

'Fundamental British Values' and citizenship

We welcome the duty on all schools to promote "fundamental British values". As secularists we strongly endorse these values, defined as "democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs".

The existence of this duty on schools provides a mechanism for us to challenge practices including gender discrimination, the promotion of bigotry and hatred against different groups, and the doctrinaire teaching of regressive social attitudes.

Citizenship studies

Good citizenship education can help promote social cohesion and equip young people with important knowledge and skills related to equality and human rights. Citizenship education provides an opportunity for pupils to address contemporary and moral issues without shoehorning them into religious education.

Citizenship education enables pupils to consider the influence of ideas such as democracy, theocracy and privilege on equal/unequal citizenship.

What's the problem?

Many faith schools, and particularly independent schools from isolated minority religious communities, fail to promote these values.

While we broadly welcome the duty to promote these values in schools and the challenge this mechanism offers to religious isolationism and extremism, there is a problem with the way this agenda has been implemented: the guidance issued by the Department for Education defends the status quo on collective worship in schools.

What are we doing?

- We have promoted citizenship studies' key role in promoting human rights education, across a range of consultations. In 2017, we called on Britain to celebrate equality and respect democracy, the rule of law and human rights in a submission to a House of Lords select committee on citizenship and civic engagement.
- In 2018 we [responded](#) to the government's consultation on its Integrated Communities Strategy green paper. In our response, we welcomed some of the proposals, including the emphasis on British values, but expressed concern over others (including the reliance on faith leaders) and disappointment over the failure to acknowledge the division caused by faith schools.
- In September 2017 we [submitted evidence](#) to the Select Committee On Citizenship and Civic Engagement. We called for investment in citizenship education as a key element in preparing young people to exercise their rights as active, autonomous and equal citizens. The concept of equal citizenship regardless of one's religious or philosophical beliefs is central to secularism and something schools rightly have a duty to promote.
- In November 2014 we [submitted evidence](#) to a DfE consultation on reforming the GCSE and A level subject content for citizenship studies, calling for pupils to be educated about the relationship between equality, human rights and equal citizenship.

What you can do:

Watch this space

We don't have any campaign actions to highlight at the moment. Please check back soon.

More information

- [Unregistered faith schools](#)
Illegal faith schools have operated for too long without official scrutiny. We have played a critical role in drawing attention to these 'schools' in order to protect the rights of their pupils to an education.
 - [Secularists call for citizenship studies to include stronger focus on human rights](#)
All schools should have high quality education about the relationship between equality, human rights and equal citizenship.
 - [Consultation on citizenship and civic engagement](#)
Our 2017 response to a call for evidence by the House of Lords select committee on citizenship and civic engagement.
 - [Consultation on citizenship studies reform](#)
Our 2014 response to the DfE's consultation on reform of GCSE and A level citizenship studies.
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While you're here

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