

# NSS criticises admissions policies that push parents into church

Posted: Tue, 17 Apr 2018

The National Secular Society has criticised policies that require parents to attend church to get their children in to local schools after a poll showed public disapproval of 'cheating' the system.

A [YouGov](#) survey revealed that 56% of people in the UK believe it is 'unacceptable' for parents to attend a church in order to get their child into a faith school. Only 22% think it is 'acceptable'.

Those most likely to find the practice 'unacceptable' are the elderly, with 70% of those over 65 disapproving compared with 18% finding it 'acceptable'.

In contrast, only 37% of people aged 18-25 think it was wrong. Twenty-four per cent said it was acceptable and 39% said they didn't know.

Conservative and UKIP voters were slightly more likely to condemn the practice than others.

The figures are a blow to [government plans](#) to allow new faith schools to select 100% of their pupils based on the religion of the parents.

In 2013 the Sutton Trust [found](#) six per cent of all parents with a child at a state school admitted to attending church services specifically to get their child into a faith school, with wealthier families more likely to do this.

Most parents do not consider religious instruction to be a priority when selecting a school for their children. In 2013 a YouGov [survey](#) found that 70% would choose a school on the basis of its academic standard; 23% would choose on the basis of ethical standards; five per cent would choose on the basis of giving a 'grounding in faith tradition'; and only three per cent for 'transmission of belief about God'.

The NSS is campaigning [to end faith-based discrimination](#) at state schools, where surveys show that the majority of the public oppose faith-based selection. According to a survey by [Populus](#), 72% of voters oppose state faith schools being allowed to discriminate against pupils on religious grounds in their admissions policy, including 68% of Christians.

Alastair Lichten, the NSS's education and schools officer, said: "No parent should be pushed into a church simply to get access to their local schools. We see a lot of this in our casework and need to empathise with those who feel pushed into this position.

"That more affluent families are more likely to do this helps explain the social and economic discrimination which comes along with religious discrimination in school admissions. At every turn, faith based admissions simply create confusion, consternation and inequity."

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