

ADDRESS 1
ADDRESS 2
ADDRESS 3
ADDRESS 4

DATE

Dear NAME,

As the head of a Local Authority [OR OTHER JOB ROLE] projected by the Government to be in high need of additional primary and/or secondary school places,¹ you are no doubt aware that the Government has recently launched a capital funding scheme to enable a wave of new 100% religiously selective Voluntary Aided (VA) schools to open in areas where there is sufficient evidence of basic need for places.

I am writing to urge you to ensure that every new school that opens in [insert LA name here] is inclusive and open to pupils from all backgrounds by rejecting any forthcoming proposals for fully religiously selective schools in the area.

It is the view of Humanists UK that state-funded schools should not be able to turn pupils away because of their religious background, and the decision to offer funding so that more 100% selective schools can open - something that hasn't been available since 2007 - is discriminatory and seriously threatens social integration.

There is a great deal of robust evidence showing that, in addition to dividing pupils by faith, religiously selective schools separate pupils along ethnic and socio-economic lines, and it is this, rather than a faith ethos, that accounts for any enhanced levels of attainment.² Indeed, in its recent *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*³ the Government itself acknowledges that homogenous religious schools can threaten inclusivity when they offer pupils insufficient opportunity to mix with those from differing backgrounds and thus fail to engender the meaningful interactions necessary to build sustainable inter-communal relationships.

For these reasons, I hope you will do all you can to oppose plans for VA schools in [insert name of LA here]. Further, section 6A of the Education Act 2006 provides that 'If a local authority in England think a new school needs to be established in their area, they must seek proposals for the establishment of an Academy.' This is plainly the Government's view here and it should plainly be yours too. Any resultant free schools, in the event that they have a religious character, may only prioritise 50% of their places on religious grounds, whereas if VA schools open instead they are quite likely to convert to academies that can 100% select.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Copson
Chief Executive

¹ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-capacity-academic-year-2016-to-2017>

² For an overview see <http://accordcoalition.org.uk/research/> and <http://fairadmissions.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-08-29-FINAL-Religious-Selection-Research-Survey.pdf>

³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf pp. 26-27