

What Mid-West Humanists are doing -

We met the Minister for Education and noted that National Schools' leases are secular.

We hope to make the public more aware that the existing National Schools are legally secular.

What you can do -

If you are not inclined towards religion(or to the religious ethos of the school), and you want your child to attend your local National School, whose Trustees are clergy of one religion (Catholic or Protestant, or other) -

You can ask the school to take your child as a pupil, without any proof of your child's religion, without any baptismal certificate.

You can ask that the school not teach your child any religious doctrine, either in the specific class time for religion, or in the rest of the school hours.

You can mention the following facts: -

In Ireland, since the UK government started National Education in the 1830s, all children have equal rights to attend any National (Primary) school; and the right not to receive any religious instruction there.

Every child has *“the right... to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction at that school”* - Constitution of Ireland 1937 Article 44.2.4

More advice at TeachDontPreach.ie and at IrishNationalSchoolsTrust.org

Deed of Variation

On the inner side we explain a plan agreed in 1997 that would entrench the National Schools as religious in character.

We hope this plan is not implemented.

Mid West Humanists

The Mid West Humanists are a group of people (in Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary) with no religion, or leaning that way (since 2008), who meet in Limerick, 3rd Wednesday of the month at 20:00, now in the Absolute Hotel. They meet similar people, with no rule about what a person thinks or believes in order to attend.

Meeting details at www.midwesthumanists.com

Inquiries to info@midwesthumanists.com



Humanism

Humanism is the idea that humans can think, plan, and do all the things that humans need for a good life. For most humanists this means a life with other people - being and doing good for other people as well as for themselves.

Humanism means that humans can get the knowledge they need, by reason and science, and that they do not need information about the world that is said to be revealed by a god/ gods.

Humanism also means that humans can make good moral rules.

Mid-West Humanists' Leaflets
A National School Lease (example lease)
Schools should be Secular
Remove Blasphemy from the Constitution
Let Ireland's Constitution be Secular
Mid-West Humanists and Humanism

National School
Leases are
Secular

- *Leases forbid religious discrimination.*

Leases of National Schools are much more neutral about religion than most people know. You may have the idea that National Schools, as we call them Roman Catholic denominational, Church of Ireland denominational, etc, are legally tied to those religions, and that those churches own all the National Schools. They are not tied legally in that way.

The *only* mark of religious denomination is that the school's Trustees are clergy of a religion.

A school's Lease is between the Minister for Education and the school's Trustees. A typical Lease includes the following -

“WHEREAS the object of the system of National Education is to afford Combined literary and moral, and Separate Religious Instruction to children of all persuasions, as far as possible in the same school, upon the fundamental principle that no attempt shall be made to interfere with the peculiar religious tenets of any pupil”.

This tells schools to accept children of any religion (or none), and not to teach religion to those pupils (or whose parents) do not want it.

National Schools - a History

Edward Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland, in a letter in 1831, set the plan for National Schools. The UK Government wanted to calm rivalries between the churches in Ireland. They sought groups of people not all of one religion to act as Trustees of schools. However, only groups each solely of a single religion volunteered to be Trustees - clergy of the various religions.

The common description of the history of the above is that the churches both Catholic and Protestant *subverted* the aim of the government to have only one type of school. This ordinary version of history seems to also say that thereby the schools are "Catholic" or "Protestant" in a legal or principled sense. However the Leases of the schools *are fully as neutral about religion as the government originally intended.*

The property of a National School is vested in Trustees by a Lease (Deed of Trust). The Trustees promise to run the school by the principles of the National Education system and the Rules for National Schools from the Minister for Education. The Lease includes the following:

"WHEREAS the object of the system of National Education is to afford Combined literary and moral, and Separate Religious Instruction to children of all persuasions, as far as possible in the same school, upon the fundamental principle that no attempt shall be made to interfere with the peculiar religious tenets of any pupil."

The Trustees are typically a parish priest and the bishop. Apart from the Trustees' titles as clergy, the lease *does not say* that the school is Roman Catholic or Protestant (or other religion).

The Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, and Ireland's Constitutions of 1922 and 1937, facilitated the continuation of National Education.

See Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution "*the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction*".

National Schools are Secular!

From the 1960s the Department of Education permitted schools to move away from a secular education system, contrary to the Leases and to the Constitution.

Deeds of Variation

In 1997 the Department of Education drafted a model Deed of Variation for leases. The Catholic Primary Schools Managers Association (CPSMA) and similar organisations sought this.

The proposed Deeds of Variation would replace much of the existing standard lease. One model states that the school has a Roman Catholic ethos, and that this means that the school would be inspired by "belief in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ". For schools with Trustees of other religions there are other versions of the Deed.

If Leases were changed by these Deeds, they would cement a denominational ethos in the schools. It would be harder for children who are not Roman Catholic (or other specified religion of the school) to be absent from religion classes. The school would have *legal* power to not admit a child who is not of the specified religion.

The Deeds have not been implemented, because of complex legal difficulties - the Attorney General is involved.

There has been little publicity about the model Deed of Variation. The CPSMA 2012 Handbook quotes the model Deed for Roman Catholic Schools as if it is already signed and implemented, though it does not say it is signed.

At the CPSMA 2015 AGM Seán Ó Foghlú Secretary General of the Department of Education said that the Department is committed to continuing the plan for the Deed of Variation, so as to make the ethos of "denominational" schools secure and not to be open to challenge.

The Mid-West Humanists have met the Minister for Education and Skills about the Deeds of Variation and noted to her that the National Schools are secular and not denominational.

The MWH asked the Minister not to sign any Deeds of Variation. We want schools to remain neutral about religion. Society is moving to being more secular, and away from identifying with religion.

We have a leaflet of a sample National School Lease.

John Suttle, of the [Irish National Schools Trust](#), alerted the Mid West Humanists to the Deed of Variation and to how the Leases of National Schools are neutral about religion.

The MWH can send a copy of a National School lease if requested - email to info@midwesthumanists.com

The Deed of Variation is on Pages 61 to 64 of the CPSMA 2012 Board of Management Handbook :-

http://education.dublindiocese.ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2012/02/CPSMA_Handbook_2012.pdf