

KS3 Lesson Plan 4 – Exploring Secularism

What is freedom of religion or belief

Background	<p>Freedom of religion or belief</p> <p>Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental principle of secularism.</p> <p>Secularists believe in and defend the right to freedom of religion or belief if these freedoms do not unduly negatively affect the rights and freedoms of other people.</p> <p>The Law on freedom of religion or belief</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion• The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the Council of Europe’s Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law, including its guarantee of freedom of religion or belief: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.</i>2. <i>Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health, or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.</i> <p>Article 9 of the Human Rights Act protects people’s freedom of thought and conscience, as well as their religion or beliefs. This freedom is an essential component of living in a tolerant, pluralist society.</p> <p>This article defends everyone’s right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>To change their religion or belief.</i>• <i>To practise religion or belief publicly or privately, alone or with others.</i>• <i>To have the right to have no religion -to be atheist or agnostic- or to have non-religious beliefs protected - such as a belief in the need for urgent action to tackle climate change or philosophical beliefs such as pacifism or veganism.</i>• <i>The State’s role is to encourage tolerance of all religions or non-religions.</i>
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A secularist viewpoint	<p>Secularism protects both believers and non-believers</p> <p>Secularism seeks to ensure and protect freedom of religious belief and practice for all citizens. Secularists want freedoms of thought and conscience to apply equally to all – believers and non-believers alike. They do not wish to curtail religious freedoms.</p> <p>Religious Freedom</p> <p>Secularism seeks to defend the absolute freedom of religious and other belief and protect the right to manifest religious belief insofar as it does not impinge on the rights and freedoms of others. Secularism ensures that the right of individuals to freedom of religion is always balanced by the right to be free <i>from</i> religion.</p>
Subjects	
Curriculum Links	<p>RE at KS3</p> <p>Key concepts of religious education at key stage 3</p> <p>1.1 Beliefs, teachings, and sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding and responding critically to beliefs and attitudes. <p>1.2 Practices and ways of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring the impact of religions and beliefs on how people live their lives. <p>1.3 Identity, diversity and belonging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring the variety, difference and relationships that exist within and between religions, values, and beliefs. <p>1.6 Values and commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding how moral values and a sense of obligation can come from beliefs and experience.• Evaluating their own and others' values in order to make informed, rational and imaginative choices.
Key Question	What is freedom of religion or belief?

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Learning Outcomes	<p>Expected: <i>I can explain the importance of Article 9 to life in modern Britain giving an example.</i></p> <p>Greater Depth: <i>I can use a range of examples to explain why Article 9 is an important protection to life in modern Britain.</i></p>
Stimulus	<p>Q. What does the law say about freedom of religion or belief?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Pupils to discuss the following and to give examples of where it might be relevant in their own lives or in other people's lives.</i>• <i>Pupils consider / respond to how people's lives might be changed Article 9 did not exist.</i> <p>The law protects your right to freedom of thought, belief, and religion. It also includes the right for you to change your religion or beliefs at any time.</p> <p>You also have the right to act upon your thoughts and beliefs. This might involve using your right to dress in religious clothing, the right to openly discuss your beliefs or to participate in different forms of worship. But this right can be limited where the ways you might act on your beliefs would harm others.</p> <p>This right also protects people's non-religious beliefs including atheism, agnosticism, veganism, and pacifism. For a belief to be protected, it must be considered serious, concern important aspects of human life or behaviour, be genuinely held, and be worthy of respect in a democratic society.</p> <p>Viewpoints</p> <p>The following are viewpoints that pertain to Article 9.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a) "Anyone who believes anything <i>any</i> religion teaches is deluded – religions don't need protecting in law – if humanity wants to progress and move forward then it's time to get rid of them all...protect the beliefs of atheists but don't protect religious fantasists...'b) "Of course, the law should protect peoples' right to believe in whatever they want to believe in – if the law doesn't protect them what or who will? This vital law keeps us all safe – believers and non-believers alike...'c) "I'm not sure really about this law really, I think it's probably a good thing – I mean, I guess people should be allowed to

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believe in what they want right? I'm unsure whether it needs to be a law though..."

