
UK: public schools and cap on Catholic pupils, UK Government backtracks

“We welcome the Government’s proposal to lift the faith-based admissions cap and call on Catholics in England and Wales to respond positively by participating in the consultation process”, said Marcus Stock, the Bishop responsible for Education, expressing the relief of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales at the decision by the UK Education Secretary Gillian Keegan to no longer limit to 50% the number of Catholic pupils admitted to new public schools that are run by the Church but funded by the British state. The final decision will be made at the end of a seven-week public consultation that closes on 20 June 2024. This agreement between the Church and the State dates back to the mid-19th century when the bishops requested permission to run institutions where the faith could be passed on to the new generations of Catholics who had just regained their civil rights. Today, these schools are under attack by more aggressive atheist associations, such as Humanists UK, because they allegedly divide society. For this reason, a 50% cap on the admission of Catholic pupils was introduced in 2010. At that point, however, the Church decided not to open new schools. In his statement, Bishop Stock points out that the 2,169 Catholic primary and secondary schools in England and Wales educate a higher percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities than the average, as well as many pupils with special educational needs.

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