more determined than ever to give their children a good education.”

According to Andrew Penman, every Sunday across the country churches are packed with non-believers, forced into the falsehood by the preponderance of local schools that use religion as a criteria for admissions. “I didn’t choose the selection criteria that meant that half the places were reserved for churchgoers,” says Penman, author of *School Daze: My Search for a Decent State Secondary School* (published by Mogzilla). “In effect, it is discriminating against local families who do not follow this particular brand of religion.”

In a bid to whittle down numbers at hugely oversubscribed church schools, religious criteria is becoming ever more stringent. Faith schools across the country demand baptism certificates, while some in the South East, where the battle for school places is exceptionally fierce, want children baptised within six months of birth. At

Sunday services, registers are signed to provide evidence for school application forms. Attendance requirements of at least 45 Sundays a year are not unusual.

One father was amazed at how many pregnant women were at the baptism classes he was attending at his church in the run-up to his one-year-old daughter's christening.

"I suddenly realised that these parents were attending the classes for babies that had not actually been born, rather than for older siblings," he says. "Their haste was about getting the babies baptised as soon as possible to make sure they were within the school's admissions rules."

...

Some names have been changed

Faith school reducing intake despite being oversubscribed and a shortfall of places in local area

The Office of the Schools Adjudicator investigates complaints that admission arrangements of state funded schools in England are unlawful. Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council complained to the Schools Adjudicator about the Governing Body of St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Halifax, as they had decided to *reduce* the pupil intake of the school to ensure that fewer children who were not considered to be Roman Catholic were let in. The school had been admitting about thirty Catholic children out of the forty it admitted in its year on entry for some years, and wanted to reduce its annual intake from forty to thirty.

The Council objected to the proposal because the school was already oversubscribed and as there was an existing and worsening shortfall of primary school places in the wider local area, which would have been acerbated; as the children who were likely to be most negatively affected would have been from a socially deprived ward, and as it believed the school's consultation on the proposed change did not adhere to statutory guidelines.

The Schools Adjudicator upheld the Council's complaint, stating that the school did not meet the requirements for consultations as set out in Schools Admissions Code, or the Code's requirement for fairness in admissions criteria. The Adjudicator noted *'I think it unlikely, given the inherent unfairness associated with the change in the school's admission number ... that the change could be considered as a proportionate one to achieve a legitimate aim'* section 43, P10.

From: <http://www.education.gov.uk/schoolsadjudicator/decisions/database/a00212542/ada2251scps>

Date of decision: 31/07/12

Child loses out on place due to ill health of parent

From <http://www.solihullnews.net/news/solihull-news/2012/06/22/a-child-was-denied-access-to-the-same-school-as-her-three-siblings-after-her-mum-was-too-ill-to-attend-church-105074-31227569/#.Ugj55xT49FA.facebook>.

A child was denied access to the same school as her three siblings after her mum was too ill to attend church

Jun 22 2012 by Hannah Jennings Parry, Solihull News

THE YOUNGEST child of four has been denied a place at the same school as her siblings after her mum was unable to visit church due to illness.

Stephanie Weaver, from Olton, was a regular parishioner at St Margaret's Church of England for over 13 years until she was struck with personal difficulties and illness this year.

Despite 'a difficult year', Mrs Weaver still attended church with her children 22 times so was outraged when her youngest child was denied a place at St Margaret's CofE Primary School, simply because she had not made the minimum of 30 church visits.

"There was no compassion," she said. "They haven't taken into account my personal difficulties, which they were fully aware of, or the effect on my daughter. They know what a year we've had. It isn't Christian.

"You can be part of a community for 13 years, and you can't get your numbers up for one year and that's it. You're out.

"I admit I don't go to church every week but that's not what being a Christian is about. I go, as a family, when I can. I've got letters from long-standing members of the church who are mortified at this."

Mrs Weaver appealed the decision but says she was told she had not met the admissions policy and it was refused.

She has now had to find a place for her youngest at the nearest church school, a 25-minute drive away, and has been forced to take her other daughter out of St Margaret's, and away from her friends, to attend the same.

"There's been no apology, no humanity. I'm shocked that a small church school can show such a total lack of empathy."

In a joint statement, headteacher Jane Martin, and director of education for Church of England, Birmingham, Rev'd Jackie Hughes, said St Margaret's had a strong admissions policy which was followed 'rigorously.'

"The school, alongside the Church of England in Birmingham, takes seriously those appealing but St Margaret's is highly oversubscribed and was regrettably unable to accommodate 51 applicants this year."

Inter-denominational exclusion

'My daughter has been refused a place at her local (and nearest) school which happens to be Church of England, despite being a practising Christian for many years. It turns out we are the wrong type of Christian. We only wanted her to go there because she is very musical and it is a specialist Arts and Music College. She has even played in their orchestra for 2 years whilst at primary school, but this has counted not counted for anything. It is time to stop this discrimination. I was shocked to find out that despite the school being publically funded, it is able to discriminate based on religion. Where else in society can you do this?'

Anonymous, Oldham, January 2012

Inter-denominational exclusion

'I live 100 yards from a good successful Catholic Secondary School and applied for my son to attend. We are Protestants attending Church regularly, but were refused a place at the School - even after appeal. The School buses Catholic Children in from 12 Miles away!

We were refused both our second choice in the local Church of England School and third choice of the County Comprehensive and were offered a school 6 miles away: a failing Catholic School. However, Catholic Children from that same area who lived near the "failing" School were bussed into the "good Catholic School", but we who live 100 yards away are refused a place because of religious/sectarian issues.'

Alan Lucas, Preston.
November, 2011

Child excluded due to parent's lack of religiosity, despite mitigating circumstances

From http://www.times-series.co.uk/news/9045114.School_slated_for_refusing_girl_on_religious_grounds/

Mill Hill church school chastised by inspector for failings in admissions policy

Published on Tuesday 25 May 2011

MILL Hill faith school discriminated against a family with a disabled child by denying their daughter a place because they did not have time to take part in church activities, an independent inspector has ruled.

St Paul's Church of England School in The Ridgeway has been chastised for not offering the girl a place because her parents could not take part in church activities because they had to care for her sibling.

In a report issued today Dr Jane Martin lists a catalogue of errors by the governors at the school, who caused "avoidable uncertainty and anxiety" to the parents by unreasonably delaying and then rejecting their appeal against the decision.

She also criticises their refusal to tell the family initially why the application had been rejected and not telling them what position their daughter was on the waiting list.

She said: "This case highlights a catalogue of errors which were all avoidable, if only basic systems had been in place.

"The school did not treat the applicants fairly in that it did not take the disability of a family member into account.

"This failure was then compounded by incorrect information, unreasonable delay, poor communication and then finally a mismanaged appeals process".

Problems started when the family were told their daughter would not get a place in the Reception class last April, because they did not take part in enough church activities.

However, when the father asked to appeal he was told he must have a face-to-face meeting with the governors, which could not be arranged until July, before he could lodge the appeal.

