



Learning in England ∞ Faith Schools

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Historically, many of the faith schools were set up in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the UK, by Christian Churches and Jewish Synagogues to provide basic instruction in reading and writing. Some of the earliest faith schools were genuine public schools, for anyone. No one needed to pay fees.

Under the Education Act of 1944 state funded schools were established across the UK and the Churches and Synagogues could continue in the governance and management of the faith schools, even if they were funded by the state.

“Many of the UK’s faith schools are renowned for their good results, and as a result are heavily oversubscribed.”¹

Schoolrun said in 2014, 37% of the total number of state funded primary schools had a faith foundation – that is to say more than a third of all primary-school pupils in England. This included:

- 4,395 Church of England schools
- 1,661 Roman Catholic schools
- 36 Jewish schools
- 9 Muslim schools
- 5 Sikh schools

More recently the House of Commons Briefing Paper on Faith Schools [6.06.18] the authors state at the start of 2017, “1.9 million pupils at current state funded primaries and secondaries in England were taught in faith schools. 28% of primary and 19% of secondary pupils.”

There are five main differences between faith schools and other state funded schools:

1. Faith schools get some of their funding from a religious organisation for example the Church of England, which also owns the school buildings and the land. Some of the school’s governors must represent its religious ethos.

¹ Schoolrun.com. www.theschoolrun.com/what-are-faith-schools



2. Faith schools may decide their admissions policy i.e. which children they may take into the school.
3. When recruiting they look for teachers and support staff who practise the faith of the school.
4. As for the curriculum, faith schools must follow the National Curriculum in all subjects. All schools are required to provide Religious Studies but they are free to emphasise their own religion and particular parts of it eg Roman Catholic or Methodist or Church of England [Anglican].
5. Like other state schools, faith schools have to be inspected by OFSTED. They are also inspected by the overseeing religious body, with the inspection focusing on the religious ethos.

In Oxfordshire most of the state primary schools in rural areas are Church of England Primary Schools managed by an academy trust under the auspices of the Oxford Diocese.

When you instruct us to find a school for you, we ask whether you would like your child to attend a faith school, or not, and explain in more detail about the religious character of the schools that we recommend.

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I need to find a state school for my daughter but I want to be sure she is somewhere where religion does not dominate her learning. I would be worried that religious schools are not open-minded but brainwash the children. What do you advise?

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Don't worry! Faith Schools have a reputation for being strong academically and on discipline – please see what Schoolrun has said. You would expect that if parents have chosen a faith school they would also be closely engaged with their children's school progress and career.

All state schools, including faith schools, are inspected by OFSTED. It is unlawful for any school or any teacher to proselytise, which means to try and convert the children to their religious faith. Also religious education in England and Wales explores other faiths too.