**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.

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| **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’)** | **Private ‘faith’ schools (the vast majority of private schools are religious)**  |
| **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. | Can decide their own governance arrangements and appoint their own governors, including along religious lines. |
| **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.  | Does not need to follow. |
| **Creationism/Evolution** | Illegal to teach pseudoscientific ideas such as creationism or intelligent design as scientifically valid or factual. Must teach evolution in line with national curriculum in science. | Illegal to teach pseudoscientific ideas such as creationism or intelligent design as scientifically valid or factual. Must teach evolution in line with national curriculum in science. | Illegal to teach pseudoscientific ideas such as creationism or intelligent design as scientifically valid or factual. Must teach evolution in line with national curriculum in science. | Illegal to teach pseudoscientific ideas such as creationism or intelligent design as scientifically valid or factual. Must teach evolution in line with national curriculum in science. | ‘Must not allow any view or theory to be taught as evidence-based if it is contrary to established scientific or historical evidence and explanations.’ And though no requirement to follow the national curriculum, ‘must provide for the teaching of evolution as a comprehensive, coherent and extensively evidenced theory’. | May teach pseudoscience including creationism as fact and can choose to dismiss evolution or not teach it at all. |
| **Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)** | Must provide SRE, but teaching about STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and the sex education elements of the national curriculum is all that is required. Parents can withdraw children from non-national curriculum elements. | Must provide SRE, but teaching about STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and the sex education elements of the national curriculum is all that is required. Parents can withdraw children from non-national curriculum elements. | Must provide SRE, but teaching about STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and the sex education elements of the national curriculum is all that is required. Parents can withdraw children from non-national curriculum elements. | Must provide SRE, but teaching about STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and the sex education elements of the national curriculum is all that is required. Parents can withdraw children from non-national curriculum elements. | Not required to teach any SRE at all, and parents can withdraw children from what would be non-national curriculum elements, if the school were a community / voluntary / foundation school. | Not required to teach any SRE at all, and do not have to provide parents with rights of withdrawal if it is taught. |
| **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. | May teach any form of RE they like, or teach none at all, with the only limitation being the fulfilment of obligations around the promotion of British values. They do not have to provide parents with rights of withdrawal if it is taught. |
| **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. | No requirement to hold collective worship, though they can choose to have it (most do) and if they do they do not have to provide parents or pupils with a right of withdrawal. |
| **Admissions** | Determined by local authority; cannot discriminate on religious grounds. Must adhere to the Schools Admissions Code. | Determined by local authority; most cannot discriminate on religious grounds although a quarter of authorities let some do. Must adhere to the Schools Admissions Code. | Determined by governors ‘in consultation’ with local authority; can discriminate against all pupils on religious grounds if oversubscribed. Must adhere to the Schools Admissions Code. | Determined by governors in consultation with local authority; can discriminate on religious grounds if oversubscribed. Must adhere to the Schools Admissions Code. | 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. Must adhere to the Schools Admissions Code. | Determined by governors; cannot discriminate on religious grounds. Must adhere to the Schools Admissions Code. | Not subject to the School Admissions Code and are free to discriminate on the basis of religion or belief, including by refusing to admit pupils even if undersubscribed. |
| **Employment** | Cannot discriminate on religious grounds. | Can 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 *able* 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. | Can 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 *able* 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. | Can use a religious test in appointing, promoting, remunerating all teachers (and in appointing other staff if an ‘occupational requirement’ is demonstrated). Teachers can be dismissed for any conduct which is ‘incompatible with the precepts, or with the upholding of the tenets’ of the school’s religion. |

Information applies to England and Wales only. Academies and Free Schools only exist in England. British Humanist Association [**www.humanism.org.uk**](http://www.humanism.org.uk) Last revised April 2016