

EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

FREE SPEECH

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

DEMOCRACY

SOCIAL COHESION

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION

**SECULARISM
PROTECTS**

national
secular
society

Secularism, the idea that the state should be separate from religion, is an essential part of promoting justice and ensuring cohesion and equality between citizens.

Britain today is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world, with more non-believers than ever before. It's essential that no religious group is able to exert undue influence, or impose their ideas on everyone whether they share their beliefs or not.

Religion enjoys a position of privilege in the UK. The Church of England is established as the 'national church'. Our head of state also acts as 'Defender of the Faith' and the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Twenty six of its bishops sit as of right in the House of Lords – Britain is the only Western democracy to give clerics this unique position of power. Publicly funded schools are used to promote religion, undermining young people's religious freedom.

By becoming a member of the National Secular Society you can help us campaign for a truly secular democracy where our political structures reflect the reality of changing times by separating religion from the state.

Whatever your religion or beliefs, secularism protects you.

Secularism protects democracy

Secularism protects individual religious freedom but denies organised religion privileged access to the public sphere. In a secular society the religious affiliation of citizens should give them no advantage or disadvantage.

Secularism protects human rights and equality

Secularism ensures religious dogma never undermines universal human rights. It ensures that everyone, regardless of their religion or belief, is treated equally. It resists religious exemptions that undermine equality laws and champions individual liberty by ensuring the judicial process is not hindered or replaced by religious courts and tribunals.

Secularism protects free expression

Religious people have the right to express their beliefs publicly, but so do those who oppose or question those beliefs. Secularism ensures religious ideas and beliefs do not enjoy privileged protection. In a democracy, all ideas and beliefs must be open to discussion, satire, ridicule and criticism.

Secularism protects social cohesion

Secularism is not anti-religious. It is a political framework for ensuring that people of all religions and none can live together fairly and more harmoniously. The alternative is a society increasingly fragmented along religious lines, leading to sectarian conflict and competitive religious grievances and demands.

Secularism protects religious freedom

Secularism protects everyone's religious freedoms, including the right to practise or change their religion or follow no religion at all. It protects an individual's right to practise their faith, provided they don't infringe on the rights of others. Secularism also prevents government interference with the doctrines of religious bodies and gives them freedom, within the law, to organise as they see fit.

Secularism protects education

Schools should not be used to promote religion or indoctrinate children. A secular approach to education would ensure that publicly funded schools are neutral on matters of religion, truly inclusive, and open equally to all children regardless of their religious backgrounds.



Religion in schools?

Around a third of our publicly funded schools are faith schools. Faith schools are permitted to promote their religious beliefs above others, and deliver the curriculum within the tenets of their faith. This means many faith schools teach Religious Education from their own narrow perspective, and distort Relationships and Sex Education through a religious lens.

All state schools, regardless of their ethos, are required by law to hold acts of worship.

We believe young people should be entitled to a secular education which doesn't seek to inculcate them into a particular faith.

Many faith schools can also select pupils on the basis of religion. This limits choice for parents and gives children unequal access to publicly-funded schools. Such unfair and discriminatory admissions policies also result in a form of socio-economic selection.

Faith schools are divisive and harm social cohesion by dividing children and segregating communities along religious and ethnic lines.

Parents have the right to raise their children in accordance with their religious and philosophical convictions, but not for this to be publicly funded.

We want to see children of all faith backgrounds educated together and empower them to develop their own beliefs.

JOIN US!



Angela Eagle MP



Dan Snow



Baroness Kinnock



Maajid Nawaz



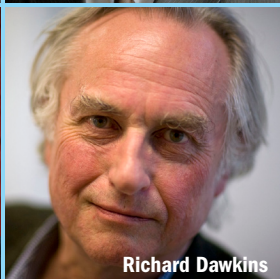
Ricky Gervais



Beverley Turner



Peter Tatchell



Richard Dawkins

Some of our honorary associates

Founded in 1866, the National Secular Society is a membership organisation campaigning for a secular state and a society where everyone is treated equally regardless of their religion or belief.

We cannot do this without financial support. Make a stand for freedom, fairness and human rights by joining the NSS today and adding your voice to the call for a secular society.

HELP US CAMPAIGN FOR:

- A secular education system and an end to publicly funded faith schools
- Freedom of expression, unrestricted by religious considerations
- Secular public services with no discrimination in employment or service delivery
- Reform of the House of Lords to end the bishops' right to seats in Parliament
- Disestablishment of the Church of England
- Equality for all under one secular law

www.secularism.org.uk

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