In the report Dr Martin says the purpose of the meeting was to “dissuade” parents from lodging the appeal, against the admissions rules of the school.

She also criticised the governors for failing to hear the appeal until September, well into the next school year, when the child already had a place at another school.

By failing to hold the panel by the end of the summer term, the school breached its duty under the appeals process, concluded Dr Martin.

When the panel did meet it “did not consider properly the complaints” put forward by the parents, the report found.

Dr Martin also criticised the dual role of the then chairman of governors Reverend Michael Bishop, who was responsible for writing references for prospective parents and judging them.

This, she said, amounted to a “conflict of interest”, although he has since been replaced as chairman of governors.

In her findings Dr Martin states: “As a result of the faults, the parents suffered months of uncertainty and were put to a great deal of time and trouble.

“They were denied a fair and timely appeal, and an assessment of whether the refusal of admission for their daughter complied with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.”

Her recommendations include an apology to the family from the school, and an overhaul of admissions arrangements there, including telling parents why they have been refused a place.

Siblings unable to attend the same school

From http://www.hartlepoolmail.co.uk/news/local/family_hit_out_over_school_place_refusal_1_3609681

Family hit out over school place refusal

Published on Saturday 23 July 2011

A FAMILY have been left devastated and distraught after their youngest son was refused a place at the local school his brother attends.

The parents of four-year-old Amar Khaliq desperately wanted him to join seven-year-old brother Aadham at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Primary School, in Hartlepool, in September.

But despite Amar attending Sacred Heart's nursery for the past 18 months and the family living close by, he has been turned down by the over-subscribed school.

Instead, he has been offered a place at a school almost two miles away.

Parents Hamid, 38, and Asiya, 32, say it will be impossible for them to take and collect both children to school on time.

Dad Hamid believes the school's admission policy discriminates against non-Catholics.

But the school strongly denied claims of discrimination and said it rigorously followed its admissions policy.

Hamid said: "The criteria for admissions is disgusting. Because he is not Catholic he has been refused a place in this school. I know they are not breaking the law but they are discriminating based on religion."

Mr Khaliq said the refusal is distressing for the children.

He added: "Despite my child having a sibling at the school, despite living a few hundred yards away in the catchment area and despite attending the nursery for the past 18 months he has been refused a place.

"On my son's last day at nursery he asked me 'why can't I go to Sacred Heart with my brother,' and 'why do I have to leave my friends behind?'

"My eldest son is also upset at why his little brother can't join him in the school."

The family were told Amar had not been given a place because the school had 129 applications for just 60 places and other children were given higher priority under its admissions criteria.

Mr and Mrs Khaliq took their case to the independent Schools Admission Appeal Panel at Hartlepool Civic Centre but lost.

Amar has been offered a place at St Joseph's Roman Catholic School in Musgrave Street, Hartlepool, which is 1.7 miles away from the family home on Hart Lane.

Mr Khaliq, a self-employed landlord, added: "It is not possible for both of us to be available all of the time and my wife doesn't drive.

"It is going to be a massive problem."

The family have complained to the Local Government Ombudsman which will examine whether the appeal was carried out properly and a fresh appeal could be held if the original hearing was found to be flawed.

Jeff Cook, acting headteacher of Sacred Heart Primary School, said: "We totally refute any suggestion of discrimination and in doing so would point to the fact that Mr Khaliq's older child is already a pupil at the school.

"Unfortunately, the school was very heavily oversubscribed for this coming year, with 129 applications for 60 places.

"In allocating those places, the school rigorously followed its admissions policy which it drew up in conjunction with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and which fully complies with national legislation.

“Where places are oversubscribed, faith schools are entitled under national law to give higher priority to applications from children who are members of, or who practice, the faith of that particular school.

“The school has done everything it can to help Mr Khaliq and to explain the situation to him.

“His son is currently third on the waiting list for a place at the school should places become available.”

Exclusion due to the contested status of a denomination

“In Bolton an Anglican school used to admit Unitarians, but then recently stopped on the basis that Unitarians are not members of Christians Together in England, which is the definition of Christianity that they used. This is in contrast locally, where Unitarians are accepted and active in ecumenical organisations.

Some Unitarian families argued that they should be counted as Christians, as they considered them selves as such and I support them in this.

However, there is a much bigger issue at stake here that should be of concern to society as a whole. I do not seek inclusion for my fellow adherents, but inclusion for all people, regardless of their beliefs. State funded schools should not be discriminating against children and their families because of their religion.”

Rev Stephen Lingwood, Minister at the Bank Street Unitarian Chapel, Bolton
October, 2010

Exclusion for not being of the school's faith

“I have just moved my two children to a new school outside of our local community because the voluntary aided Church of England primary school closest to us operates an admissions policy based on faith.

My son was attending the school and we have waited for over two and a half years trying to get our daughter in, but places have been allocated to 'Christian' families.

We are so angry and upset that they can treat us in this way, when our taxes pay for the school! How can ANY government allow this?”

Kay Mercer, Bath
June, 2010

Islamic sectarianism

From: http://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/4761382.Mosque_leaders_protest_over_pupil_admission_policy/

Mosque leaders protest over pupil admission policy

Thursday 26th November 2009

OFFICIALS from two of the town's mosques have lodged complaints with Bolton Council about the admission procedures of Bolton Muslim Girls School.

Senior figures at the Masjid E Ghosia Mosque, in Caroline Street, and the Noorul Islam Mosque, in Prospect Street, say priority is given to girls from the Deobandi movement, despite the wider Muslim community helping to fund the school's establishment in 1987.

But the school claims its admission policy was put together in consultation with a variety of "stakeholders" and that it is fair. In a letter to town hall chiefs on behalf of both mosques, Bashir Shama, secretary of the Masjid E Ghosia Mosque, said: "Having provided that support, the girls from our congregations are now being refused entry because the school's management have chosen to provide priority to the Deobandi community.

"The wider Muslim community therefore feels that the actions of the school's trustees has been dishonourable and they are seen as having used the wider Muslim community to establish the school and then discarded us once they had no further use for us."

There are many different branches of Islam, but the three most common are Sunni, Shi'ite and Sufi. The Deobandi movement is one of the lesser known but is growing in popularity.

Mr Shama said problems started when the school, established by the Bolton Muslim Welfare Trust in 1987, entered the public sector in 2007 and put together an admission policy that included giving extra points to girls from the Deobandi movement.

Margaret Asquith, director of children's services at Bolton Council, said the admission policy, which is under the jurisdiction of the school, was legal.

On Monday, members of Bolton Council's Executive agreed to expand the school from 450 pupils to 600 pupils, with a Year Seven increase of 30 pupils per year from 2012. The school is also to move to a new building as part of the £80 million Building Schools for the Future programme.

Head teacher Mubaaruck Ibrahim said: "Prior to the school becoming a local authority voluntary-aided school, we were supported by a small section of the community in Bolton as well as Bury, Rochdale, Oldham and Manchester who demonstrated that support by sending their daughters to an Independent fee- paying school.

