

NSS: school admissions changes miss chance to tackle discrimination

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The National Secular Society has criticised a revision of England's school admissions code for failing to tackle inequities stemming from faith-based admissions.

The criticism came in a response to a government [consultation on minor changes](#) to the school admissions code. The code controls how admissions authorities including local authorities, faith schools and academies must design their admissions rules.

One proposed change aims to "clarify" that school practicing religiously selective admissions can prioritise cared for children from a religious background over those who are currently or were in care, but are not from a religious background.

Children from care backgrounds are usually prioritised over all other children in admissions.

The NSS has warned that the change could result in looked after children from non-religious or minority religious backgrounds facing additional barriers accessing their local schools.

The government said it was "not seeking views on wider changes to the admissions system and other elements of the code at this stage".

The NSS's head of education, Alastair Lichten, said: "It is very disappointing that the first review of the admissions code since 2014 has ignored the opportunity to address the inequities stemming from faith-based discrimination in the current code.

"This revision of the code leaves religious discrimination untouched and even makes clear that children from care backgrounds can be subject to unjust faith-based discrimination, too."

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In July the government permitted faith schools to temporarily alter their admissions criteria to reflect closures of places of worship.

The NSS has [argued](#) that this should prompt lasting change in the school admissions system which ends religiously selective admissions for good.

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