

HOW TO OPT OUT FROM RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AS A TEACHER

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ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND HUMANISTS

Northern Ireland Humanists is part of Humanists UK. At Humanists UK, we want a tolerant world where rational thinking and kindness prevail. We work to support lasting change for a better society, championing ideas for the one life we have. Our work helps people be happier and more fulfilled, and by bringing non-religious people together we help them develop their own views and an understanding of the world around them. Founded in 1896, we are trusted to promote humanism by 130,000 members and supporters and around 100 members of the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group. Through our ceremonies, pastoral support, education services, and campaigning work, we advance free thinking and freedom of choice so everyone can live in a fair and equal society.

How to opt-out from delivering RE and collective worship

If you **teach in a controlled school**, excluding controlled integrated schools, in Northern Ireland, Article 22 provides a route to be wholly or partly excused from:

- conducting or attending collective worship, and/or
- teaching Religious Education (RE)

To do this, you submit

1. a cover letter requesting withdrawal to the Board of Governors, and
2. a statutory declaration stating the request is made solely on grounds of conscience.

Witnessed by a lay magistrate

In Northern Ireland, you can have the statutory declaration witnessed by a lay magistrate. [NI Direct](#) states that lay magistrates will not ask you to pay anything for witnessing (in the context of official witnessing requirements).

How to book in with a lay magistrate:

- NI Direct provides a [contact route](#) via the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service that can help you find a lay magistrate in your area.

Witnessed by a solicitor

If you prefer a quick in-office appointment, a solicitor can witness the declaration for a small fixed fee. [Phoenix Law](#) will charge between £30-£50 to sign a witness declaration, other solicitors are available.



What teachers need to do

1. Fill in the [cover letter](#) and [statutory declaration form](#).
2. Book and attend a lay magistrate appointment (free) and have them witness the signing of the declaration.
3. Send both documents to the principal (asking them to table it with the Board), directly to the Board clerk/chair, or both.
4. Ask for written confirmation and the effective date of withdrawal to take place.
5. Move to practical arrangements: who is taking the RE cover and what happens during assemblies. In some cases, such as if there are staff capacity constraints, schools can get funding to cover the cost of employing an extra teacher to cover RE and collective worship.

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