

Job applications should not be a matter of faith

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A teacher's perspective on why faith schools should not be able to select staff and students based on their religion.

I am about to begin a role at a state-funded faith primary school, having had a successful start in teaching at an independent Catholic primary. And while I am excited about my new position, I've arrived at it by a process of elimination as much as merit.

I applied to and visited many state-funded faith schools, the vast majority being Catholic, and they made no secret of their preference for practising Catholics. One head teacher went so far as to warn potential applicants that the first part of the selection process was to indicate that a priest could provide a reference – those without one would be rejected.

I was unable to secure such a reference, because I do not attend Mass and have no intention of becoming a hypocrite.

I have thankfully been successful in finding a new job. However, I am troubled that my opportunities for employment are narrowed because I do not attend Mass. I cannot think of another public service where the issue of faith would be considered relevant or its consideration tolerated. How might doctors and nurses react if they were asked to secure faith references before they could practise medicine? Similarly, what might the public reaction be if hospitals required patients to have the "right" faith, or at least be willing to convert to gain admission?

I had another career before deciding teaching was for me and was under the misapprehension that it would always be my quality as a teacher that would be under scrutiny, not whether I attended church. I had also wrongly assumed that state-sponsored religious discrimination was something that happened in far-flung corners of the globe.

Furthermore, the segregation of children on the basis of religion does them a disservice, because it does not reflect, or prepare them for, the multicultural and increasingly globalised world we live in.

I enjoy teaching religious education and accept that some parents want schools to have a religious dimension. But I do not think that institutions should be able to select staff and students based on their religion, and I believe that such selection constitutes discrimination.

The writer is a teacher from the North of England. This blog originally appeared in the [Times Educational Supplement](#) and is reproduced here with kind permission. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the NSS.

The European Commission is currently investigating complaints submitted by the National Secular Society concerning whether UK legislation relating to state funded faith schools breaches European employment laws in relation to discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. [Find out more](#)

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