"Since joining the local authority family of schools the school has formulated its admissions policy in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.

"It is no different to any other Faith School Admission Policy which relies on faith as an oversubscription criteria.

"It is understandable that those parents who fail to get their daughters into the school are naturally disappointed, particularly in light of the high levels of attainment and achievement at the school."

Brazen instruction on how Church attendance can earn a place at an oversubscribed school

Photo of instructions on a notice board at St John-at-Hampstead Church - image available at <http://accordcoalition.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Hampstead-admissions-09.09.jpg>. Sent to Accord by a supporter in September 2009.

'To Parents intending to apply for a place in the Reception Class at Hampstead Parochial School

We welcome new families to St John's and we are glad that some will come intending to apply for a place for the children at Hampstead Parochial, our school. The School is always oversubscribed and its admission policy has to be applied strictly to be fair to all. The current policy (and you should be aware that it can change) provides that children of families which belong to St John's take priority) behind looked after children- i.e. those in public care, and siblings). "Belonging" is defined as having attended the church (or another church before) as a family on average twice a month for at least the two years prior to the September for which a place is sought. When you apply, you will need to ask one of the clergy to sign a form which confirms this attendance.

To enable this process to work efficiently please make sure that you take the initiative in making yourself known to the clergy. It would be a good idea to complete one of the blue newcomer slips in the pews, indicating your interest in a school place. If your child attends the crèche or one of the Junior Church Group (probably the St Matthew Group), please be sure that you are registered and recorded as having attended each time. Some children prefer to stay in church during the service. If you do so we suggest you should sign a register which you will find below this notice during and after the 10:30 service. This may seem rather over regimented but we hope will avoid misunderstandings and disappointment. We have assumed most families will come to the 10:30 service on Sunday morning. If you prefer another service (Holy Hamsters, for example) make sure you are known and make a note in the register mentioned above.

If on starting at St John's you find that you will not have worshipped here for the necessary two years, you will need to provide the School with a letter from the parish priest of your previous church showing how long you worshipped there. If you are unable to provide such a letter, we should warn you in making your selection of schools that, whatever the circumstances, your child will not be considered by the admissions committee as fulfilling the necessary criteria and is therefore very unlikely to be offered a place at the School.

If you have any questions about this process please speak to one of the clergy. You will find further information about admissions and about the school generally on its website www.hampsteadprim.camden.sch.uk

Socially exclusive admissions and exclusive ethos

'Having been a parent governor of a Church of England primary school I feel very strongly that faith was used to ensure a white middle class intake. Furthermore, when the school expanded its catchment area northwards when a nice estate was built between it and the secular primary school to the North, it opted to take in the whole of the estate (very expensive housing) into its catchment area, apart from a section to the very north,

which was where some social housing was built. Those children had to go to the primary school to the North via the main road, even though our primary school was nearer and easier to get to via quiet back routes. As the school was its own admissions authority it could decide this was the fair thing to do, despite objections when it "consulted" with other schools in the area.

When I stepped down as a governor I took this issue up with one of the parent governors who told me that people had paid more for their housing in order to get into the school (best in the City) and they weren't just going to open it up to anyone who wasn't paying their own hefty mortgage!

Very little, if anything, was done to accommodate the needs of children of different faiths or none. When my child refused to pray in class, explaining he was not a Christian, he was asked by the teacher what he was doing in a Church school. This despite the fact that this was the only primary school in the catchment area.'

Anonymous, Oxford
June, 2009

Hindu school shows preference to vegetarians, even though many Hindus eat meat

From: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7118069.stm>

School gives vegetarians priority

Published on November 28th 2007

Vegetarians will be given priority for places at the UK's first Hindu state school, it has been announced.

The Krishna-Avanti school in Harrow, north-west London, will give places first to pupils whose parents follow Hindu teachings such as vegetarianism.

But the Hindu Council UK criticised the plan, warning it would result in many Hindu children being excluded.

School promoter, charity I-Foundation, said it was in line with admission policies at other faith schools.

The school is expected to open next year, and is likely to receive a large number of applications from the UK's 1.5m Hindus, 40,000 of whom live in the London Borough of Harrow.

I-Foundation said the school's admissions policy was intended to mirror those used by other faith schools that are oversubscribed.

Director Nitesh Gor said: "In common with other faith schools - which may require letters from priests or proof of church or synagogue attendance - we want to give priority to those that are most active in their faith.

"The definition we have arrived at includes regular home and temple worship, as well as vegetarianism and avoiding alcohol.

"We will, of course, welcome applications from any Hindu however they practice their belief and will welcome them at the school as places allow."

But the Hindu Council UK said the policy could exclude most Hindu children.

Jay Lakhani, the council's director for education, said: "We believe it is unfair to rule out other Hindus by imposing on them the strict rules of one particular, minority Hindu group in order for their children to attend."

The council, which has previously backed the school, called for a meeting to discuss the admissions plans.

2. Discrimination in staff employment

Religion or belief in the workplace and service delivery: Findings from a call for evidence, by NatCen Social Research for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (March, 2015)

Stigma associated with having a child outside of marriage

In 2014 the Equality and Human Rights Commission conducted a public consultation into how the laws around religion and belief were working, to which it received hundreds of responses in regards to education. It found a range of problems with the way matters of religion and belief were negotiated in British schools, and some the issues found were emphasized by way of releasing some anonymised testimonials. One related to employment is repeated below - a pregnant Humanist teacher working in a Catholic school recounted that:

'As an unmarried woman, I was told I was not allowed to talk to the children about my 'condition', and that I would struggle to gain a promotion in any local school. I was also advised to wear a pretend wedding ring. I didn't do this. I applied for other jobs and now work in a non-faith school.' (p38)

From:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/RoB%20Call%20for%20Evidence%20Report.pdf.

Successful temporary head teacher released because they are not of the right religion

From <http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/11472889>. /

Head must quit school he saved because he's not Roman Catholic

Jon Reynard told he must quit Annecy Catholic Primary School in Seaford because he is not Roman Catholic

Mon 15 Sep 14

A headteacher drafted in to save a failing school cannot stay permanently because he is not a Roman Catholic. The religious rule governing Seaford's Annecy Catholic Primary School has led to outrage from parents who say the policy is "unfair" and "contradictory."

They say Jon Reynard, who was called in to improve standards after the school was placed in special measures by Ofsted, should be allowed to remain in his post.

A Seaford parent, who asked to remain anonymous, said: "It's completely contradictory and unfair.

"The school is the only one in the catchment area not full to capacity. "Children are allowed to attend if they are not Catholic.

"Mr Reynard has been fantastic for the school. Our children are happy under his leadership and are progressing well."

But the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton said the policy is recognised in law.

The school was rated inadequate in every category, except behaviour and safety of pupils, while under the leadership of ex-headteacher Fiona McGonigle, in an Ofsted report last October.

