

Types of school with a religious character ('faith' schools)

Almost all Voluntary schools have a religious character, but most Foundation schools and all Community schools do not. Academies and Free Schools are a mixture. 34% of state schools in England and 14% in Wales have a religious character.

| Type of school | Community schools (cannot have a religious character) | Voluntary Controlled 'faith' schools (legally registered with a religious character) | Voluntary Aided 'faith' schools (legally registered with a religious character) | Foundation 'faith' schools (legally registered with a religious character) | 'Faith' Academies and Free Schools (legally registered with a religious character) | Academies and Free Schools with no registered religious character (but may have a 'faith ethos') |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| Funding | From local authority. | From local authority. | All running costs and 90% of building costs from local authority; remaining 10% from the religious authority. | From local authority. | From central Government. Under Labour, Academy sponsor invested 10% or up to £2m of start-up capital costs (whichever is greatest) with remainder of funding from central Government. Often the sponsors' fee went unpaid, and sometimes eventually waived altogether. Nowadays, no sponsor is required to invest any money. | |
| Governors | Appointed along secular lines. | One quarter appointed by the relevant religious authority. | More than half appointed by the relevant religious authority. | The foundation usually appoints about a quarter of the school governors but in some cases it appoints the majority of governors. | If sponsored, the sponsor can appoint all the governors. If converting to Academy status from another type of school, the governing body, foundation or trust will form the academy trust and then appoint the governing body. In the case of a brand new Free School, the organisation setting it up can appoint all governors. Governing body must include at least two parents and the principal. If with a 'faith ethos', governors may be appointed for religious reasons. | |
| Land and building ownership | Owned by local authority. | Normally owned by a charitable foundation run by the relevant religious authority (apart from the playing fields which are normally vested in the local authority). | | Owned by the governing body or by a charitable foundation run by the religious authority. | Land typically leased by local authority or diocese to the Academy Trust for 125 years at peppercorn rate. Otherwise, the school's land and buildings are owned by the Academy Trust. | |
| National Curriculum | Must follow. | Must follow. | Must follow. | Must follow. | Does not need to follow, but must teach a 'broad and balanced curriculum' including English, Maths and Science. Free schools and some Academies opened from 2012 cannot teach as 'evidence-based' anything that contradicts the scientific consensus. | |
| Religious Education | Set every 5 years by local Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and overseen by Standing Advisory Council on RE (SACRE). Must be non-confessional. Inspected by Ofsted. | As set by ASC and hence non-confessional – unless parents request RE for their children is taught in accordance with the trust deeds and faith of the school. Inspected by person chosen by the governing body (not Ofsted). | Set by governors in accordance with the tenets of the faith of the school (i.e. the trust deeds), unless parents request non-confessional RE for their children as set by ASC. Inspected by person chosen by the governing body (not Ofsted). | As set by ASC and hence non-confessional – unless parents request that RE for their children is taught in accordance with the trust deeds and faith of the school. Inspected by person chosen by foundation governors (not Ofsted). | If the Academy is a former Foundation or Voluntary Controlled school, non-confessional unless parents request faith-based RE for their children. Otherwise, set by governors in accordance with the tenets of the faith of the school, unless (for schools opened from 2012 onwards) parents request non-confessional RE for their children as set by ASC. Inspected by a person chosen by the Academy (not Ofsted). | Set by governors but must be non-confessional. Many schools choose the syllabus set by the ASC, although there is no requirement to and many don't. Inspected by Ofsted. |
| Collective Worship | 'Wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' but subject to SACRE approval may be changed to another faith, multi-faith or spiritual. | Must be 'in accordance with the tenets and practices of the religion or religious denomination.' | Must be 'in accordance with the tenets and practices of the religion or religious denomination.' | Must be 'in accordance with the tenets and practices of the religion or religious denomination.' | Must be 'in accordance with the tenets and practices of the religion or religious denomination.' | 'Wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' but subject to government approval may be changed to another faith, multi-faith or spiritual. |
| Admissions | Determined by local authority; cannot discriminate on religious grounds. | Determined by local authority; most cannot discriminate on religious grounds although a quarter of authorities let some do. | Determined by governors 'in consultation' with local authority; can discriminate against all pupils on religious grounds if oversubscribed. | Determined by governors in consultation with local authority; can discriminate on religious grounds if oversubscribed. | Determined by governors; can discriminate on religious grounds though with Academies that do not replace a pre-existing state school, also known as Free Schools, can only do so for up to 50% of intake. | Determined by governors; cannot discriminate on religious grounds. |
| Employment | Cannot discriminate on religious grounds. | Are required to use a religious test in appointing, remunerating and promoting a fifth of teachers (and in appointing other staff if an 'occupational requirement' is demonstrated). These teachers must be <i>able</i> to teach religious education. The head teacher can be included in this. | Can use a religious test in appointing, remunerating and promoting all teachers (and in appointing other staff if an 'occupational requirement' is demonstrated). Teachers can be disciplined or dismissed for conduct which is 'incompatible with the precepts' of the school's religion. | Are required to use a religious test in appointing, remunerating and promoting a fifth of teachers (and in appointing other staff if an 'occupational requirement' is demonstrated). These teachers must be <i>able</i> to teach religious education. The head teacher can be included in this. | Can use a religious test in appointing, remunerating and promoting all teachers (and in appointing other staff if an 'occupational requirement' is demonstrated). Teachers can be disciplined or dismissed for conduct which is 'incompatible with the precepts' of the school's religion. If converting from VC or Foundation to Academy status, existing staff are protected from discrimination. Teachers do not need to hold Qualified Teacher Status. | If with a 'faith ethos', can use a religious test in appointing, remunerating and promoting some staff if a 'genuine occupational requirement' is demonstrated. Teachers do not need to hold Qualified Teacher Status. |