



Different types of secularism (part 3) – The Secular Charter

KEY QUESTIONS ??

- What is secularism?
- How do secularists think about decisions?
- What are religious privilege, tolerance and discrimination?

STIMULUS

The Secular Charter

The National Secular Society's Secular Charter reflects the mainstream model of and approach to secularism in Britain. But there are different models and secularists will disagree on how such principles should be applied.

The charter promotes a secular democracy, where:

- There is no established state religion.
- Everyone is equal before the law, regardless of religion, belief or non-belief.
- The judicial process is not hindered or replaced by religious codes or processes.
- Freedom of expression is not restricted by religious considerations.
- Religion plays no role in state-funded education, whether through religious affiliation of schools, curriculum setting, organised worship, religious instruction, student selection or employment practices.
- The state does not express religious beliefs or preferences and does not intervene in the setting of religious doctrine.
- The state does not engage in, fund or promote religious activities or practices.
- There is freedom of belief, non-belief and to renounce or change religion.
- Public and publicly-funded service provision does not discriminate on grounds of religion, belief or non-belief.
- Individuals and groups are neither accorded privilege nor disadvantaged because of their religion, belief or non-belief.

EXERCISES

- Q1. Do you agree with this clause? (a–j)
- Q2. Why or why not? (a–j)
- Q3. How would this clause affect religious privilege, tolerance or discrimination? (a–j)
- Q4. Is this the case or not in the UK? (a–j)

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Find other examples of secularist organisations that have a charter or other statement of principles. How do these differ, and how does this affect their approach to secularism and religious privilege, tolerance or discrimination?
- Write your own charter for secularism and religious tolerance. It might be a charter for your school, club or country. Create a poster for this, or for the Secular Charter above.