

Church of England schools flouting daily worship law

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A survey by *The Sunday Times* has found that 40% of Church of England 'faith schools' are flouting the law that requires all state funded schools to provide a daily act of collective worship.

The survey revealed that in many C of E schools, Bible readings and prayers have been replaced by group discussions about community and society. According to the *Sunday Times*, even among those schools that abide by the law, many are doing the bare minimum.

Earlier [research by the BBC](#), conducted last year, found that the law requiring daily worship is widely ignored across all schools and not wanted by parents. Almost two-thirds (64%) of parents said that their children did not attend such an activity and over two thirds (67%) of parents do not support enforcing the law.

Daily worship in all state funded schools has been a legal obligation since 1944. England and Wales are the only countries in the world where such laws apply. Attempts by the National Secular Society to make worship optional for schools rather than compulsory during the passage of last year's Education Bill (now Act) were [rejected](#) out of hand by the Government – even though, for tactical reasons, this proposal only related to community (i.e. not church) schools. The Government also rejected our amendments to allow older pupils to withdraw themselves despite backing for our stance from the Joint (Parliamentary) Committee on Human Rights.

Michael Nazir-Ali, the former Bishop of Rochester, said: "Compulsory daily prayers and reflection of a religious nature is law for a reason. It is there to enforce the foundations of moral and spiritual values in children."

Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society said: "This latest research makes it clear that compulsory worship in schools is outdated and unpopular – even in church schools.

"The Government is determined to continue to impose religion on pupils in this draconian way, despite its unpopularity, and England and Wales being the only countries in the world continuing to do so. The [law](#) doesn't just say that pupils will attend these acts of worship, but that they will 'take part' in them. This is a breach of their human rights. In what other context — other than some authoritarian theocracy — would worship be enforced even on those who have made a conscientious decision to reject it?"

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