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## Ep 63: Christian education challenged in court – a Northern Ireland case

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A ground-breaking case on the right to a pluralistic education in Northern Ireland is currently being considered by the High Court.

A father of a seven-year-old girl at a primary school in Belfast has brought judicial review proceedings against the school and the Department of Education. He argues that the school's collective worship and Religious Education provisions are narrowly Christian, being effectively designed to indoctrinate children and denying their right to a pluralistic education, in which no one worldview is privileged over others. The case was heard by the High Court of Northern Ireland on 22-23 November.

In this episode, [Darragh Mackin](#), solicitor for the applicants, discusses the case with [Emma Park](#). Darragh is a partner at Phoenix Law, a firm of solicitors in Belfast that specialises in human rights. He describes how the girl's family, who are non-religious, discovered her praying late into the night. This led them to investigate the way that her school was imposing Christianity on young children through religious assemblies and RE lessons.

Darragh outlines the main issues in the case and the human rights principles involved. He explains how Christianity is embedded into the legal framework governing education in Northern Ireland. He also argues that proselytising religious instruction can reinforce the divisions at the heart of the region's historic troubles, and that it is therefore all the more important to ensure that children are brought up with open minds.

### Follow-up

- [Christianity being 'wrongly promoted and privileged in the classroom', court hears – Irish News](#)
- [Laws requiring exclusively Christian RE to face court challenge in NI](#)
- [Bill to replace worship with inclusive assemblies heads to Commons](#)

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[A ground-breaking JR case on the right to a pluralistic education in Northern Ireland is being considered by the High Court. @DrEmmaPark interviews @darraghmackin, solicitor for the](#)

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