

Religiosity inspections: the case against faith-based reviews of state schools

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Faith schools in England and Wales are inspected by their sponsoring religious group to ensure that their worship, religious education and overall approach promotes a rigorous religious ethos. These publicly funded 'religiosity inspections' are required by law in England and in Wales through Sections 48 and 50 of the Education Act 2005.

This report from the National Secular Society provides the key arguments for removing faith-based inspections. It features numerous case studies, including accounts from leaders within faith schools, and includes an in depth qualitative and quantitative analysis of 40 SIAMS reports.

[Faith based inspections of state schools are an unnecessary drain on public funds, frame widely held values as exclusive and promote biased religious education.](#)

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The report finds that religiosity inspections:

- **Cost the taxpayer over three-quarters of a million pounds a year.**
Inspections cost taxpayers £760,000 a year on average over the eight academic years examined. Each grant is the equivalent of up to 14% of the cost of an typical Ofsted inspection.
- **Conflate religiosity with virtue, presenting widely shared moral values as being rooted in specific religions.**
83% of the reports we examined framed widely held values as uniquely or fundamentally "Christian". 63% of the reports urged schools to be more explicit or exclusive about this.
- **Promote religious organisations' theological approach to religious education and collective worship.**

50% of the reports we examined explicitly promote the Church of England's own evangelical resource. 58% of the reports conflated successful RE with promoting or eliciting Christian viewpoints.

- **Are an unnecessary burden for schools.**

Testimonies in the report show that religiosity inspections can place a significant stress on teachers and senior leaders in faith schools. In addition to preparing for the usual inspections, they must prepare for an additional regime with often conflicting standards and aims.

Recommendations

The report recommends key steps towards an equal inspections regime in all schools.

1. Repeal Sections 48 and 50 of the Education Act.
2. Extend Ofsted or Estyn inspections to cover religious education in all schools.
3. Stop public funding of religiosity inspections.
4. Issue guidance on third party inspections of state schools.
5. Strengthen Ofsted and Estyn inspections to cover religious education and ensure that all schools are promoting an appropriate and inclusive ethos.

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John, from Nottingham

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Share the report and ask your MS to end religiosity inspection in Wales.

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If you have experienced some of the problems addressed in this report that you would like to share, or are seeking advice on Section 48/50 inspections, then please [get in touch](#).

More information

- [NSS renews call to end faith schools' 'religiosity inspections'](#)

- [NSS calls for end to state funded 'religiosity inspections' in schools](#)
 - [Let Ofsted inspect religious education in faith schools](#)
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