

Evangelicals put indoctrination ahead of education

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A survey for the Evangelical Alliance shows that evangelical parents are more likely to choose a school for their children based on whether it has a strong religious ethos rather than whether it fares well in league tables or inspectors' reports.

The survey of 1377 parents was conducted by the EA and found that while more than 70 per cent of respondents supported compulsory, predominantly religious education, and looked for a school where Christian beliefs and values were important, only 20 per cent chose a church school or an independent Christian secondary school.

Opinions on Christian schools varied among the respondents. Some said that their children had to learn to deal with others from non-Christian families, while others looked for teachers who would actively encourage their children's faith. Only one in ten, however, believed that church schools were divisive.

Many evangelical churches have close links with schools in their area, the report suggests. More than half regularly took assemblies in local schools, and one in five reported "good contacts" with their local university.

The general director of the EA, Steve Clifford, said that evangelicals had a long history of involvement in education. "It is part of our passionate investment into the well-being of society as a whole as well as into the lives of the poor and least able."

A spokesperson for the National Secular Society said: "This goes some way to explaining the over-emphasis on religion in some schools. It is clear that many parents from an evangelical Christian background would like schools that provided 'predominantly religious education', indicating that they put indoctrination of their children before a good all-round education. The fact that preachers from evangelical churches are such frequent visitors to some schools is also an indicator that they are being used to indoctrinate rather than educate."

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