

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

Posted: Tue, 21st Dec 2021

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](#)

[Watch this episode on YouTube](#) | [Direct MP3 Link](#) | [Transcripts](#)

Support the podcast, share with a friend, and leave a positive review everywhere you can.

Podcast produced by Emma Park for the National Secular Society (2021). All rights reserved.

[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 applicants.](#)

[Click to tweet](#)

We publish our podcast to enable exploration of subjects of interest to NSS members and supporters. Guests' views may not always align with those of the NSS.

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Collective worship](#), [RE](#), [School admissions](#), [Women](#)

Related Campaigns

•

[**End religious discrimination in school admissions**](#)

No child should face discrimination for their family's religion or belief.

[Read More](#)

•

[**Women's rights**](#)

End religious subordination of women and girls.

[Read More](#)

•

[**Rethink RE**](#)

We need a new subject to teach children about worldviews, citizenship and ethics.

[Read More](#)

•

[**Compulsory worship**](#)

No child should be compelled to pray in school.

[Read More](#)

Subscribe to NSS Podcasts: [Apple Podcasts](#) | [Android](#) | [Google Podcasts](#) | [Stitcher](#) | [Spotify](#) | [RSS](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Blubrry](#) | [TuneIn](#).

If you value the podcast please share it with a friend and leave us a positive review wherever you get it. You can also support future podcasts and our campaigns by [joining](#) the NSS or making a

