

P-05-757 Remove the Obligation on Schools to Hold Acts of Religious Worship – Correspondence from Richard Harris to the Committee, 05.03.18

Dear Petitions Committee,

Given the YouGov poll of people's beliefs in the UK in December 2016 which gave the statistic that only 28% of adults believe in a god or higher power and that 38% do not believe in any god or higher power (atheist), with a further 20% believing in some sort of spiritual power not associated with the concept of a god or gods and the remaining 14% being unsure (agnostic), and that of that 28%, many of these will not be Christian; it seems inappropriate for our children to be subjected to Christian based daily collective worship at school by default. Given also that church attendance is likely to fall below 10% of the population within the next couple of years if it hasn't done so already (10.3% in 2013) there is clearly no justification for this rule other than the as a devious mechanism for the establishment to try to indoctrinate our children to get the church numbers back up.

Community spirit is something worth fostering in schools but it seems more culturally relevant to force them to sing Beatles songs than hymns. My child's school, without the need to inform us, invited a Pentecostal church to conduct its collective worship for them and given that this is a sect with practices (particularly glossolalia) considered controversial and not in keeping with the Bible's teachings by most mainstream Christians and with their rather archaic views on things like evolution and homosexuality, which go against accepted scientific thought and human rights laws respectively, I think is a real issue and a big oversight in transparency and judgement. Realising that the idea of collective worship is that it is non-denominational, there is no definition of what this means or how it is should be applied or controlled in the rules. Though an Ofsted inspector will make a judgement based on what is presented to them on that day, that is just their subjective opinion based on a potentially non-representative sample.

Collective worship is also taking valuable time out of the school day which could be used for more relevant and educational purposes. Given these points, if the establishment is still set to reject the idea of removing Collective Worship for an increasingly multicultural and atheistic/antitheistic population, then the awareness and transparency of activities should be increased and the default position should be non-attendance forcing schools to seek consent from parents and preventing secrecy and/or apathy from being the driver.

If church numbers are falling, maybe that is as a result of improved education as there has always been a direct correlation between level of education and likelihood

of believing in God and maybe it's time that this should at least be accepted as the direction of the modern world if not embraced as something that we can be proud of in the modern world.

Thank you for your consideration,

Richard Harris