

NSS: council wrong over baptism certificates in school admissions

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The National Secular Society has criticised Renfrewshire Council over proposals to extend the priority given to children who are baptised Catholic for admission to Catholic schools.

The council [plans](#) to ask parents who wish their children to be prioritised for admission to Catholic primary schools to submit a Catholic baptismal certificate before it allocates places.

Currently children in Renfrewshire are allocated schools based on where they live. If schools are oversubscribed places are allocated by ballot, with no religious test applying at that stage.

Baptised Catholics are only given priority if parents then request a Catholic school instead of their allocated school.

Under the proposed changes children with baptism certificates would take priority over children with siblings at the same Catholic school and children who have medical needs that cannot be accommodated in any other school.

The council will also base the initial allocation of a child's secondary school on the denomination of their current school and their home address. Currently the child's address is the only factor at this stage of the process.

The council launched a [consultation](#) on the plans late last month, to run until 31 March.

The consultation says: "The proposal to change the admissions policy will allow the council to fulfil its duty to provide education to children and young people who are baptised into the Roman Catholic Church in a denominational school."

National Secular Society spokesperson Megan Manson said: "Extending discrimination against children on the basis of their religious background will alienate many families and entrench division, resentment and sectarianism."

"The council should focus on providing high quality education to all children equally, regardless of their families' religion or belief, rather than furthering the objectives of the Catholic Church. It should re-think these proposals and instead work on making schools more inclusive for all."

Notes

- The consultation will end on 31 March. Responses can be submitted [here](#).
- If approved, the policy would take effect for the August 2021/22 intake.
- There are 16 Catholic primary schools and three Catholic secondary schools in Renfrewshire. There are no other state-funded faith schools in the area.
- The council has scheduled a [consultation meeting](#) at Trinity High School in Renfrew on Tuesday 18 February at 6:30pm.

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