

NSS questions new report on Religious Education

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A new report from Oxford University, which says that teachers are afraid to teach religious education in case they are perceived as "evangelising", has been questioned today by the National Secular Society.

The [report](#) says that according to a poll it has undertaken, two thirds of people think RE should be taught in schools and that Christianity should be given preference.

But a closer look at the sponsors of this research shows it has received £48,500 funding from a strongly evangelical organisation, the [Jerusalem Trust](#) which is underpinned by money from the Sainsbury family.

Among the Jerusalem Trust's stated aims are: "to advance the Christian religion" and "Evangelism and Christian mission in the UK: Trustees are particularly interested in Christian projects that develop new ways of working with children and young people."

The University received a further £100,000 from Culham and St Gabriel's Trust, a Christian organisation with links to the Church of England, which runs an organisation called [RE Today](#) whose sole purpose is to advance the strength and prominence of religious education in schools.

The Oxford Study also produced an opinion poll that showed two thirds of the population in favour of religious education and the importance of Christianity, although the poll has not been published, so it is difficult to know what questions were asked and how they were framed in order to get these results.

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said: "This study has been reported with very little mention of who has sponsored it and what their motives are. Is it just evangelical Christians surreptitiously pushing forward their agenda under a respectable academic cover?"

Mr Sanderson said that The National Secular Society is receiving an increasing number of complaints from parents about the intensity and often evangelical nature of religious education that is being taught in schools – even community schools.

"Parents contact us frequently with stories of their children having been told that if they don't believe in God there will be dire consequences for them. One parent said that her child had been told that the Bible is the most important book they will ever read and much more important than any science book.

"Religious education will always be a happy hunting ground for the evangelically minded. They realise that the cross-over point from education to proselytising is very hard to define."

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