

# **“No evidence” that denominational schools are academically superior, study finds**

Posted: Mon, 3rd Apr 2017

A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research has found that there is "no evidence" to suggest Scotland's denominational schools achieve better results than their non-denominational counterparts.

The [study](#), on efforts to reform the governance of Scottish schools, reviewed policies aimed at closing the "persistent and entrenched gap in attainment" between students from richer and poorer households.

The analysis considered both denominational and non-denominational schools "to consider whether school types in Scotland have an effect on attainment."

When controlling for intake, the researchers found that, "overall attainment does not differ significantly between denominational and non-denominational schools, and there is no evidence to suggest that one school type or the other has better performance."

The director of IPPR Scotland Russell Gunson, who worked on the report, said: "Once you take account of intake, there is no evidence to suggest that denominational schools, or non-denominational schools see better school performance or attainment."

"It may or may not be the case that different school types add value in other ways, but on the issue of pupil attainment, the hard evidence shows that a religious ethos in itself doesn't make a difference."

Claims of superior academic results are one of the arguments made by proponents of more faith schools in England. But recent [research](#) by the Education Policy Institute found that after adjusting for "disadvantage, prior attainment and ethnicity" pupils in primary schools with a faith ethos "seem to do little or no better than in non-faith schools".

Pupils in secondary schools with a faith ethos record only "small average gains" over non-faith schools or "just one-seventh of a grade higher" in GCSE results.

The Education Policy Institute study concluded that such minute gains came with a risk "of increased social segregation".

It also noted that "the average faith school admits fewer pupils from poor backgrounds than the average non faith school."

Stephen Evans, the campaigns director of the National Secular Society, said: "This research demonstrates again the falsity of arguing that faith or denominational schools are more rigorous and successful."

"Faith schools can operate extremely convoluted admissions procedures and many are able to select their pupils from more affluent backgrounds than non-faith schools."

Academics at Leeds Beckett and Missouri universities [published a paper](#) last month arguing that excess time spent on religion in schools harmed progression in other subjects including maths and science.

Professor Gijsbert Stoet of Leeds Beckett University said, "Our research suggests that education might benefit from a stronger secular approach."

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Faith schools](#)

## Related Campaigns

- 

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

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

[Read More](#)

## Related Articles

### [NI assembly votes in favour of inclusive, evidence-based RSE](#)

MLAs speak of "twisted" RSE teaching that thoughts of sex are "sinful" and same-sex relationships "laughed at". [Read More »](#)

### [Faith school takeover proceeds despite overwhelming opposition](#)

NSS: Governors 'concealing' strength of feeling against Church of England ethos. [Read More »](#)

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

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

## **Allowing more religious selection in schools would be a big mistake**

Abandoning the 50% admission cap would exacerbate the discrimination, disadvantage and division inherent with faith schools, argues Stephen Evans. [Read More »](#)

## **NSS joins open letter against faith school discrimination**

Education experts, politicians, religious leaders and public figures unite to call on Education Secretary to keep the faith school admissions cap. [Read More »](#)