

BHA BRIEFING: Plans to expand the number of Church of England schools

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Briefing from the British Humanist Association (BHA):

'The single most threatening development on faith schools in a decade': Government backs Church plans to take over many more state schools

A recent report in the *Times Educational Supplement (TES)* (<http://bit.ly/xdshoP>) has revealed that the government is looking for ways to make it even easier for the Church of England to take control of state-funded schools, including:

- 1) Changing policy to encourage and allow inclusive community schools to become 'faith' Academies in one simple step – something that has not been allowed previously;
- 2) Allowing the Church of England to 'sponsor' many other schools which may not take on a 'religious character' but would still have a 'faith' ethos;
- 3) Allowing 'Secular' Academies (i.e. Academies without a religious character) to enter into partnership with the Church.

These changes could help the Church to realise its vision of becoming the *'largest sponsor and provider of secondary education in the country'* (<http://bit.ly/An4a9N>).

We believe these government-supported Church plans represent the single most threatening development in the area of 'faith' schools since their expansion began in 2001. We believe that the plans put inclusive education at real risk, and we urge support from parliamentarians to oppose them.

We have produced a detailed background briefing to provide more detail, evidence and information on this subject. Please see our website at <http://bit.ly/Ahewcq>, or contact me directly on the details below.

We are keen to support MPs and Peers to table parliamentary questions, arrange debates, write to Michael Gove, or by any other means possible to gather more information on the plans and to make clear to the government that there is strong opposition to an increase in the role of religion over the state-maintained school system.

About the BHA

The British Humanist Association (BHA) is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. It is the largest organisation in the UK campaigning for an end to religious privilege and to discrimination based on religion or belief, and for a secular state.

The BHA has a long history of contributing towards and improving state education. We provide materials and advice to parents, governors, students, teachers and academics. We also work closely with others on wider equalities issues in a range of forums. The BHA is a member of the National Children's Bureau Sex Education Forum (SEF), the Children's Rights Alliance for England and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales.

Naomi Phillips

Head of Public Affairs

07540 257101

020 7079 3585

naomi@humanism.org.uk

www.humanism.org.uk