

Dealing with inappropriate evangelism in schools

Schools are forbidden by law from promoting partisan political views during teaching, but there are no such limitations on the promotion of partisan religious views.

We are concerned that state schools are being targeted by evangelical religious groups as part of their missionary work. If you have concerns about evangelising and proselytising in the classroom, we urge you to raise the school's head teacher in the first instance, and if necessary, also with the Governors or LEA.

If you have information or concerns about proselytising teachers or external visitors in a particular school, we would also be keen to hear from you and will be happy to assist you in challenging it.

Some questions you may want to think about are:

1. What are your aims? Are they to (1) stop the group visits (2) put in place appropriate boundaries to prevent proselytization or (3) draw attention to the wider issues of evangelism in schools? We are happy to support you with any or all of these, but it may be best to think about what it is that you would like to achieve.
2. Who else shares your concerns?
3. What is the nature and stated purpose of the visits/involvement in the school of the church?

We always recommend good communications with the school, and recognize that often schools invite groups in or fail to set appropriate boundaries because they have good intentions (external visitors can make a valuable educational contribution) but have been naive or lack experience. The organisation may have policies in place to prevent evangelism, you may want to find out what they are, if they are sufficient and if they're being followed. The group may even welcome feedback if they have inadvertently strayed into evangelism and don't want to undermine their educational goals.

If you need advice please contact education@secularism.org.uk

Groups currently active in schools

The NSS maintains a database groups who have been reported to us as engaging in evangelism in schools for casework purposes. This is by no means exhaustive and such groups may be doing legitimate work in schools, alongside any problematic activities and inappropriate evangelism.

If you would like information about or to raise concerns about a specific group, please get in touch: education@secularism.org.uk