

Teachers Are Losing Their Religion – Part One

Welcome Tappers! It has been a busy week, with 4,000 of you answering questions on religion among teachers and schools (or not, as the case may be) as well as the exciting news that there is a new Education Secretary.

1. The new Education Secretary

It's all-change at the top. Again. A new Prime Minister means a new Secretary of State for Education. Will you miss Damian Hinds any less or more than you said you would miss Justine Greening? Apparently you will! (Though remember our sample was much smaller when Greening left – perhaps you were all just the loving types.)

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The policy-watchers amongst us have been nervously worrying that a Johnston government would mean another shot at bringing back selection at 11. The appointment of a comprehensive boy, Gavin Williamson, has however brought some comfort.

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Right, let's leave the controversial topic of politics and get onto the even more controversial topic of religion.

2. Religion & Schools: What Is Going On?

You were so keen to learn A LOT of things about religion in schools that we are covering it over the next two weeks' blogs. In this part, we look at how religious teachers are and whether schools are carrying out their statutory duties with respect to religious education in schools. The status of religion in schools makes nobody happy. People who value religious education and worship, point out that schools are widely flouting the rules. People who argue the prominence of religion in schools is discordant with society are particularly unhappy with faith-school admissions. Where does the teaching profession's attitudes lie?

A. The lack of religious beliefs among teachers mirrors our whole society

Around two-thirds of teachers (65%) told us that they were raised in a religious household and

yet, as adults, 61% of you consider yourselves to belong to no religion. The decline in affiliation to the Church of England is most striking, but other Christian groups also experienced a decline. This loss of religion mirrors a new release of the [British Attitudes Survey](#) this month, which reported a doubling of the number of people who don't believe in God in the past two decades. Across the general public, 52% of people say they do not belong to a religion and just 12% of Brits currently describe themselves as followers of the Church of England.

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Some teachers are more religious than others. Whilst many of you attend a religious service every week, over half of Anglicans attend church pretty infrequently – just the major Holy services (or less). 14% of teachers who identify as Anglicans also tell us they never go to church!

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B. Do Religious Teachers Work In Religious Schools?

Big Question: Are religious teachers clustered in religious schools or spread out?

Answer: Catholic teachers are indeed clustered in Catholic schools, with about half their teaching staff identifying as Catholic. By contrast, Anglican schools have just a few more Anglicans in them than secular schools. (For the purpose of this analysis we excluded religious schools that aren't CofE or RC because there aren't enough for the numbers to mean anything).

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C. How Many Schools Do The Legally-Required Daily Acts Of Worship?!

When you think about the Daily Act of Collective Worship what first comes to your mind? For many of us, it would be sitting on a cold hall floor at schools saying the Lord's Prayer. Yet two-thirds of the current generation of primary children won't have shared in this ritual as it has now fallen out of favour.

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All state-funded schools have a statutory duty to take part in a [daily act of collective worship](#) (that should be of a broadly Christian nature unless you've applied for an exemption). This is adhered to in nearly all Anglican and Catholic primaries, but over half of secular primaries are failing to adhere to this. In secondary schools, consistency with legislation is much worse – almost no secular secondaries are delivering a daily act of collective worship and only half of Anglican secondaries are. Catholic secondary schools do tend to follow the law, though

mostly via the classroom. Of course, few secondaries can accommodate all students in a daily assembly, so there isn't an easy way to do anything collectively on a daily basis! Time for a re-think, perhaps?

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How can we have a piece of legislation that everyone ignores? Easy! It is tough to police, given that nobody has set out exactly what collective worship has to look like. We thought that your own views on what constituted collective worship would likely differ by your own religious activity, but this isn't the case.

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Maybe everyone is simply happy to live with the status quo? After all, if lack of adherence is challenged too strongly, public opinion will likely fall on the side of removing the daily worship requirement. Indeed, only this week, [non-religious families are challenging school provision](#) for those withdrawn from assemblies.

D. Is Religion Still Taught In Schools?

Religious duties in school do not end with collective worship. There is also supposed to be the teaching of religious education. Religious education is a compulsory subject at all Key Stages in the [National Curriculum](#), though it is up to individual local authorities, faith schools and academies to set out exactly what should be taught. The difficult question of how to deliver RE for 14-16 year olds was often solved in the past by running a [GCSE short course](#). The removal of the qualification from performance tables created a problem. The majority of religious schools responded by switching to the full GCSE religious studies; just 1-in-5 make no attempt to teach religious education in Year 10. For non-religious schools, half now deliver no religious education at all in Year 10 and a quarter deliver a full GCSE RS.

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The lack of religious education at KS4 is more acute in schools serving disadvantaged students. We suspect this is because these schools find it impossible to 'squeeze in' an extra GCSE and do not wish to deny students the normal choice of subjects to study. (NB. This pattern is principally due to secular schools.)

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Phew! So we've learnt that teachers are losing their religion (just like the general population) and that schools are failing to deliver the weekly dose of collective worship and religious education that is due to students. Where do we go from here? Tune in next week to find out...! (For previous

studies on religion from Teacher Tapp see [here](#))

Finally, finally, we know that you love the Daily Tips on Teacher Tapp so here are this week's...

- [Handing out incorrect GCSE and A level grades](#)
- [Test pupils on the first day back](#)
- [Novice teachers operate differently in the classroom](#)
- [So you think you know how good you are at teaching?](#)
- [Descartes was wrong](#)
- [School emails](#)