

# Promotion of 'British values' undermines Christian teaching, says Church of England: NSS responds

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The Church of England has complained that the promotion of fundamental values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance in schools could undermine Christian teaching.

The Church has said the "Christian commandment" to "love your neighbour" should be included in the "British values" taught to schoolchildren.

It also described the government's approach to tackling religious extremism in schools as "potentially dangerous, divisive and undemocratic".

Responding to the Church's comments, Stephen Evans, National Secular Society campaigns manager, said: "It's rather divisive in itself for the Church of England to insist that the secular ethic of reciprocity should be promoted in schools as the 'Christian commandment' to love your neighbour.

"It's not as if Christians have a monopoly on morality and the truth is that the 'Golden Rule' is a universal value shared by people of all faiths and none – and is already firmly embodied in the ethos of schools up and down the country."

In its own [response](#) to the DfE's consultation, the NSS questioned whether the values explicitly expressed by the Department were exclusively "British" values and suggested a more outward looking approach to teaching about values might be beneficial as part of a broader-based intercultural education so as not reinforce a "them and us" culture.

A DfE spokesperson said: "The fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance were set out by the Government four years ago and have been commonly used since. Clearly Christian principles such as 'loving your neighbour' are integral to these. We believe that all young people should develop an appreciation for these values as this will help them to contribute to and succeed in modern Britain."

Meanwhile, writing on the [Church of England blog](#) this week, the Church's chief education officer, the Rev Nigel Genders, has also warned against "rejecting all forms of religion from our schools". He insisted "Church schools are not, and never have been, about indoctrination or recruitment."

However the National Secular Society pointed out that his claim was fundamentally undermined by comments made by John Pritchard, the former Chair of the Church of England's former Board of Education, who said "We don't need to attract [children] to church... they're already there, if we embrace our church schools fully."

Mr Evans, said: "With the long and continuing decline in church attendance, our state schools are clearly regarded by the church as the primary method of recruiting the next generation of Anglicans

– and it should at least be upfront about this."

Earlier this week, in a [blog published by the Guardian](#), a church school governor revealed how the Church's promotion of Christianity in her school had started to resemble a form of evangelism.

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