Mr Reynard was called in to mirror the success he had already achieved as head at Seaford Primary School. He was made executive headteacher of both schools and reports by the education regulator said progress was being made at Annecy.

Mr Reynard told The Argus he was touched by the high praise from parents but stressed he knew the conditions of the post from the start.

He insisted he had not been asked to leave the school and would remain in post for the near future. He said: "I've come in to help the school improve, which it is, and hopefully get it up to a good standard at its next Ofsted inspection in September or October. We don't know exactly when."

Maggie Prout, chairman of the school's board of governors, was unavailable for comment yesterday. In a June meeting she said appointing a Catholic headteacher was already being discussed.

A diocese spokesman said: "To maintain the clear Catholic character of Catholic schools the Bishops of England and Wales have stated that the posts of headteacher, deputy headteacher and head of religious education are to be filled by baptised and practising Catholics.

"The Diocese expects all Catholics schools in the diocese to follow this policy."

Job offer removed after marital breakdown

From <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/cardiff-faith-school-corpus-christi-6991546>

Cardiff faith school reneges on appointment of headteacher because of 'marital reasons' Unforeseen 'marital reasons' has led to Corpus Christi retracting its job offer and makes new temporary arrangement

Apr 15, 2014

A faith school has reneged on its decision to appoint a new headteacher for unforeseen "marital reasons".

Christopher Belli was chosen in February to lead Corpus Christi RC High School in Lisvane, Cardiff, following a lengthy recruitment process.

Mr Belli was in line to replace the school's long-serving headteacher David Stone, who left in December, but his contract has been withdrawn less than two months after his appointment.

A meeting was called earlier this month to inform staff that Mr Belli would not be coming to the school as planned.

The Echo understands the school chose to retract Mr Belli's job offer after an issue with his conditions of employment.

School governors are permitted by law to appoint only practising Catholics to senior roles and headteachers are expected to abide by Catholic principles.

Mr Stone, who was appointed in 1996, retired through illness and the school advertised twice for his replacement, who was due to attract an annual salary of £75,300-£87,229.

Mr Belli is the brother of Marc Belli, who will leave his current role of headteacher at Mary Immaculate RC High School to join Bishop of Llandaff CIW High School later this summer.

Kath Brown, chairwoman of governors at Corpus Christi, said that "due to the marital position of Mr (Christopher) Belli" the school had decided "that it is not appropriate for him to assume the headteacher post".

Temporary arrangements will see Angela Thomas appointed as acting headteacher following the retirement of current incumbent David Cushion in the summer.

Head of religious education Pat Pavlovic will assume the role of acting deputy headteacher and the pair are expected to lead the school for the next academic year, starting in September.

Anne Robertson, schools director for the Archdiocese of Cardiff, said developments at Corpus Christi were “relatively unusual” – but not unprecedented.

“There have been issues before and things change in personal circumstances for all sorts of reasons,” she said.

Gender discrimination

From: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10666129/Muslim-boys-school-bans-women-from-applying-for-job-as-science-teacher.html>

Muslim boys’ school bans women from applying for job as science teacher

An Islamic school has advertised for a new science teacher but ruled out female applicants

07 Feb 2014

A Muslim boys’ school is facing claims of segregation after advertising for a temporary science teacher but making clear that women need not apply.

The advert published by the outsourcing company Capita requested a “Male Science Teacher” to cover lessons, including some mathematics classes, until the end of the current academic year on a short term contract for up to £150 a day.

Secular campaigners said the advertisement was just the latest in a series of demands for religious customs and practices to be “accommodated” in the education system as a result of giving faith groups the power to run schools.

It follows a storm over allegations that non-Muslim female staff at the Al-Madinah free school in Derby had been forced to wear headscarves in line with strict Islamic practices.

There have also been concerns that girls at other Islamic schools are being required to wear full veils as well as questions over segregation in classes.

Capita argued that the exclusion of women could be legally justified but the advert was later withdrawn after a warning from the Department for Education over the need to comply with equality law.

The National Secular Society said it had been alerted to the advertisement by a female science teacher who had been looking for work in the Leicester area.

Among requirements listed for the job are a good knowledge of the national curriculum and an ability to plan “innovative and engaging lessons”.

The advert describes the school simply as an Islamic School for Boys in Leicester without specifying which school.

Capita refused to confirm the name of the school claiming it was to “protect their confidentiality”.

But it follows a similar advertisement placed by the Madani Boys School in Leicester last month for the post of "Male Technician" in the IT department.

Capita insisted that the male-only requirement was legal under the Equality Act, which allows employers an opt-out from sex discrimination rules in specific circumstances.

"These provisions are referred to as occupational requirements and they create exceptions that allow an employer to act in a way that would otherwise be discriminatory," a spokeswoman said.

"Capita Education Resourcing is committed to equal opportunities both as an employer, and as an agency for the recruitment and placement of educational staff."

But a spokeswoman for the Department for Education said: "Schools must comply with equality law. "We asked Leicester City Council to raise this with the school and the advert has now been withdrawn."

Stephen Evans, campaigns manager at the NSS said: "Being male isn't a genuine occupational requirement for a science teacher in a state school. Any attempt to try and make it so is unjustifiable.

...

Teachers having to wear religious dress

From <http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/Teachers-Derby-s-Muslim-school-ordered-wear/story-19822232-detail/story.html>

Teachers at Derby's Muslim school 'ordered to wear hijabs'

September 25, 2013

WOMEN teachers at Al-Madinah School in Derby claim they are being told to cover their heads and shoulders with a hijab – an Islamic scarf – whether or not they are Muslim.

This is one of several complaints made by staff to their unions at Al-Madinah School, which is currently under investigation by the Education Funding Agency for alleged irregularities over its grants.

A member of the teaching staff told the Derby Telegraph that women were being told to sign new contracts that say they must wear hijabs and that girls are told to sit at the back of classes.

Two non-Asian women, who refused to comment, were spotted taking off their hijabs as soon as they were out of sight of the school during the lunch hour.

Nick Raine, regional NUT officer, said he was "very worried" about the school and the education of the 200 children there.

He said: "It's one thing to have a dress code which we can challenge and quite another to build it into a contract."

It is understood that the new contracts for staff also include rules about not taking non-halal food into the school and not being allowed to wear jewellery.

Mr Raine added: "There are worries over practices concerning the discrimination between male and female pupils in the school, with the girls being told to sit at the back of the class regardless of whether they can see the board properly."

...

The school has yet to receive an inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, which could reasonably be expected to happen this academic year as it is a new school but it could be brought forward in view of representations from the teaching unions and city council.

An Ofsted spokeswoman said: "As schools are only notified the afternoon before inspections begin, we would not be able to let anyone know when the school is being inspected."

A Department for Education spokesman would not comment on what stage the investigation had reached and said: "We are investigating the allegations and will respond in due course."

...

Requirement to take part in worship

'As a primary school teacher who is non-religious, I feel discriminated against. I do not feel I can apply to work at faith schools, as although they do not all always insist on you belonging to the school's religion or denomination, you invariably have to be "sympathetic" to their aims - and by my own experience through supply work have seen this can include attending activities like Catholic mass. I want to teach children, not have to engage in worship.'

