

NSS welcomes decision to prevent anti-LGBT protests outside school

Posted: Thu, 28th Nov 2019

Protests against LGBT-inclusive education, primarily held by reactionary Muslim groups, will not be allowed outside a school in Birmingham after a high court judge upheld an exclusion zone.

Protesters objecting to lessons at Anderton Park Primary School had targeted the school for several months, on the basis that the lessons contradicted their Islamic faith.

This week's [ruling](#) at Birmingham Civil Justice Centre will [mean](#) an emergency interim order which restricted protests outside the school temporarily is now in place permanently.

The protesters will also not be able to use amplification devices to disrupt children's education.

In the ruling the judge, Mark Warby, said:

- The right to protest did not "carry with it a right repeatedly to cause distress to primary school children by aggressive shouting through megaphones or microphones using amplification, or to inflict months of distress on teachers and local residents";
- The protests had represented "a significant interference" with teachers' private lives. He noted that 21 teachers at the school had been treated for stress;
- The protests had been "been positively harmful to children whose parents or carers have allowed them to become involved";
- The protests had led some residents to consider selling their homes.

He also strongly criticised the protesters for spreading false information about the lessons.

The protesters' claims had included that the school had a "paedophile agenda" and staff were "teaching children how to masturbate".

The judge said: "None of this is true. None of the defendants have suggested it was true and the council has proved it is not true."

Mainly Muslim protesters have gathered outside several schools in Birmingham in recent months in opposition to teaching which mentions LGBT people. Other groups have also launched coordinated leafleting campaigns and complaints, with some schools [altering](#) their teaching in response.

National Secular Society chief executive Stephen Evans welcomed the court's decision.

"The right to protest cannot include the right to disrupt children's education, teachers' efforts to do their jobs and local residents' lives for months on end. It's reasonable to expect those behind these protests to target their disapproval elsewhere.

"We hope this decision will allow the staff and children of Anderton Park to return to normality. And policy makers should take note that the protesters' fake news has been comprehensively exposed in court."

The NSS's previous role

- The NSS has [previously exposed](#) the reactionary agendas of some of those who have supported anti-LGBT protests.
- In April the NSS also [urged](#) the government to defend teachers facing intimidation and reconsider a requirement on schools to take pupils' "religious background" into account when teaching about relationships.

Notes

- After the ruling the headteacher of Anderton Park, Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, said the protests had "misrepresented" the lessons and created an "awful" situation in recent months.
- The Department for Education, Birmingham City Council and the National Association of Head Teachers also welcomed the decision.
- In an earlier ruling Warby removed a ban on social media criticism of LGBT-inclusive teaching on the basis that it infringed the right to freedom of expression.

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