

# New Anglican schools to operate 'open admissions' policies

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The Church of England's chief education officer has indicated that new CofE schools will adopt 'open admissions' policy but will still be "rooted in Christian heritage".

Rev Nigel Genders [told the Telegraph](#) that by not reserving places for Christians, new CofE schools would serve local communities because they would help ease an anticipated shortage of primary school places.

The Local Government Association [has warned](#) two-thirds of England's school districts are expected to have more primary pupils than places within three years.

With 80 sponsored and 277 converter academies, the Church of England is the biggest academy sponsor in England. The Church has signalled its [intention](#) to "reinforce and enhance" its influence throughout the education system, and is well placed to sponsor new schools.

Unlike other church schools, free schools (new academies) can only base 50% of admissions on faith and the remaining 50% are supposed to be 'open' admissions. Rev Genders said he expected many new CofE schools to go further and operate completely open admissions policies.

Last year, the Archbishop of Canterbury also [suggested](#) the Church could move away from religious selection, but swiftly backtracked, issuing a [statement](#) saying he fully supported the current policy for schools to set their own admissions criteria, including the criterion of faith.

Stephen Evans, National Secular Society campaigns manager, said: "It should go without saying that no publicly funded school should be allowed to discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief. Unfortunately, both the Church of England and the Catholic Church demand exemptions from equality law which allows them to do so".

However, even with open admissions, Mr Evans said there were "big questions" about whether faith based schools were an appropriate way to serve diverse communities.

"With its pews emptying at an alarming rate, the Church of England has spotted an opportunity to church the unchurched and increase its influence throughout the education system", he said.

"But in relying on the Church to provide state education, the Government is undermining young people's religious freedom and compromising parents' rights to raise their children in accordance with their own beliefs.

"In a pluralistic and diverse society there is a clear need for a secular education system to ensure all schools are appropriate for all pupils, regardless of their religious background."

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