Victoria, West Midlands, June 2013

Head teacher required to step down to remarry

'Relatively recently a head teacher at a Bradford school was required to step down because they wanted to remarry, as this went against the tenants of the school's faith. The head teacher was excellent at their job, and actively upheld the religious ethos of the school while in their post. However, rather than to live in sin, they wanted to marry their partner, and had to pay a penalty of losing their job for wanting to find happiness in their personal life in this way.'

The school is almost entirely state funded, and lost an able head teacher during a period of a national shortage of head teachers. The head teacher should have been protected under employment law, but when it comes to the employment of most teachers in faith schools, many of the rights that almost all other employees enjoy in society enjoy are ejected. The power for schools to treat teachers in this way is over overdrawn, unjustified and unjust.'

Lack of opportunity in faith schools

'As a newly qualified teacher applying for my first post I have been disappointed to find that I would not even be considered for employment in certain voluntary aided schools unless I can provide a faith reference from an ordained person. Living in a rural area, this vastly reduces my employment opportunities.

Whilst I am happy to support the Christian ethos of such a school and indeed agree with many of the tenets of Christianity, I can't provide such a reference. I could, of course, start going to church on a regular basis purely with the aim of securing a reference, drawing a parallel with the many parents who do just that to get their child into the school of their choice, but feel that not only would that be hypocritical, but that it trivialises Christian belief.

Not only am I losing out, but surely schools are potentially missing out on the people who could provide the best teaching for their pupils? It is extremely disappointing to face such religious discrimination in twenty first century Britain and I am very frustrated.'

Anonymous,
March, 2010

Disguising a lack of faith or genuine religiosity to help get into a faith school

"I teach in a Church school, and it was made clear to me that I would have found it very difficult to have got my job with the governors if I had stated I was non-religious. Luckily, I work in a wonderful school where my opinions are respected and there is no admission policy based on faith.

Every year however I have to deal with parents who feel they have to jump through hoops to get their children into the next school they want, yet most stop going to Church once their children have been admitted.

I also have a son in year 6 who would have found it very difficult to get into the local school, simply because he was not baptised. The idea that he should be allowed to make his own mind up when he is older was not considered valid."

Anonymous, Canterbury
November, 2009

Teacher "resigns" from post to remarry

From <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/jul/22/headteacher-remarry-forced-resignation>

Headteacher about to remarry forced to leave Catholic school

Parents start petition as primary head resigns ahead of second marriage

Published on Wednesday 22 July 2009

"A popular headteacher at a Catholic primary school has been forced to quit his job because he plans to remarry, it emerged today.

Michael Cassidy wrote to parents at St Patrick's primary school in Sheffield on the last day of term informing them of his resignation.

He said: "This is a decision that has been taken for me as a result of the forthcoming change in my personal life, which is that I am to remarry in the autumn.

"As a consequence my position as headteacher is no longer compatible with the conditions and services of my contract. Therefore I have no option but to leave.

"It goes without saying that leaving St Patrick's will be very difficult for me as I have become very much part of this special community."

Cassidy, who has been headteacher of St Patrick's for the past four years, is believed to be a divorcee who is marrying his long-standing partner.

Catholics believe that a Christian marriage can never be wholly annulled and argue that marrying for a second time is therefore not valid.

Cassidy will leave the school at the end of the autumn term.

John Cape, director of [schools](#) for the Hallam diocese, said he was aware Cassidy would resign on December 31.

"It is a matter of personal choice made by a man of great integrity," he told the Sheffield Star newspaper.

"As director of schools I will continue to offer pastoral and professional support to him in the decision he has taken."

Parents are believed to be drawing up a petition protesting Cassidy's departure and are planning a campaign on facebook.

Claire Bolsover, whose daughter attends the school, told the paper: "Mr Cassidy is a fantastic head and both children and parents are really upset.

"Any school occasion and he's there, and he knows every child's name. There are a lot of upset and angry parents.

"Catholic views on marriage and divorce are very strict, but if it is going to put our children's learning in jeopardy then I think it needs rethinking.

She said Cassidy's personal life was irrelevant to his job and he should stay.

Mother-of-two Melissa Lightfoot told the paper: "I had to think which century we were living in and, yes, we do live in the 21st century and not the dark ages."

The school refused to comment.

Lack of opportunity in faith schools

'I have taught in faith schools and LA [local authority] schools, experienced professional discrimination in a Church of England school over promotion because I was not a practising Christian.

I have managed an inner London LA educational advice centre for parents and witnessed first hand the divisiveness of faith schools which by default have lead to segregated schooling and mitigate against community cohesion.'

Anonymous, Essex
September, 2008

3. Inappropriate, narrow or exclusive practices in the curriculum

Independent boring school restricts pupil's access to media

From <http://news.sky.com/story/1524949/faith-school-bans-pupils-from-meeting-outsiders>

Faith School Bans Pupils From Meeting 'Outsiders'

Ofsted gives a "good" rating to a religious school which threatens to expel its students if they socialise with "outsiders".

July 25th, 2015

A Muslim boarding school has been rated "good" by Ofsted, despite threatening to expel students if they mix with other children.

The Institute of Islamic Education in Dewsbury was praised by the education watchdog despite its pupils being taught not to speak to the media and being banned from watching TV, listening to the radio or reading newspapers.

...

The school has no website, but Sky News obtained copies of documents given to parents which state that students "socialising with outsiders... will be expelled if there is no improvement after cautioning."

The school's Pupil and Parent Handbook contains a Sharia section which lists "Items that are prohibited in Islam... such as portable televisions, cameras, etc".

It says boarders are also banned from wearing un-Islamic garments and using music players or mobile phones at any time.

Official inspection reports spanning the past 11 years have highlighted a lack of school trips and no formal sex education.

Mosque elder Shabbir Daji, chairman of the school's governing shura, told Sky News the school "works for unity", but would not comment on how its restrictions prepare children for life in Britain.

"Our policy is to keep away from the media," he said...

Pressure to engage in worship

'A lesson in failure'

Summer, 2015 *New Humanist*

'... Denning [co-founder and former head governor at the Durham Free School] emphasises that the school did not have faith-based admissions criteria, but was run on the basis of Christian theology. "It's a belief that human beings are created in the image of God, so there's a special value accorded to every human being and the value of a student does not have anything to do with where they come from or their ability."

Not all students found this ethos welcoming. Assemblies were religious in tone, and there were daily prayers. Lucy had been raised an atheist, and did not want to take part, but her parents felt that if she opted out of

assemblies altogether, she ran the risk of missing important information. “A teacher spoke to her about the fact that she wasn’t praying,” says Everard. “I rang the school and said, ‘Look, she doesn’t want to pray’, and they responded, ‘Can’t she just pretend?’ In the end, she had to sit at the back so other students wouldn’t see that she wasn’t praying.”

