

Resource 5

Draft school resolution

A draft resolution relating to the topic of the importance of religious freedom, and respect for religious belief, in our school.

Preamble

- i. Affirming that "Freedom of religion or belief is not just an optional extra, or nice to have; it is the key human right. It allows everyone to follow their conscience in the way they see fit" (Baroness Anelay of St Johns, in the House of Lords, 16 July 2015).
- ii. Having considered that our school should promote human rights including the commitment that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and... to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (UDHR, Article 18).
- iii. Noting that "no one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice" (UN ICCPR, Article 18).

This meeting

1. Reminds members of the school that as a public body, the school is required by the Equality Act 2010 to ensure an individual is not discriminated against because of their religion or belief.
2. Notes that according to the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 it is illegal to use words, behaviour, written material, recordings or programmes which are threatening and intended to stir up religious hatred.
3. Encourages the creation of a school ethos in which all students and staff have the right to enjoy their religion without fear, hatred, or judgement from others.
4. Condemns the rise of intolerance and hate speech in the UK.
5. Further condemns that there is still a legal requirement for schools to hold a daily act of collective worship of a mainly or broadly Christian character (DfE Circular 1/94).
6. Recommends that our school should provide assemblies to reflect the range of religious beliefs (and none) and allow students to opt in or out according to their conscience.
7. Recommends that the school should ensure that all students and staff can pursue their own religion, including adapting uniforms and wearing religious symbols to reflect their beliefs; and attending religious meetings at appropriate times.
8. Recommends that no-one should be allowed to offend others because of their religious beliefs, and that the definition of offence should be determined by the person who perceived the offence, not the person who spoke or acted in an offensive manner.

Example 6: Small group 1 discussion in Avon School

In this extract the students discuss point 6 of the draft resolution.

[Turn 1] Speaker 2: "What I also mean is say for example it is a non-faith school they don't need to particularly promote any particular religion and atheism doesn't say like everyone is going to die and burn so could they necessarily give that message with the positive values that are behind the Bible or Qur'an or whatever there's going to be a message that's being delivered that even a common person can say 'oh that's a good value message' without tying yourself to a religion you can see the good it is trying to get to is it possible to give that message without."

[Turn 2] Speaker 1: "No I don't think so."

[Turn 3] Speaker 3: "No if you look at it this way, the title that we do our assemblies on they talk about it from a non-religious perspective it is standard, a norm innit to show respect, to show love, to show that you are caring."

[Turn 4] Speaker 1: "I agree with you to an extent."

[Turn 5] Speaker 3: "If you actually sit in assembly and pay attention to it you'll realise that they give the message first before they bring in anything to do with Christianity and then afterwards they bring in that Christian message so I think it's completely plausible for them to deliver that message without having the religious side attached to it."

[Turn 6] Teacher: "What do you think?"

[Turn 7] Speaker 1: "I agree with what they're saying but if you go to the root of it and you don't believe in heaven or hell and you think you are just going to die you can't really convince someone what they are doing is wrong or what they are doing is right it is just the group belief being told what is right for them. It is different for everyone."

[Turn 8] Speaker 3: "I think you can influence them and like try and help them to broaden their thinking but you can't, obviously you can't convince them or impose it but you definitely can have that influence."

[Turn 9] Speaker 2: "You're not telling them that if they show respect they are going to have a good death or something, it's a norm of society innit to show respect."

[Turn 10] Speaker 1: "I agree with that but why, you have to question it, why would you do that?"

[talking over each other about questioning it]

Example 7: Small group 2 discussion in Avon School

In this extract the students discuss point 8 of the draft resolution.

[Turn 1] Speaker 1: You can't implement it

[Turn 2] Speaker 3: Because it conflicts with freedom of speech

[they talk over each other, disagreeing]

[Turn 3] Speaker 4: No he's kinda right because

[Turn 4] Speaker 1: If you can't disagree with someone you can't move forwards

[Turn 5] Speaker 3: Obviously everyone knows that it is subjective what you are going to find offensive...

[Turn 6] Speaker 1: If I am eating Halal meat and some guy comes up and says "oh I don't agree with this you are offending me that you are eating this," who's in the right and who's in the wrong...?

[Turn 7] Speaker 2: What do you mean? That's disagreement though innit? It's not...

[Turn 8] Speaker 1: Yeah, that's what I'm saying

[Turn 9] Speaker 2: That's a stupid thing to be offended over

[Turn 10] Speaker 3: Stupid or not it's still something to be offended over. But there's the freedom to be offended over it

Example 8: Whole group plenary Avon School

In this extract the students return to point 8 of the draft resolution.

Speaker 1: You were talking about something to do with opinions and if you don't know if it is out of malice or not that's also subjective but it is also what you would say an opinion is because some are signs of oppression because you can't just say "oh it wasn't out of malice" or something like that as some people would agree it is a sign of oppression.

Speaker 2: So what I meant was like it's the way you respond to the situation so obviously you can say that someone isn't allowed to say something offensive but the question is when someone does, because it happens, what do you do with that situation? So I think it is you have to look at whether they said it because they wanted to be oppressive or malicious because in that case you should punish them or sanction them for it or if they said it because they genuinely did not know that it was wrong to say then you should educate them about why it's wrong.

Speaker 3: Then it comes down to what's more important – your right to say what you want or someone else's right to feel comfortable in their own environment? What's more important there? I think it is more important that people around you feel safe and comfortable and happy rather than you just being able to say whatever you want all the time.