

SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

POLICY STATEMENT

ADMISSION CRITERIA - DEFINING CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

DEFINING CHURCH CRITERIA

2.8 The criteria which relate to "faith" commitment are the most difficult to define because of the variety of styles of worship and the different ways in which commitment may be expressed. Governing bodies together with the local church need to consider for themselves how commitment should be defined. Each governing body must decide for itself what is appropriate to the local circumstances. Evidence of Christian commitment should be sought from the clergy and this should be stated in the policy. Governing bodies should consider whether parents ought to include evidence of religious commitment with their application, if appropriate.

2.9 Governing bodies should consider how they would define "church" in the policy. Is admission open to members of:

- (i) the local Parish Church? - If so, is it named in the policy?
- (ii) other Anglican churches? - In a defined area or named churches? Governors should consider the proximity of other schools. Governors may wish to consider, in particular, including other churches where there is no church school in the parish.
- (iii) other Christian denominations? - How is "Christian" defined? Are there ecumenical links with other churches?

Consider membership of with, for example, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and/or the Evangelical Alliance (see Annex 2).

DEFINING COMMITMENT

2.10 Attendance: Many admission policies require parents to attend church services either weekly, or once or twice a month for at least a year. However, attendance at Sunday worship is not the only means of establishing commitment and governing bodies should consider whether this is an appropriate measure. In particular, it is important that single-parent families are not disadvantaged. Consideration should also be given to a parent's ability to attend Sunday worship. Some parents may find it is easier to be involved with mid-week services and some may have jobs which require them to work on Sundays, eg, hospital staff, shop assistants, police; others may have one parent working abroad for extended periods.

2.11 Active involvement in the church: Involvement can be interpreted differently in different churches: for families who have moved recently governing bodies should consider previous commitment in another church. Evidence should be sought from the previous minister. Some examples of evidence of involvement are given below.

- (i) Participation in church activities.
- (ii) Membership of church committees.
- (iii) Responsibilities in the church, eg, steward, sidesperson, youth leader, Sunday school teacher.
- (iv) Leading worship.

However, it is important to note the considerations mentioned in the previous paragraph which may apply to some families. No one definition of Christian commitment will be suitable for all church schools. Each governing body should work out for itself what is appropriate to the particular circumstances of their community.

FAMILY OR PARENT?

2.12 Governing bodies may take into account the commitment of the parent/guardian, or family, and, in secondary schools, that of the pupil. Again it is important to define the terms used. If a governing body means to restrict "family" to parents and guardians, this should be made clear in the policy. If a broader definition is meant, eg, including grandparents, this should also be explained.

OTHER FAITHS

2.14 Some church schools attract parents of other faiths who choose a church school because it recognises the value of faith and acknowledges the reality of the presence of God. In the foundation/open place model, children of other faiths would naturally fall in the open category. Where priority is given to families of other faiths, governing bodies will need to obtain appropriate evidence of commitment from the faith leader and make it clear in the policy that such evidence is required. Governors may also wish to consider what proportion of the intake should be from families of other faiths.

June 1998 (Schools Committee)

Revised June 2000

Reference: *Admission and Appeals in C of E Schools: Guidelines for Governors of VA and Foundation Schools*, SDBE,2003.