From: <https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/4876/a-lesson-in-failure>

Religion or belief in the workplace and service delivery: Findings from a call for evidence, by NatCen Social Research for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (March, 2015)

Faith based prejudice and discrimination at British schools

In 2014 the Equality and Human Rights Commission conducted a public consultation into how the laws around religion and belief were working, to which it received hundreds of responses in regards to education. It found a range of problems with the way matters of religion and belief were negotiated in British schools, and some the issues found were emphasized by way of releasing some anonymised testimonials. Two related to disparagement of pupil's views by staff are reproduced below:

'My son, aged eight, was called over by a Dinner Lady and asked if he believed in God. When he said no she told him he didn't deserve any Xmas presents. I made a written complaint to the Head Teacher, but was told the dinner lady had said her comments were a joke and she was not able to discuss the incident further.' (p80)

'The teacher replied that people who are 'religious nutters' are those who believe that God created the universe. [My daughter] told him that as a Christian she believes that God created the universe to which the teacher ridiculed her in front of the class.' (p81)

From:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/RoB%20Call%20for%20Evidence%20Report.pdf

Creationist teaching in science at a free faith school

‘God designed the solar system,’ says worksheet

Durham Free School: homework was ‘isolated incident’

Morgan announces on Wednesday that school will close

Feb 27, 2015

Durham Free School will close at the end of this term – and Schools Week can exclusively reveal a science teacher told pupils “God has designed the solar system”.

The school, which opened in September 2013, was sent a letter on Wednesday afternoon by regional schools commissioner Janet Renou informing it of education secretary Nicky Morgan's decision to terminate its funding agreement.

Schools Week has discovered David Hagon, a teacher at the school, in September asked year 7 pupils to complete a worksheet as part of their science homework that stated God was responsible for the design of the solar system.

The worksheet (pictured) said: "Only the Earth has life on it. God has designed the solar system so that the Earth can support life."

Any school, academy or free school that is found to teach creationism as a scientific fact would be in breach of the law and its funding agreement.

Ms Renou (pictured below) said the school's representations did not "sufficiently" address "major weaknesses" including the need "to address a culture of intolerance of people who have different faiths, values or beliefs".

The school, which is in special measures, said this was an isolated incident and the worksheet was not school literature, but put together by Mr Hagon. Despite repeated attempts, we were unable to contact Mr Hagon for comment...

From: <http://schoolsweek.co.uk/exclusive-god-designed-the-solar-system-says-worksheet/>

Resistance of East Lancashire faith schools to engage with local NHS sexual health team

From

[http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/11750663.FRUSTRATION Blackburn faith schools thwart sexual health workers/](http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/11750663.FRUSTRATION_Blackburn_faith_schools_thwart_sexual_health_workers/)

FRUSTRATION: Blackburn faith schools thwart sexual health workers

KNOWLEDGE: Some health workers believe some students are not getting the right information when it comes to sex education

Tuesday 27 January 2015

HEALTH workers have voiced their frustration at several faith schools which have refused to host their sex education workshops – fearing pupils are not getting the information they need.

The NHS Community Education Sexual Health Team (CESH) said it had not been given access to any of the Catholic and Muslim secondary schools in Blackburn, while some in other parts of East Lancashire also appear to have declined the sessions.

The team believes its information about contraception is the main reason, and fears pupils will be more at risk of teenage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease.

They would not name individual schools, but the state-funded Catholic and Muslim schools in Blackburn are St Bede's, Our Lady and St John, Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School and Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School.

Meanwhile, St Augustine's in Billington and Mount Carmel in Accrington do not appear to run the sessions, while St John Fisher and Thomas More, in Colne, has not hosted the team for about two years.

There is no suggestion that any of the schools are failing to adhere to the national curriculum, which requires contraception and some sex and relationship education (SRE) to be covered under the science agenda. However, several leading charities and sexual health experts have described this as inadequate, and called for comprehensive SRE to be taught within compulsory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) classes.

And the CESH team's work goes far beyond the national curriculum by offering specialist support and advice on contraception and other issues, as well as sessions about the impact of pornography, digital technology and the risk of sexual exploitation.

East Lancashire is one of just a few areas in the country to benefit from this dedicated outreach service, due to its historically high rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

But the team are worried that thousands of Catholic and Muslim teenagers are not seeing the benefits, and called for every school to recognise the 'big cultural shift' needed to communicate effectively with youngsters.

Sue Roscow, a senior member of the sexual health team, said: "The thing about the faith schools is the misunderstanding about what we deliver and it's often the governors.

"It's been extremely frustrating over ten or 12 years of working in this post. At one school a parent didn't like what we were doing and went to the governors. I then had a phone call from the school saying, I'm sorry, we have to take it out because you're talking about contraception."

There are no problems with accessing pupils at non-faith and Church of England schools, the team said.

Although all the faith schools said they teach pupils about contraception, Harry Walker, policy manager at the Family Planning Association, said: "Thinking of Catholic schools in particular, some might say; 'here are the 15 methods of contraception, and by the way the Catholic church teaches this', whereas others might just say; 'the Catholic church teaches this' and nothing else.

"Unfortunately ignorance doesn't protect young people, and international evidence has shown clearly that if you don't give young people good information, especially on contraception, they are more – not less – likely to become pregnant or get a sexually transmitted infection.

"The average age of first sexual activity is 16, with obviously a minority before that, so it's irresponsible for us not to teach young people about methods of contraception before they need to know about and use them."

When asked why they had not hosted sessions from the CESH team, the schools said they had designed their own sessions within the PSHE programme. Meanwhile, their formal Sex Education Policies, obtained by the Lancashire Telegraph through Freedom of Information laws, suggest varying approaches are taken. ...

Anonymous testimony from a C of E faith school Governor: pressure to evangelise

From <http://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/nov/08/secret-governor-trojan-horse-school>

Secret governor: have we let the Trojan horse into our school?

The church was traditionally fairly hands-off with our local faith school, but it's started meddling in our governance and curriculum

Sat November 8th, 2014

The request to promote Christianity is no longer subtle and has a hint of evangelism to it. Photograph: Alamy
Green fields, windswept clifftops, rolling hills. This is rural England, and if you send your children to school here, there's a good chance you're sending them to a Church of England school.

This isn't necessarily a matter of faith – in many areas, all the primary schools in the village are affiliated to a church. It isn't a bad thing even if you have no faith because these organisations are concerned first and foremost with the provision of an excellent, modern education. Religion comes second – or it used to.

A few years ago, I volunteered as a foundation governor. I was appointed by the church, acting through its local diocese, in the village primary school. My lack of religion wasn't an issue; I was happy to promote the "Christian" ethos because the values were mostly just humanitarian. More importantly, I wanted to ensure the school maintained its high academic standards, nurturing environment and commitment to a broad, all-round education.

Over the next few years the school did just that. Yes, we have strong links with the local church – there are regular religious education lessons, we have harvest festivals and nativity plays, and there's a religious element to school assemblies. But these were kept in their place – below English, maths, science and the individual needs of the children. The Church of England helped the school, it didn't interfere in the curriculum or tell us what to do.

