

# Last chance to speak out against the Government's faith school expansion plans

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The Government's consultation on plans to open more faith schools and allow them to select up to 100% of their pupils on religious grounds is coming to a close very soon.

The National Secular Society is calling on all those who are concerned by these deeply damaging proposals to respond to the [consultation](#) before it closes on Monday 12 December.

At present, all oversubscribed faith free-schools are subject to a 50% cap, requiring them to keep at least half of their places open to local children, regardless of religion or belief. Because the Catholic Education Service insists on the ability to select all pupils on religious grounds, these rules have discouraged the opening of any new Catholic faith schools.

The Government now intends to give in to religious lobbying and scrap the cap to create additional school places in a new wave of fully religiously selective faith schools.

NSS campaigns director Stephen Evans said: "Religious selection in schools is discriminatory, entrenches religious segregation in wider society, and often leads to ethnic and socio-economic segregation as well. Faith schools also limit choice for the increasing proportion of parents, already a majority, who do not profess a faith and do want a faith-based education for their children.

"Rather than facilitating segregation along religious lines, we want to see the Government doing everything it can to ensure that children of all faiths and none are educated together in inclusive schools. Government policy should seek to break down barriers, not erect them.

"The limitation on places allocated on the basis of faith sends out the important message that state funded schools should be shared spaces, open and inclusive of children of all faith and belief backgrounds. The 50% rule is the only meaningful effort to promote diversity and address the problems caused by faith-based schooling.

"The consultation closes soon – next Monday 12 December – please don't miss this opportunity to let the Government know what you think."

In place of the cap, the Government says it will introduce 'strengthened safeguards' to 'promote inclusivity'. Mr Evans said these proposals were just "window dressing."

Earlier this week an independent review into integration carried out by Dame Louise Casey found that "segregation appears to be at its most acute in minority ethnic and minority faith communities and schools".

While the 50% cap hasn't prevented minority faith schools from being religiously and ethnically segregated, removing the 50% cap will do nothing to address this issue, the NSS has warned.

The Society said the measures proposed by the Government to replace the cap were "ineffective and tokenistic measures".

Mr Evans added: "Of course, in the long-term the only real solution is to have a secular and inclusive education system which isn't organised around the religious beliefs of parents. In the meantime, we must urge the Government to resist regressive demands to allow faith schools to select even more pupils on the basis of their parents' religious beliefs and activities.

"Whilst these proposals may create extra capacity in the schools system, they will do so by sacrificing equality and social cohesion. Please urge the Government to abandon them.

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