

Fears that faith-based admissions criteria are infiltrating community schools through feeder schools

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Concerns have been raised that faith based admissions criteria are being indirectly applied to community schools when 'faith' schools become feeder schools.

It is feared that a [proposal](#) (PDF) by Surrey County Council to turn Reigate Parish Church School into a 'feeder school' for the Reigate Priory Junior School will indirectly apply faith based admissions criteria to a community school, disadvantaging other local children.

As a Voluntary Aided Church of England school, Reigate Parish reserves 50% of its places for children whose parents are active participants of, and regularly worship in, a local Anglican church or other Christian churches.

Reigate Priory is an oversubscribed community school, rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Historically most children who want to have been able to transfer to the oversubscribed Reigate Priory from Reigate Parish Church Infant School. However, with increased pressure on school places in Reigate, increasingly, there are children who have found it difficult to access a local junior place.

The council has therefore proposed to introduce a feeder link for children from Reigate Parish and one other community school.

Local parents are concerned that under the proposed new admissions policy for Reigate Priory, children attending Reigate Parish will be prioritised above other local children for whom Reigate Priory is the nearest school. In doing so, it is argued that the Church schools' discriminatory admissions policy is being indirectly applied to Reigate Priory community school.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits schools from discriminating against pupils because of their religion or belief. As Reigate Priory has not been designated a faith school it does not benefit from the wide exemptions from equality law granted to schools of a religious character.

It is therefore being argued that if a foundation pupil (a pupil prioritised on religious grounds) of Reigate Parish Church School is offered a place ahead of another child for whom Reigate Priory is the nearest school, then that child may have been discriminated against on grounds of religion and belief.

Rachael Munroe, a local non-churchgoing parent who lives close to Reigate Priory, but unable to obtain a place at either feeder school, told the NSS: "It seems very unfair that children living further away from Reigate Priory School will be prioritised over other local children for a place at Reigate Priory School just because they are practicing Christians."

Stephen Evans, campaigns manager at the National Secular society, said: "It is both inequitable and unreasonable that schools that operate discriminatory admissions policies can become feeder

schools for community schools. It is already unfair that state funded 'faith' schools are permitted to turn away children simply on the basis of their parent's beliefs – but for that discrimination to then give children of Children parents privileged access to community schools is completely unacceptable."

The National Secular Society has written to Surrey County Council to express its concerns and has sought legal advice with a view to making an official complaint to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator if the plans go ahead.

The NSS is also monitoring similar proposals nationally where religious primary schools are establishing formal feeder links with community secondary schools and non-religiously designated academies.

The full consultation document setting out the proposals can be found [here](#) (PDF)

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