But an institution is only as strong as the people who run it, and when those people change, anything can happen. Islam wasn't called into question during the Trojan horse scandal in Birmingham's schools – the problem was the people seeking to impose their vision of it. In our school, to a lesser degree, something similar has happened. The diocese that administrates and "advises" church schools – and has the final say in the appointment of foundation governors – has got muscular, and it's starting to look like it's on steroids.

Change started with us governors. It's no longer sufficient for foundation governors – who form a majority on the governing body – to promote the "Christian ethos" of the school. Now, you have to be a regular church-goer, at the right church, with a vicar to vouch for you. While those of us who don't fall into that category can brush off the implied insult about all the hard work we've already done, we aren't happy that, when our four year term comes to an end, people who might care less about the school and more about how it fits with the church could take our place.

Moreover, when schools right across the country are struggling to recruit governors, it seems foolish to limit the field. We're ok for the moment, but it's a knife-edge – some of us will be leaving soon and there's no one on the horizon to replace us. No one who ticks the diocesan boxes, anyway.

That's the high-level, theoretical stuff. Who the governors are isn't something children, parents or staff get too excited about, they have more pressing concerns – and the diocese wants in on those too. We've been told that the school should actively promote Christianity not in the casual way we've always managed it, but more directly, overtly, and it feels with a hint of evangelism.

This, they tell us, is now more important than anything else. When I heard this last part, I assumed there must be a mistake. More important than football or drama? Maybe. But more important than maths and English? They couldn't possibly mean that, could they?

They could. The message was repeated loud and clear and enough times to convince the most ardent denier. The word of the Lord is more important than Pythagoras and Shakespeare and the rest of the heathens. Precisely how we're to implement this remains vague. But it's concerning – we've always put the "school" bit first, and anything less feels like a betrayal of the purpose of education.

It's early days in this strange new world and we can't tell if this is just talk, or if there are teeth behind it. We'll be including something about strengthening our Christian basis in the next school improvement plan, and we're hoping we can let it sit there and not do a great deal about it.

But we're nervous. What happens if we don't toe the line? We can handle a negative church school inspection: nobody likes being told off, but we'll live with it. But more significant sanctions, like direct appointment of governors, loom on the horizon and would lead to more influence on the way the school is run day to day.

We'll just have to see how serious they are. But they should be warned: we're not prepared to sit back and let them do what they want. The "Christian ethos" we signed up to was the spirit of kindness and forgiveness, not the anti-scientific intolerance we hear about from across the Atlantic. That's not something we're prepared to let into our school, whether God's on our side or not.

Resistance to science that does not fit with a religious worldview

From <http://hackneycitizen.co.uk/2014/10/31/yesodey-hatorah-stamford-hill-school-defiant-exam-question-redaction-ofsted-visit/>

Following no-notice inspection, Jewish school remains defiant over exam question redaction Jewish state school rated 'good' will continue instructing students to refrain from answering sensitive exam questions

Friday 31 October 2014

Following a no-notice Ofsted inspection, the head of an Orthodox Jewish state school in Stamford Hill who was warned against redacting exam questions has said he will continue to discourage his pupils from answering "halachically questionable" exam questions.

Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls' School in Egerton Road, was subject to a no-notice inspection in September as part of a round of unannounced Ofsted visits to 40 schools across England. Three of the inspections, which tested schools' promotion of 'British values' in the wake of the Trojan horse affair, were at Jewish schools, prompting complaints from the National Association of Jewish Orthodox Schools that their schools are being unfairly targeted.

...

Regarding future exams, Pinter said, "If we can't redact (questions), then we won't redact them."

Nevertheless, Pinter made clear that his pupils will continue to be advised against answering certain exam questions, and that this practice is supported by parents at the school.

"Our children will be aware of which questions they should be answering and which ones they shouldn't be," he said.

Asked whether the Darwinian theory of evolution, which is a compulsory part of the national curriculum, was among the topics that were at odds with the school's ethos, Pinter replied: "Yes, it is."

Questions about homosexual relationships and social media were also cited by Pinter as topics of concern to the school's ethos.

Faith school redacting GCSE Science questions that go against its religious understanding of the natural world

From <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-26823183>

Evolution exam questions cannot be blocked, says Ofqual
Schools will not be allowed to screen out exam questions which contradict their religious ethos, says England's exams watchdog.

31 March 2014

Ofqual says blocking out questions on exam papers will count as "malpractice".

It follows reports of a Jewish school redacting questions about evolution in a GCSE science exam.

The OCR exam board, which set the science paper, says schools must not "tamper with question papers".

In response, a representative of the National Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools said the association was seeking advice on this "very concerning matter".

Earlier this month, Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls' School in Hackney, east London, was criticised for blacking out questions about evolution in a GCSE science paper.

It meant that pupils could not answer the questions.

'Not allowed'

It also raised the issue of whether faith schools could opt out of questions in public exams if they clashed with their religious beliefs.

Ofqual has now written to all exam boards explaining that this is not permissible.

"Having looked into the issue, we concluded that while the practice was very rare, it should not be allowed," says a spokesman for the exam watchdog.

"Denying learners access to all the questions on a paper prevents the candidate achieving their full potential and therefore disadvantages them. It also threatens the validity of the qualification.

"If awarding organisations suspect that schools or centres are redacting exam papers in the future we would expect them to act in the same way as they would for any other case of malpractice."

The OCR exam board says two schools redacted exam questions last summer.

It has issued a policy statement saying that schools are not permitted to make changes to exam papers before they are seen by students.

Richy Thompson of the British Humanist Association welcomed that news that schools would not be permitted to "censor exam questions".

"Every child has a human right to scientific knowledge, and evolution is fundamental to understanding how life came to be," he said.

Jonathan Rabson, executive director of the National Association of Orthodox Jewish Schools, said that the association was "very surprised that there has been no consultation, and we are considering our position as this statement has come without any notice".

Mr Rabson said that he was surprised that this ruling had been made in a "country famous the world over for tolerance of faiths, where faith schools regularly come top in the league tables and are highly valued for their contribution to education".

Inappropriate worship

"Yesterday my 5 year old child was made by the head teacher to bow her head and put her hands together while other children prayed during school assembly. Before joining the school we brought this up with the head who re-assured us that no religious practices of any specific faith would be forced upon our child. However, when my wife mentioned it to the head today, the Head's reply was that 'well it's the law', as well as 'you celebrate Christmas don't you?'. Our child was confused and upset that she had been 'made to pray'."

Stewart Baylis-Crisp, Plymouth
December, 2013

Catholic Education Service of England and Wales urging Catholic secondary schools to encourage their pupils to oppose civil marriage equality

From: <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2012/04/25/exclusive-catholic-school-urged-pupils-as-young-as-11-to-sign-anti-gay-marriage-petition/>

Catholic school 'urged pupils as young as 11 to sign anti-gay marriage petition

Published on 25th April, 2012

The Catholic Education Service confirmed to PinkNews.co.uk that it had written to at least 359 Catholic state secondary schools in England and Wales last month asking them to draw attention to a letter by senior archbishops which told Catholics of their “duty” to do “all we can to ensure that the true meaning of marriage is not lost for future generations”.

