

# NSS urges schools commissioner to reject church plan to control community schools

Posted: Tue, 5th Apr 2016

The National Secular Society has called on the Regional Schools Commissioner for the North of England to oppose plans for a Church of England takeover of four Newcastle schools.

The Commissioner, Janet Renou, is currently considering a proposal to form a multi-academy trust (MAT) which would include one Church of England school and four non-religiously designated schools.

According to one city councillor, the Church would have [three out of five](#) seats on the trust's board, despite just one of the five schools currently having a religious ethos.

In a letter to the Schools Commissioner, Stephen Evans, NSS Campaigns Director, urged Ms Renou to preserve local provision of secular education and protect children's rights to religious freedom by blocking the proposal.

Despite MATs being under a contractual obligation to protect schools' individual character the NSS says it has "little confidence" that in reality the ethos of the community schools will be protected through the funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

The letter invites the Commissioner to "consider how non-religious schools can realistically be protected from an encroaching religious ethos if the most senior people in the trust are all advancing the interests of the Church."

The Newcastle Diocesan Education Board claims that the ethos of the individual schools will be protected – despite representatives of the Church controlling the trust's board.

Newcastle City Council is seeking assurances that the schools will continue to adopt a "fair approach to school admissions."

In the letter to Ms Renou the National Secular Society also noted its broader concerns about forced academisation potentially resulting in even more schools falling under the control of religious groups.

Mr Evans added: "In the long-term, there is nothing to prevent non-religious schools in [faith-based] multi-academy chains from taking on a religious designation provided they gain the approval of the Secretary of State.

"At the National Secular Society we are frequently contacted by parents, teachers and governors concerned about Church of England controlled schools seeking to assert an overbearing religious ethos in its schools."

The NSS has [repeatedly raised concerns](#) with the Department for Education about religious organisations using academisation to further their own interests by gaining greater control of publicly funded education, including non-religious schools.

- [Share on What's App](#)

- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Disestablishment](#), [Faith schools](#)

## Related Campaigns

- 

### [\*\*No more faith schools\*\*](#)

We need inclusive schools free from religious discrimination, privilege or control.

[Read More](#)

- 

### [\*\*Disestablish the Church of England\*\*](#)

A state religion has no place in a 21st century democracy.

[Read More](#)

## Related Articles

### [\*\*NSS announces major conference on protecting liberal values\*\*](#)

Kenan Malik, Joan Smith and more speaking at NSS Secularism 2024 conference in London. [Read More »](#)

### [\*\*School “misleading” parents on plan to join CofE academy trust\*\*](#)

Primary school fails to tell parents academy trust is run by Church of England and all its schools are faith schools. [Read More »](#)

## **Schools targeted in £3 million CofE child evangelism initiative**

Church of England scheme to see youth ministers in Guildford running "worship events" in state schools, including a nonreligious school [Read More »](#)

## **Church plans to use schools to drive conversion of children**

The Church of England has unveiled plans to use schools to drive recruitment of children and young people to Christianity.... [Read More »](#)

## **Established church hinders religious freedom, NSS tells UN expert**

The NSS has told a UN expert that lack of separation between Church and state is undermining freedom of religion or belief in the UK. [Read More »](#)