

Forced academisation could impose religion on pupils

Posted: Wed, 3rd Jun 2015

The National Secular Society has warned that proposals to force struggling local authority schools in England to become academies could increase the proportion of faith based schools.

The NSS has written to the Education Secretary Nicky Morgan seeking assurances that upon conversion, no non-religiously designated school would be permitted to acquire a religious designation or faith ethos.

The Government's new Education and Adoption Bill will force councils and governing bodies to actively progress the conversion of failing schools into academies. Education Secretary Nicky Morgan says the tough new measures intended to turn around failing schools will "sweep away bureaucratic and legal loopholes" that previously prevented schools from being improved.

However, the NSS has warned that without adequate safeguards, schools joining faith academy chains could acquire a religious designation or faith ethos upon conversion with no opportunity for parents to object or even be consulted.

Stephen Evans, National Secular Society campaigns manager, said: "Plans to scrap the requirement for academy sponsors to consult with school communities, including parents, could result in a faith based education being imposed on parents and young people against their wishes.

"Given England's religiously diverse population – around [half of which](#) self-identify as non-religious, any increase in the proportion of religiously designated or faith ethos schools is likely to impede parents' ability to secure an education that doesn't run counter to their beliefs.

"Forcing a religious ethos on young people through their education would in many cases disrespect their parents' wishes and be at odds with principles of fairness and equality. The Government need to be aware that respecting young people's right to religious freedom and an objective education is part of, and not separate from, looking after their best interests."

The NSS has warned that the academisation of local authority controlled schools would increase the risk of faith-based organisations gaining greater control over school curriculums, admissions arrangements and employment practices – leading to even greater discrimination in our education system than already exists.

A shortage of school places in many parts country of has already seen [parents allocated faith schools against their wishes](#).

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