

## **Bishop of Oxford speaks out on Church Schools**



**From The Daily Mirror**

### **Bishop says C of E schools should change admissions policies**

CHURCH of England schools could be forced to open their doors to non-Anglican pupils, a leading clergyman said yesterday.

Rt Rev John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford, wants an end to schools reserving all their spaces for children of the faithful.

The Bishop said: "That number ought to be minimised because our primary function and our privilege is to serve the wider community."

**The Oxford Diocese website**

### **Bishop of Oxford speaks on church schools**

The Bishop of Oxford was widely quoted in the media over the weekend about his views on admissions policy in church schools. For information, this story came out of a wide ranging interview he gave to the Times Educational Supplement some weeks ago as the new Chair of the Board of Education.

This statement has also been issued to the media:

"The views on admissions expressed in the TES interview represent the personal views of the Chair of the Board of Education. They are part of what he called a good, honest discussion about what church schools are for. But it should be remembered that admissions policy remains the responsibility of the governors of each school."

In case of any confusion it should also be noted that the advice which the National Society/Board of Education will give to Diocesan Boards of Education in the summer will not mention any recommended percentages for foundation places.

From The Churchmouse website

## Bishop of Oxford blunders on Church School admissions

Bishop John Pritchard has bizarrely chosen Good Friday to discuss admission policies in Church schools. Not only that, but he has made a mess of it.

For a while the BBC were leading with it on their bulletins, and the story was their lead story online.

Secularists were semi-jubilant at the 'admission' from the bishop that Church schools only outperform others due to their 'selection' policies.

Bishop John has taken Church schools to task. There really is no other way to look at it. He has said that he would like to see Church schools limit the number of reserved places for families from the Church to no more than 10% of the intake. In doing so he has told Church schools that don't currently abide by this policy that they are not serving their communities and are only serving themselves by collecting "nice Christians into safe places".

However, he also made some comments around the topic, which are what has caused most of the stir. In a series of interviews, Bishop John said that results would fall if this policy is adopted. This is what has got the secularists in a spin, as they see that as confirmation that they were right all along, and Church schools results are all due to covert selection through their admissions policies.

The reaction, other than from those who have always been hostile to faith schools, is that this is a mistake. It has been condemned by those who run other faith schools, including the Catholic Schools, who feel this is pandering to a secularist agenda.

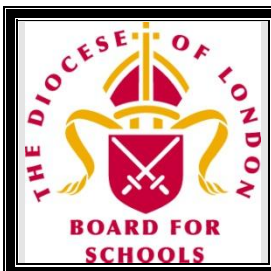
**The Guardian**

**Faith schools: now even the church admits they're unfair**  
by Polly Toynbee



Humanists and secularists have been hammering away at this, but the churches denied unequivocal evidence that faith schools take fewer free school-meal pupils. The Commons education committee reported faith schools discriminating against poor and migrant children. The chief schools adjudicator is leaving before his contract ends after criticising government plans to weaken the admissions code. He told parliament a third of his cases related to faith school admissions. Institute of Education research shows selection by faith schools leads to greater social segregation – with no improvement in an area's results. So it is a great step forward that the Bishop of Oxford, new chair of the church's education board, accepts the facts and proposes only 10% of places be reserved for the faithful: "We may not get the startling results that some church schools do because of getting some very able children, but we will make a difference to people's lives."

He echoes a strong strand among liberal vicars uncomfortable at running schools excluding the most needy. But will it happen? Remember the almighty row from Catholics and the Daily Mail at a failed Labour plan to reserve just a quarter of places for non-churchgoers. It may be far too late. The bishop admits he has no power, since governors run and often own faith schools, while parents in pews expect a place in reward for their prayers. Will the other 90% of children need to prove no CofE connections? That 10% selection will still be enough to make these desirable schools, so parents will still move into their catchments.



**Interview given by the Bishop of Oxford  
to the Times Education Supplement**

To Chairs of Governing Bodies and Headteachers

From Inigo Woolf and Liz Wolverson

27 April 2011

Dear Colleagues,

For those of you in England on Maundy Thursday/Good Friday, you will have been surprised to hear the Bishop of Oxford, who chairs the Board of Education for the Archbishops' Council expounding on the need to open up the admissions policies of Church Schools.

For a leading clergyman in the Church of England to give personal views to a journalist about a sensitive topic such as admission policies when the subject has not even been considered by the National Church or dioceses beggars belief.

We all agree that the Church of England has been providing education for the poor and labouring classes of our parishes for centuries and this remains the rationale for our voluntary aided schools.



We are also clear that Church of England schools need to maintain a Christian distinctiveness and ethos. The Bishop is of the view that this can be achieved with a small number of foundation places where the headteacher, the governing body, staff and the local Church provide this strong Christian leadership.

Within our 149 Church of England schools the admission policies reflect local circumstances but across the Diocese, the LDBS would like to see wherever practicable 50% of foundation places and 50% open places. Where Schools are heavily oversubscribed on first preferences any changes in admission policies will be fraught with difficulty and unintended consequences.

No doubt the Bishop of Oxford will consult widely before making further personal pronouncements and we would hope that the National Society will seek the views of schools before formulating advice on admission policies.

In London we are proud of the inclusiveness of our schools, the diverse backgrounds of our 50,000 pupils and we will continue to support your future plans for developing education in your locality.

You remain in control of admission arrangements and we hope you will allay any fears within your communities that change will be imposed.