

## KS2 / KS3 – Exploring Secularism

OVERVIEW resource: What is Secularism?

<b>Background</b>	<p>This overview resource can act as an introduction to secularism and secularist views on religion and society at KS2 or KS3.</p> <p>The match-up vocabulary definition activity allows discussion about secularism and associated viewpoints and introduces six terms: secularism, atheism, agnosticism, theism, pluralism, and humanism. The vocabulary match-up and six viewpoints' activities invite discussion of differing viewpoints and encourages pupils to put forward their own developing views.</p> <p>This lesson can be used to teach strands from the DfE KS2 &amp; KS3 Citizenship Programme.</p> <p>The principles of <b>secularism</b> which protect and underpin many of the freedoms we enjoy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Separation</b> of religious institutions from state institutions, and a public sphere where religion may participate, but not dominate.</li><li>2. <b>Freedom</b> to practise one's faith or belief without harming others, or to change it or not have one, according to one's own conscience.</li><li>3. <b>Equality</b> so that our religious beliefs or lack of them does not put any of us at an advantage or disadvantage.</li></ol>
<b>Subjects</b>	Citizenship at KS2& KS3
<b>Curriculum Links – from the DfE Citizenship programme of study at KS2/KS3. Pupils should be taught:</b>	<p><b>KS2</b></p> <p>1a) to talk and write about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society</p> <p>2a) to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems, and events</p> <p>2g) what democracy is, and about the basic institutions that support it</p> <p>2h) to recognise the role of voluntary, community and pressure groups</p> <p><b>KS3</b></p> <p>Teaching should develop pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils</p>

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	<p>should use and apply their knowledge and understanding while developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate, and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action.</p> <p>Pupils should be taught about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the development of the political system of democratic government in the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, Parliament, and the monarch</li><li>• the operation of Parliament, including voting and elections, and the role of political parties</li><li>• the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom</li><li>• the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals</li><li>• the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society, and the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities, including opportunities to participate in school-based activities</li></ul>
<b>Key Question</b>	What is secularism?
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p><b>Expected:</b> pupils can give a simple explanation of secularism in terms of separation of religion and state.</p> <p><b>Greater Depth:</b> pupils can give a simple explanation of secularism in terms of separation, freedom &amp; equality.</p>
<b>Stimulus</b>	<p>If you have access to an interactive whiteboard or similar, it's a good idea to start by watching the short video (link below) produced by the NSS called, 'What is Secularism?'</p> <p><a href="https://www.secularism.org.uk/">https://www.secularism.org.uk/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• first briefly discuss the contents of the video and briefly discuss what secularism is and what secularism isn't (i.e. it's not a religion)</li><li>• then introduce the vocabulary for the match-up</li></ul> <p>Vocabulary match-up - defining terms (at bottom of plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discuss the meaning of the suffix 'ism' in these examples they describe a belief system or theory</li></ul> <p>'ism' a suffix from the Greek</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain that many children and adults find ‘isms’ quite difficult, as each belief system has many variations. Go on to say that at KS2 or KS3 we will be only studying the fundamental principles.</li><li>• Studying the etymology of the root words will act as an Aide-mémoire and further develop pupil’s understanding of each word.</li><li>• Elicit the pupil’s existing knowledge and ask them to match up the ‘ism’ with the basic definition. Offer as much or as little support as appropriate. Discuss each word with the pupils.</li></ul> <p><u>Notes for the teacher:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>separation of religion and state</b> is the foundation of secularism. It ensures religious groups don't interfere in affairs of state, and the state doesn't interfere in religious affairs.</li><li>• In the United Kingdom there are officially two state recognised Christian denominations – the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Monarch is both head of state and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. There is no established church in Northern Ireland or Wales. But the 26 unelected bishops of the Church of England who sit in the House of Lords influence laws that affect the whole of the UK.</li><li>• Christianity is one major influence among many that shape our current ways of life. We are a nation of many denominations and religions. Large sectors of the population do not hold, or practise, religious beliefs.</li><li>• If Britain were truly a secular democracy, political structures would reflect the reality of changing times by separating religion from the state. (NSS)</li></ul>
<b>Exercise</b>	<p><b>Scenario:</b> Imagine that the religions in the UK got together to change the law because of what it says in their holy books.</p> <p>They insisted the government change the law to bring back corporal punishment in schools – instead of being told off or facing</p>

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	<p>a consequence for rule-breaking, your teacher could now hit you with a cane as a punishment.</p> <p>Together, discuss the viewpoints a-f and ask for ideas about what you can tell about each person's beliefs.</p> <p>Does the viewpoint fit into an 'ism'? Which of the viewpoints are secularist?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>"I think it's absolutely right – kids today have no respect for anything or anyone. In my religious book it says that adults should hit children to make them behave and I believe in that 100%."</li><li>"I really don't think that religions should be able to change what happens in schools – that's the job of the government isn't it?"</li><li>"I'm very religious myself and I do believe in smacking my own children. However, I wouldn't tell other parents what to do and I don't think the government should get involved with any religious groups – where will it all end?"</li><li>"Gods don't exist – full stop - and religion is just storytelling. This is a disgrace and against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – religion and politics should not mix."</li><li>"Well, I don't know whether there's a god or not, but I do think kids need strong discipline so I'm backing the new law."</li><li>"This is terrible – the government should be completely separate from religious groups – that way we can ensure equal and fair rights for everyone. I'm not going to tell you whether I am religious or not because that's my own business or whether I believe in corporal punishment. All I know is that the government should make the law in the proper way and not because religious groups tell them to."</li></ol>
<b>Take it Further</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In a pair, role-play a TV interview with each of the six people above about their views. Take it in turns to play the journalist/TV interviewer and write down three questions to ask each of the people who gave their opinion.</li></ul>

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<b>A secular state</b>		<b>the belief in God/Gods</b>
<b>atheism</b>		<b>A country's law and governance is kept separate from the religion and religious law</b>
<b>A theocratic state</b>		<b>not believing that there is a God/Gods</b>
<b>theism</b>		<b>A country's law and governance is based on religion and religious law</b>
<b>pluralism</b>		<b>the belief that people can be good without believing in God/Gods</b>
<b>humanism</b>		<b>the belief that different people with different beliefs &amp; opinions can live well together</b>