It also asked schools to “draw attention” to the Coalition for Marriage campaign and petition against civil marriage equality, which now has over 460,000 signatures.

Responding on the school’s behalf, the Catholic Education Service said St Philomena’s itself had designed the presentation which is said to have encouraged minors to add their names to that campaign.

It confirmed the presentations for all age groups had consisted of the Archbishops’ letter and ended with a slide displaying the Coalition for Marriage’s website and the words: “Sign the petition”.

Experts in the handling of gay and transgender issues in schools have today questioned whether the presentation may have breached equality laws.

A sixth form student told PinkNews.co.uk of her experience: “In our assembly for the whole Sixth Form you could feel people bristling as she explained parts of the letter and encouraged us to sign the petition.

“She said things about gay marriage and civil partnerships being unnatural. It was just a really out-dated, misjudged and heavily biased presentation.”

She added that students had begun to respond: “A few of us in my year are buying Gay Pride badges to pin on our uniform and thought about staging a Stonewall coup by posting the ‘Some people are gay – get over it’ posters around school.”

“Most importantly though, there are several people in my year who aren’t heterosexual – myself included – and I for one was appalled and actually disgusted by what they were encouraging.

“After all, that’s discrimination they were urging impressionable people to engage in, which is unacceptable.”

Instructional teaching at a non-faith school

“I am a parent governor at Thames Ditton Infant school where three of my children attend. Due to my experiences I opted to send my children to a community school as I believed it would teach religious tolerance in RE class.

I was very surprised therefore when my twins came home telling me God made the world in six days. So I started asking questions, there was no mention of Darwin, Adam was Caucasian, as was Jesus and Mary. I did not have a problem with them participating in the Nativity. However statements of faith within the script concerned me. At the next governors meeting I asked where was the dividing line between the nativity story and creationism, they looked at me as if I had asked the stupidest question ever and gave me a copy of the Surrey RE curriculum.

The curriculum was not about religious tolerance; it was promoting Christian beliefs as the norm in our society, and then only presenting a few other religious alternatives. Marriage was a way of “belonging” and being part of the community. My partner and I are not married and my children are not christened, yet were told this is how parents show their love and respect for their children.”

Richard Lanigan, Surrey
January, 2011

Instructional teaching at a non-faith school

“I have witnessed a number of scenarios where instructional religious views have been expressed to my children at their community school.

I feel very strongly that my children should be educated about all the different belief systems without bias. I am very careful not to influence my children (who have not been Christened), but I have found this has been completely undermined by the school.

There have been a number of situations which brought this to my attention and caused me to look into the matter further. For example, my wife and I attended our son's assembly in which the children presented what they had been learning about evolution and food chains etc, only to finish the assembly with a song about how God made everything. On another occasion our eldest was "presented" with a children's bible, and there have been other examples.”

Anonymous, Norfolk
January, 2010

Homophobia

From: <http://news.pinkpaper.com/NewsStory.aspx?id=2127>

School teaches gay pupils to practice celibacy

A Catholic school in Wales which teaches gay people to be celibate has come head to head with the director of a local gay business group.

10 December 2009

A Catholic school in Wales which teaches gay people to be celibate has come head to head with the director of a local gay business group.

Cain Otley saw red when he read revision notes for St Joseph's Catholic School declaring that sex between two men or two women simply becomes a way of gratifying a person.

Under the title *What is the Catholic Church's attitude to homosexuality?* the notes say genital acts between people of the same gender are wrong; homosexual acts are 'morally wrong'; and sex is seen in the Bible as a

way of a man and a woman to become 'one flesh' to be fruitful and multiply.

Pupils are taught that 'Homosexual sex can never be open to the potential of new life and so sex simply becomes a selfish way of gratifying a person.'

Otley, who runs the Gay Business Network in South Wales was further infuriated by the reference to AIDS and how the subject is treated in the revision aids.

"The notes claim that AIDS is seen by some people as the 'gay plague' and viewed by Protestant groups as God's punishment on gay people whose lifestyle, they argue, is immoral and against God's law.

"I was completely shocked and disgusted at what I saw. The information contained in the booklet could incite homophobic bullying and homophobia in general.

"I can't imagine what any LGBT pupil thinks having to go through being taught this filth."

A spokesman for St Joseph's Catholic School in Newport, which distributed the notes to the pupils said the information was designed to help the youngsters learn what is required by the examination specifications produced by the Welsh Joint Education Committee

"In a Roman Catholic school the church's teaching on sexuality has to be presented clearly and in lessons this is done in a sensitive way," she said.

"The information is purely factual as these are the points that students need to know for the examination.

"In lessons they will have discussed these points and put forward opposing views and these will also be included in their examination answers where they are required to give all sides of the argument."

With reference to the section about AIDS it states that whilst AIDS is sometimes described as the "gay plague" it is increasingly common among heterosexuals. It also states quite clearly that the Catholic Church teaches that no illness is God's punishment.

Failure to properly instil critical reasoning

'I have just qualified as a primary school teacher, and some of the ethics and "knowledge" I have seen passed on to children in just a relatively short while has genuinely upset me.

I am a Theravada Buddhist, and one of my main goals in life is to look at everything I am presented with a critical eye and to attempt to understand the world through reasoning, experience and evidence, and to take responsibility for the way I live my life rather than just follow someone else's ideal. So much of what I experienced in schools (two faith schools) was counter to this, it made me sad and angry.

I felt that children were being led away from the skill of critical evaluation and learning to simply accept what is told to them, no matter the source.'

Lindsay, Ceredigion
August, 2009

Segregated education breeding ignorance

"Having been educated in a Catholic school in Bradford, by the age of 18 I did not know a single Asian person. Quite frankly, I had bigoted views and knew nothing of other religions.

My own children have attended state schools in London where they have become friends with other children from many different cultures and religions. It is an enriching experience which gives them a deep understanding of others and a bond of common humanity.

How can dividing children and segregating them from each other ever be a good idea if we have the aim of understanding each other?

Anonymous, London
February, 2009

About the Accord Coalition

The [Accord Coalition](#) is a campaign coalition, launched in 2008, which brings together a wide range of organisations, both religious and non-religious, that are concerned that restrictive legislation around admissions, employment and the curriculum in state funded faith schools can serve to undermine community cohesion, discriminate against pupils, families and staff on religious grounds and not adequately prepare children for life in our increasingly diverse society.

Accord's growing list of [members](#) and [supporters](#) includes the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the British Humanist Association, the Christian think tank Ekklesia, the British Muslims for Secular Democracy, The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, the race equality think tank The Runnymede Trust, as well as members from the four largest groupings in parliament.

ENDS