- d) "The official religion of this country is part of our national identity and needs to be protected - this law does just that – it also protects the rights of other religions in this country so it's something everyone should be in favour of..."
- e) "The state religion is under attack from all sides – the press, the media, everyone wants to have a pop at our religion. The law should protect the state religion and encourage and defend its members and their beliefs. We need more religion in government, in the law courts and in local government. Our religion is good for society, and it needs to be protected at all costs..."
- f) "Our religion is the one true way – all non-believers should be dealt with very firmly and given absolutely no protection in law – this is what our religion teaches and what God wants...God's law is the only law that should be followed..."

Which of the viewpoints above are secularist? What makes them secularist? Can pupils match the viewpoint descriptions below to the viewpoints?

- a) Is an anti-religious viewpoint
- b) Is a strong secularist viewpoint
- c) Is a weak secularist viewpoint
- d) Is an open-minded religious privilege viewpoint
- e) Is a very strong religious privilege viewpoint
- f) Is a religious supremacist viewpoint

Scenarios

Attending a faith school

I am personally delighted that our village primary school is a faith school. Our state religion is extremely important culturally, spiritually, and morally and I'll support the school in any way I can. You get all these moaners who go on about indoctrination and brainwashing but what's wrong with kids knowing the difference between wrong and right? If the moaners don't like it, they can take their kids somewhere else, can't they?

Faith schools are part of our history as a country – it's also good that kids from different religions are kept apart – I don't want my child

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	<p><i>learning about other religions or the weird stuff they do – why should we care about them?</i></p> <p>Book being banned because it offends religion</p> <p><i>I saw this book being discussed on the news and I was absolutely disgusted. This writer has made fun of my religion and that should not be allowed in a civilized country. This book should be banned from all bookshops and deleted from the internet – if I could burn every copy I would. How dare this so-called author poke fun at people’s beliefs?</i></p> <p><i>He might think it’s funny, but it shouldn’t be allowed...I am really offended by what he’s written, and the law should protect me from feeling offended...</i></p> <p>Religious hotel owner doesn’t want to rent room to same sex couple</p> <p><i>My religion says homosexuality is a sin – so if I allow them to stay in my hotel then I’m going against what God wants and I’m not going to do that. I would be promoting a sin if I allowed them to stay...</i></p> <p><i>Surely most right-thinking people would believe I have a right to run my own hotel in accordance with my own values and beliefs...</i></p> <p>Religious symbol banned</p> <p><i>My company told me I wasn’t allowed to wear a bracelet with a religious symbol on it because it didn’t fit in with their uniform policy. They said it wasn’t because it was religious but that no one was allowed to wear any jewellery – surely Article 9 should mean I have the right to express my religious beliefs in this way?</i></p> <p><i>It’s only a little symbol on a bracelet and it’s a personal expression of my faith – it means a lot to me...</i></p>
Exercise	<p>Discuss each of the scenarios above. Consider the following questions about each of the four scenarios.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Does the law support this viewpoint?2. Do you think that the law <i>should</i> support this viewpoint?3. Do you agree with any of the viewpoints, or do you think that any of the viewpoints make valid points?

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	4. What might a secularist feel about each scenario? (Check against the 'What is the secularist viewpoint' section)
Take it Further	Research the following cases: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eweida v United Kingdom2. Peter & Hazel Mary Bull v Stephan Preddy & Martyn Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Write a brief synopsis of either or both cases</i>• <i>Discover what the rulings were in each case</i>• <i>Do you agree with the ruling on each case?</i>• <i>What precedents do you think each case may have set?</i>• <i>Do you think a secularist would agree with the rulings? Try to explain why.</i>