

NSS: school which censored textbooks trying to hide from criticism

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The National Secular Society has said a school which removed references to homosexuality from textbooks is "erroneously employing accusations of bigotry to hide from criticism".

Last week it was [revealed](#) that an orthodox Jewish girls' school in Stamford Hill had censored sections of GCSE textbooks. Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls' school removed references to homosexuals from a section of a textbook about Nazi policies.

It also changed a number of images of women to hide their chests, shoulders, arms and legs above the knee. In a section on the position of women in modern American society, it removed references to women smoking, drinking and driving with men, along with the sentence: "They kissed in public."

The book was called [Understanding the Modern World](#), one of the exam board AQA's GCSE history resources.

In response to the revelation a spokesman for the school [claimed](#) those criticising its conduct had "an anti-Jewish agenda".

"We are concerned that Ofsted continuously jumps to the tune of small pressure groups like the humanists [Humanists UK] and the National Secular Society that have a very clear anti-Jewish agenda.

"Their current noisy campaigns against circumcision, shechita [the method of slaughter used to produce kosher meat], Jewish schools, housing and respecting the dead make it clear that the humanists' idea of a modern Britain is one that is free of observant Jews."

The spokesman said the school's policies were designed to "protect our girls from sexualisation in line with our parents' wishes and religious beliefs".

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans called the school's reaction "appalling".

"The school appears to have no reasonable defence for censoring its textbooks in this way. Removing references to men mixing with women limits girls' horizons when education should empower them. And removing references to the persecution of homosexuals during the Holocaust is particularly shocking.

"This school's response to the revelations about its own position is worryingly blasé. And its decision to throw out unfounded, incorrect accusations of bigotry appears to be an attempt to change the subject so it can hide from justified criticism."

The school's accusation came before the NSS had publicly commented on the episode, apart from by sending one factual [tweet](#) which described what had happened.

Yesodey Hatorah also faced complaints over censorship in 2013. The exam board OCR [found](#) that questions on evolution had been obscured in 52 papers in two GCSE science exams, meaning

they could not be answered. The NSS had asked it to investigate reports that teachers had redacted questions.

At the time OCR said it did "not consider obscuring aspects of question papers to be good exam practice". It said it would raise the matter with the Department for Education, Ofsted and its fellow awarding bodies, and Ofqual was aware of the investigation and its outcome.

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