

NSS to address legacy of 1944 Education Act in lecture

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The National Secular Society is to consider the impact of the 1944 Education Act, which brought hundreds of faith schools into the state sector, in a lecture in February.

Dr Keith Sharpe, the chair of the NSS's Secular Education Forum, will deliver [*The 1944 Education Act and its legacy*](#) at Conway Hall in London on Monday 10 February 2020.

The act, which continues to influence the structure of education in England and Wales, introduced free primary and secondary education for all for the first time and required daily worship in schools.

It also created a system where faith schools – some [voluntary aided](#), where religious groups tend to have most influence in management, and some voluntary controlled – were distinguished from community schools.

The act is also commonly known as the Butler Act after the MP Richard Austen Butler, who was the driving force behind it.

Explaining his plans for the lecture, Keith Sharpe said:

"The 1944 Education Act was in its time an extraordinary political achievement, creating a post-war consensual framework for a more equitable system of schooling. But it and subsequent acts of parliament also embedded religious control over schools, with an impact on the education system in England and Wales that endures today.

"This event will explain how that came to be and make the case for reconsidering religious groups' privileged position in the education system, so it's fit for the demands of the third decade of the 21st century."

NSS head of education Alastair Lichten said: "The Butler Act has had a remarkable influence on education in England and Wales. Some of this has indisputably been for the better, but it also means religious groups continue to enjoy a privileged influence in our schools.

"The legacy of the act and the need for change require careful consideration and we very much look forward to Dr Sharpe's lecture."

The event starts at 7pm, with registration opening at 6:30. It is free to attend but the NSS recommends [booking in advance](#).

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