

# Anti-LGBT religious exemptions will be removed from Ireland's equality legislation

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The National Secular Society has welcomed confirmation that Ireland's government is to amend the exemptions to equality law which permit religious discrimination.

Plans to amend the Employment Equality Act were confirmed by equality minister Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, so that Section 37 will be changed to end discrimination against LGBT people in schools and hospitals.

Speaking as marriage equality came into force in Ireland, the minister [said](#): "As marriage equality becomes a reality today, on Wednesday we amend [Section 37] to end LGBT and other discrimination in schools and hospitals".

Speaking with News Talk, he also added: "Marriage equality was a wonderful achievement, and Ireland should be very proud of being the first country to bring in marriage equality by popular vote.

"But if you're 13 years of age, and you're just coming out and you're nervous, marriage equality or rights might feel a very long way away.

"We still have issues of homophobia in Ireland – I don't think we're unique in that respect – but the things we're doing even this week will go a long way to addressing that."

The law [currently says](#) that a "religious, educational or medical institution which is under the direction or control of a body established for religious purposes or whose objectives include the provision of services in an environment which promotes certain religious values" can 'take action' against employees who undermine the organisations religious ethos.

At present employers may give "favourable treatment" on religious grounds to their workers or prospective employees to "maintain the religious ethos of the institution".

Similar exemption in the UK allow schools with a religious character to apply a religious test to teaching posts and discipline or dismissed teachers for conduct which is "incompatible with the precepts of the school's religion".

NSS campaigns manager, Stephen Evans, welcomed the development in Ireland and said: "It's great to see Ireland leading the way in eliminating discrimination against LGBT people by removing these religious exemptions.

"It's time similar exemptions from UK equality law were removed to prevent teachers and other employees of religious organisations from being discriminated against based on personal circumstances irrelevant to their ability to do the job."

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