



Following our correspondence earlier in the year, I am writing to share the findings of our most recent report – ***Religious Reps: Unrepresentative, Unnecessary and Unjustified*** – which makes the case for removing religious appointees from education committees in Scotland.

The report calls for repeal Section 124 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, which at present requires councils to appoint three religious representatives to their education committees. In the meantime, it calls on councils such as yours to exercise your power in removing religious appointees' voting privileges.

Scotland – like the majority of western democracies – has moved over the last two centuries from a patchwork of voluntary schools provided by religious and other charities, to a modern universal state funded education system. One which should be accountable and responsive to all of its citizens' needs. One where citizens of all faiths and beliefs can contribute to decisions about education, not only through the democratic processes, but through volunteering as governors, attending public meetings, or contribute to consultations and public debates.

Given this transformation – alongside radical changes to the nation's increasingly diverse and irreligious population – a law mandating councils to provide a small subset of the population an additional privileged institutional role in education policy is outmoded, unjustifiable and ripe for reform.

Our report draws on responses to the 2013 and 2016 petitions on this topic, views in the current debate and our new survey of all 32 local authorities. We systematically examine the arguments for retaining religious appointees and their flaws, building a powerful case for change.

I urge you to examine the report and to act on its recommendations. I would be grateful for an opportunity to meet and discuss our findings.

Kind regards,

Alastair Lichten  
Head of Education  
National Secular Society



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As an introduction, the National Secular Society works for the separation of religion and state and equal respect for everyone's human rights so that no one is either advantaged or disadvantaged on account of their beliefs.

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