

C of E services for schools expand by 56% in four years

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The National Secular Society has said a rapid rise in the number of children being taken to Church of England school services should prompt "a separation of church and school".

The C of E's [Statistics for Mission](#) figures, published on Wednesday, showed that the average weekly attendance at C of E school services grew by 56% between 2013 and 2017.

In October 2017 197,000 people attended the services, compared to 126,000 in October 2013. Over 2,600 churches reported attendance at services for schools in church in October 2017.

The figures also reveal that the church has a substantial role in leading worship in schools. Almost half (46%) of churches surveyed reported that a member of their ministry team led an act of worship in schools once a month or more during 2017.

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said: "It's clear that churches and faith schools are working in cahoots to coerce pupils into participation in worship. These publicly funded schools are not homogenous worshipping communities. Forcing Anglican services into the school day is completely inappropriate.

"These figures not only demonstrate the need to separate church and state, they also highlight the need to separate church and school."

The statistics also show that C of E attendance has fallen significantly since 2007. Adult average Sunday attendance has fallen by 15%, child average Sunday attendance by 24% and adult average weekly attendance by 12%. All-age average Sunday attendance has fallen by three per cent since 2016.

Little more than one per cent of the British population attended Church of England services on an average Sunday in 2017. The usual Sunday attendance at C of E churches was 722,000. Each week 895,000 people attended Church of England services and acts of worship in October 2017. These figures do not include attendance at services for schools.

Attendance at C of E baptisms, thanksgivings, marriages, funerals and Easter services has also fallen.

Mr Evans said the figures were "another reminder of the need to re-evaluate the Church of England's public role". He added that the expansion of C of E school services was "particularly unjustifiable in this context".

The NSS campaigns for the [disestablishment](#) of the Church of England, the [removal](#) of bishops' automatic right to sit in the House of Lords, an [end to state-funded faith schools](#) and an [end to compulsory worship](#) in schools.

In 2016 179,300 children attended weekly school services in the C of E, as the NSS [reported](#) when the relevant figures were released last year.

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