



So we've got a High Court win... What's next? Putting *Bowen* into action

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curious

What (who) is *Bowen*?

- High Court judgment of 26 May 2023 UK case law but in practice England only
- R (Bowen) v Kent County Council
- Humanists **can** be full members of group A
- Any decisions should be made on same basis as applications from religious people
- Judgment restated *Fox* on numerous occasions
- All told, very useful for us!



What I'll cover

- What the UK Government has done
- What we'd like them to do
- What we've done
- What we plan to do
- What you can do
 - (If you're already on group A, bear with me)
 - (but there're still things you can do...)



What the UK Government has done

- DfE officials met with Humanists UK in July 2023 to discuss *Bowen*
- New guidance promised on RE
- Secretary of State wrote to all local authorities in August



What we'd like UK Government to do

- Revise the RE guidance
- Ultimately change statute law to match Wales - long game



What we've done so far

- Spread the word about judgment
- Sent detailed briefing to DfE on RE guidance reform
- Commissioned legal commentary from Prof. Satvinder Juss of King's College London
- Surveyed humanist SACRE reps on status
- Shared DfE guidance note



Problem to solve

- Case law now states that humanists should be on group A
- But many are co-opted, on group C/D, or observers
- Meanwhile those SACREs without humanists fall into two camps:
 - Open to a group A humanist but have a vacancy
 - Not open to a group A humanist (may have C/D, co-opted, or observer)



Where we're at

Full member	78
Co-opted	26
Observer	2
TBC	12
No info	1
Total check	119
Applied	8
Want a humanist - previously had	9
Want a humanist - not had	6
Don't want a humanist	1
No response	9

- NB 'full member' includes at least two on group D
- Work ongoing to improve our data
- Hence survey of reps



What we plan to do

- Ultimate aim is for 100% coverage
- Two scenarios:
 - a) Rep happy to take charge
 - b) Rep would rather we did
- Template letter drafted by us



The Letter - either from rep or from us

- Addressed to local authority and SACRE chair:
 - State the rep's current status
 - Very brief outline of *Bowen*
 - Point to guidance from the DfE
 - 'More than half have humanist on group A already'
 - Cite some local and national demographic info
 - Accordingly include a request to be converted to group A status by a certain date (likely the date of the next meeting)



***Bowen* is not just about SACREs**

- It also restated *Fox* on the inclusion of humanism in RE syllabuses
- Adds new weight to making the case for ‘equal respect’
- Satvinder Juss commentary will be very useful
- New opportunity to look for non-compliant syllabuses
 - Whether LAS or in academies
 - Raise concerns at early stage



‘Equal Respect’

- If it is **compulsory** to systematically study a module on one or more of the principal religions (other than Christianity), then it should also be compulsory to systematically study a module or modules on one or more principal non-religious worldviews (which, in practice, means humanism).
- Similarly, if there is an **option** to study a module or modules on one or more (non-Christian) principal religions, the **choice should include** a module or modules on one or more principal non-religious worldviews (again, in practice, humanism).
- If there are thematic modules, those modules **should include or allow for** the study of principal non-religious worldviews to the same extent as any of the non-Christian principal religions.



Case Study of a non-compliant syllabus

- Academy, using AQA GCSE RS course. Two components:
 - Christianity and Judaism (systematic)
 - Thematic study (four from eight)
 - A – relationships and families
 - B – religion and life
 - E – religion crime and punishment
 - F – religion, human rights and social justice
- ‘They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions’



Thank you

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