

CofE faith school to insist parents attend church for two years

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A Church of England faith school in Heysham is considering changing its admissions policy to require parents to attend church for a much longer period to help secure a school place for their child.

St Peter's CofE Primary School currently requires proof of church attendance for six months, but [proposals](#) for new admissions arrangements will require "a minimum of monthly attendance at church at public worship for at least 24 months".

The proposed change at St Peter's school has come about after allegations that parents were having to fake faith to secure a school place.

Rather than abolishing selection on religious grounds as [some Anglican schools have done](#), the school is instead tightening its religious requirements in response and insisting on two years of church attendance to meet the criteria for preferential treatment on the grounds of faith.

The required period of church attendance will increase under the new policy incrementally to eight months, then to one year and finally to the full two year period.

The school's headteacher, Nicola Gomersall, said that the "changes would mean that anyone joining the school in September 2020 would need to have demonstrated their faith at least once a month for the previous 24 months."

When deciding on how to allocate places, "parental worshipping" is considered more important in St Peter's admissions policy than children who have a sibling who attends the school.

NSS campaigns director Stephen Evans said: "It's utterly farcical that parents in modern Britain have to feign faith or prove their piety in order to get their children into local schools.

"Alarming, instead of tackling this inequality of access to publicly funded education, the Government is proposing to create yet more religiously selective faith schools, which will only increase levels of religious discrimination in state education.

"The time has come to end the discrimination and resulting segregation by moving towards an inclusive, secular and fairer education system that leaves the religious upbringing of children to their parents."

The Church of England claims its schools "are established primarily for the communities they are located in" and that they are "inclusive and serve equally those who are of the Christian faith, those of other faiths and those with no faith."

In response to recent Government proposals to allow more religious discrimination in new faith school admissions, the Church said "Our schools are not faith schools for the faithful, they are Church schools for the community."

Mr Evans added that "the admissions policies of many church schools across the country, including St Peter's, point to the falsity of that statement."

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