

## KS2 Lesson Plan 3 – Exploring Secularism

*Should religion influence government?*

Faith Schools Debate

<b>Background</b>	<p>New religiously selective faith schools are opening in the UK despite concerns about their impact on social cohesion and children's rights.</p> <p>In 2018 The government announced plans for a new wave of faith schools, which act as their own admissions authority and can select up to 100% of their pupils on a religious basis.</p> <p>In VA faith schools 100% of running costs and 90%+ of the capital costs are paid by the government. These faith schools are permitted to teach denominational religious education (inspected by the religious body that runs them, rather than Ofsted). They can also apply a religious test when hiring, promoting or retaining any teacher.</p> <p>The DfE assigned funds for 14 VA faith schools in March 2019. Shortly beforehand a government assessment had said new VA schools would be bad for families and teachers who did not their faith and risked harming community cohesion.</p>
<b>Subjects</b>	<p>Citizenship</p> <p>Religious education</p>
<b>From the DfE Citizenship programme of study ay KS2 – Pupils should be taught:</b>	<p>1 a) to talk and write about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society</p> <p>2 a) to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events</p>
<b>Key Question</b>	<p>Should religion influence government?</p>
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p><b>Expected:</b> pupils can give a simple explanation whether they think faith schools are a positive, negative or neutral aspect of our education system.</p> <p><b>Greater Depth:</b> pupils can give a simple explanation of whether they think faith schools are a positive, negative or neutral aspect of our education system and give their own viewpoint backed by a range of reasons.</p>
<b>Stimulus</b>	<p><i>The following scenario is fictitious but based on facts about a new faith primary school due to open in 2022.</i></p> <p>It was the beginning of the summer holidays and the three new friends were super-happy. They had all just moved</p>

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into new houses on Eagle Way in the same week and had already become best mates. First, Jack and Mohammad had started talking in the hallway of their small block of flats and quickly become friends playing football out the back. They had met Lily because she'd been in goal – she was the best goalie they'd ever seen! Over the following weeks they had become inseparable – the other kids even started calling them 'the 3 amigos'.

So, when Jack, Mohammad and Lily heard that a brand-new school was opening just two minutes down the road from them – they were really happy. "We can all go there together – maybe we'll all be in the same class!" suggested Lily excitedly. They talked about it all the next week and made plans about everything they would do at their fantastic new school.

But when Mohammad mentioned the new school to his dad he was surprised by his response.

"You can't go to the new school – we are Muslims, and that school is Christian – everything the school does will be rooted in Christianity – we'd basically have to pretend to be Christians – and that's not right for anyone."

When Lily spoke to her mum about the school, she too was shocked.

"I'm sorry Lily but that new school is going to be religious, and they will tell you things about the world that I really don't agree with or believe in..."

And when Jack spoke to his parents, they too had bad news.

"Your year group has too many children who want to go to the school, so they're only allowing children who attend their church to go... sorry son."

When the 3 amigos met the next day, they felt so sad and disappointed by the news they'd received the previous evening. They just *couldn't* understand why the new school was going to be religious. If it was an inclusive community school, then they would all have been able to go together – to their local school that was just 2 minutes' walk from their houses. Now they would all have to go to different

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	<p>schools all over town that were miles away <i>and</i> get buses to get there.</p> <p>“This makes no sense - this is crazy!” They all said together...</p> <p><b>Questions for discussion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What do you feel about children from different backgrounds having to go to different schools?</li><li>2. Do you think it is good for the local children / community?</li><li>3. What positives can you think of for attending your nearest/local school?</li><li>4. Why might some adults want to separate children into specific groups to teach them?</li><li>5. Do you think we should have religious schools in our country?</li><li>6. What potential dangers are there to society when children are kept apart according to religion, race or culture?</li></ol>
<p><b>Exercise</b></p>	<p>Look at these four viewpoints of parents. Can you use the glossary to describe their beliefs?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) “It’s not good for kids to be kept apart from each other – I want my children to go to a school where everyone gets to know each other – whatever their beliefs, colour or nationality. Anyway, religion should be taught in churches, temples and mosques – not in schools...”</li><li>b) “All children should go to their local school – It’s bad for the environment and bad for society when kids travel all over the town going to this or that different school...I wouldn’t want my two going to a faith school – you’d never know what they’re teaching them - religion is all nonsense anyway”</li><li>c) “I’m a strong believer in faith schools – it’s what the parents want isn’t it? You know they are stricter and get good results and anyway what’s wrong with teaching the kids religion? I believe in god and I want my kids to believe too”</li><li>d) “I think faith schools are best – they teach them our beliefs and customs and they mean that our kids</li></ol>

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	<p>won't have non-believers messing with their minds and telling them there's no god and things like that..."</p> <p>e) "It's so massively important for kids to know that everyone is basically the same, whatever their background or skin colour. For me, it's terribly sad when a child has never met someone with different traditions to them. I believe so strongly that all schools should be a mixture of kids from all different backgrounds – then we might have a chance of ending racism in our country..."</p> <p>f) "My religion tells me that girls and boys should be kept in separate schools, that children from different religions shouldn't mix with each other and that all schools should be religious – I believe that's what god wants..."</p> <p>Questions to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which of the viewpoints above are secularist?</li><li>• Which are atheist?</li><li>• Which are theist?</li><li>• Are any harder to define than others?</li><li>• What is your view on how schools should be run?</li></ul> <p>Answers</p> <p>a) Strong secularist b) Secularist c) Non-secularist d) Strongly non-secularist e) Secularist f) Non-secularist</p>
	<p>Glossary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secularist (a person who believes that religion and government should be kept separate)</li></ul>
<p><b>Take it Further</b></p>	<p>Think about and discuss creating a perfect school for modern Britain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How would you decide who could come to the school?</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How would you order the criteria for deciding who could attend?</li><li>• Would your school be religious or a community school?</li><li>• Explain why you made your decision.</li></ul>
<b>What do secularists think about faith schools?</b>	<p>Secularists want an open and inclusive education system, free of religious discrimination. A secular approach would see faith-based education phased out and ensure that publicly funded schools are equally welcoming to all children, regardless of their backgrounds. Secularists oppose publicly funded faith schools and campaign for an end to religious discrimination in school admissions.</p> <p>Secularists oppose faith schools in principle. They believe parents are entitled to raise their children within a faith tradition, but they are not entitled to enlist the help of the government/state to do so. The state should not fund proselytisation or allow the schools it funds to inculcate children into a particular religion.</p> <p>Secularists also believe there are other reasons why organising children's education around religious identities is a bad idea. Separating children along such fundamental lines of difference is divisive and leads to religious, ethnic and socio-economic segregation.</p>