

# Inclusive assemblies to replace Christian worship in Brent schools

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Local authority schools in Brent have been freed from the requirement to hold a daily act of Christian worship, after the council decided to promote a more inclusive approach.

All schools, including community schools which do not have a religious ethos, are currently required to conduct an act of daily collective worship with a "wholly or broadly Christian character".

But schools can opt out of Christian collective worship if they receive a "determination" from their Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

Schools can move to provide worship for a different religion instead of Christianity, or they can receive "part determinations" to allow assemblies inclusive of many different beliefs – including non-religious worldviews.

On the recommendation of its Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education local authority schools in Brent will now be encouraged to provide assemblies which are inclusive for pupils of all religious backgrounds and none.

In 2015 [freedom of information requests](#) revealed that 125 schools had requested determinations to exempt them from the requirement to hold Christian worship.

Stephen Evans, the campaigns director of the National Secular Society said: "This is a most welcome decision by Brent council.

"The law on collective worship is already widely flouted. But where it is enforced children's rights to religious freedom are infringed, parents' right to raise their children in accordance with their own religion or lack of it is breached, and teachers are left in the impossible situation of confronting a law with no relevance but which technically remains in force.

"The Government should scrap the requirement for collective worship. That doesn't mean assemblies themselves should be abolished, far from it, but it would mean that assemblies can be truly inclusive and that they aren't used to impose religious practices on pupils."

Last year the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child called on the UK government to repeal legislation requiring daily religious worship in schools.

A report by the committee expressed its concern that "pupils are required by law to take part in a daily religious worship" and that "children do not have the right to withdraw from such worship without parental permission before entering the sixth form. In Northern Ireland and Scotland, children do not have [the] right to withdraw from collective worship without parental permission."

A student-led campaign in Northern Ireland has been nominated for this year's [Secularist of the Year](#) prize. Scott Moore of the 'Let Pupils Choose' campaign said the group "wants to let over 16s/post-GCSE pupils opt out of collective worship without parental permission."

"Children of all ages are guaranteed religious freedom under UK, European and international human and children's rights laws."

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