



Craig Whittaker MP

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Faith Schools: National Secular Society campaign

Thank you for contacting me about faith schools.

I appreciate the concerns of people of no religion, and I certainly share the view that we should all work towards a society in which all citizens, regardless of religious belief or lack of it, can live together fairly and cohesively.

I can understand why some secular families might not wish to send their children to faith schools, however, it is also the case that many parents, of all faiths and none, wish to send their children to faith schools. Moreover, the Government does not take the view that such schools need be a source of division

Schools, including most faith schools, play a vital role in promoting integration and an understanding of different faiths and communities. All schools are required to be inclusive and to fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

By law, all schools, including faith schools, have to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and the mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and Ofsted inspectors are charged with ensuring that this happens. It is encouraging that, in her first report, the Chief Inspector of Schools said: *'In the overwhelming majority of state-funded schools, whether faith or not, these values are embedded in the school's ethos and teaching.'*

State-funded schools which fail to meet these standards face severe sanctions; independent schools face closure.

Faith schools are sometimes singled out as causes of community division but they have the same obligations as secular schools to promote the values outlined above. Moreover, they have a strong record of high pupil attainment and are often very popular with parents of all faiths and none. I welcome the Government's wide ranging education reforms which are raising school standards across the country, and allow parents, both secular and religious, greater choice of good schools in which to educate their children.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP