

Primary school tables: faith schools dominating rankings



School league tables show that two-thirds of the best primaries in 2014 are faith-based institutions, even though they represent just a third of all schools nationally

More faith schools are dominating places at the top of primary league tables.

Faith schools are increasingly monopolising places at the top of national league tables, figures show, prompting fresh claims that institutions are creaming off bright pupils from middle-class families.

School-by-school results published by the Department for Education show two-thirds of primaries achieving “perfect” results this summer have a religious ethos. It was up on the number a year earlier.

The figures suggest that faith schools – which make up just a third of all schools nationally – are dramatically overrepresented among the best performers.

In all, almost half of the best schools are affiliated to the Church of England while one-in-eight are Roman Catholic primaries.

For the first time this year, one Sikh school – Guru Nanak Academy in Hayes, west London – featured among England’s top primaries.

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Faith schools have repeatedly claimed that they get better results because of their strong religious ethos, high levels of pastoral assistance and support from churchgoing families.

But the disclosure is likely to renew the debate over the admissions policies used by faith schools.

The British Humanist Association has warned that schools are “unrepresentative” of their local communities, with large numbers of middle-class families conveniently finding God to secure places for their children.

Richy Thompson, BHA campaigns officer, said its own research had shown that top performing faith schools were "less inclusive" than their communities, particularly Catholic and Jewish schools.

"It is hard to escape the conclusion that the high number of faith schools at the top of today's tables is due to religious schools having unrepresentative intakes," he said.

But the CofE has criticised the BHA findings as flawed, adding that many pupils at its best-performing school were from poor families.

According to figures, some 693 primaries in England saw 100 per cent of pupils reaching the standard expected of the average 11-year-old this summer. All children are supposed to achieve level 4 in reading, writing and maths.

It was up dramatically from 549 in 2013.

Of those “perfect” schools, 427 – or 62 per cent – were faith-based primaries. This was up from 60 per cent 12 months earlier.

A breakdown of figures shows 330 were Church of England, 88 Roman Catholic, four Jewish, four belonged to other Christian denominations and one was Sikh.

It emerged that Hampden Gurney CofE Primary School in central London – where more than half of pupils speak English as a second language – was the best performing faith school. Some 85 per cent of pupils at the school achieved the more advanced standard – level 5 – which is typically expected of children in the first few years of secondary education.

Rev Nigel Genders, the CofE's chief education officer, said: “We are working hard to ensure that the excellent practice in these high-performing schools is shared across our network and beyond, so that all schools can achieve the best for their pupils.

"I am particularly pleased that our highest performing school, Hampden Gurney, has secured fantastic

outcomes with a significant number of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 – demonstrating once again that a child’s success should never be limited by their background.”

Graeme Paton - The Telegraph