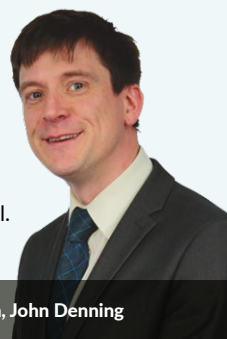




Every year we help around 200 Christian parents, teachers and school governors with tailored, practical advice on dealing with issues including the Equality Act, sex education, Religious Education and LGBT ideology.

John joined The Christian Institute in June 2015. He previously taught biology in state schools for 17 years, including as Head of Science, and served as a governor at a Christian school.



▶ Head of Education, John Denning

Christians have always been heavily involved in education.

One prominent example is the massive effort churches made to found schools to meet the needs of the poor during the UK's industrial revolution.

These provided education to the poorest children free of charge, resulting in basic literacy levels for around 70% of the working class.

Today, the picture is very different. Christian approaches to education

are increasingly contested: many would consider Christian values not only irrelevant, but harmful. There are determined efforts to remove Christian influence from schools.

But we should never forget that education is primarily the responsibility of parents.

At times, Christians can feel 'on the back foot' in dealing with contentious contemporary issues. Christian parents are

increasingly finding that schools are undermining their values. Christian schools, too, need help to receive fair treatment and respect for their beliefs.

Our education team is helping Christians to respond.

Often a little timely advice has quickly resolved matters. But there are also complex and challenging situations requiring intensive input over a number of months, as well as advice from our Legal Department.

Making a difference

INFLUENCING POLICY

The Education Department undertakes policy work, casework and public meetings, as well as producing resources. These reinforce one another. The experiences of Christian families, teachers and schools have been used to frame policy briefings and talks, as well as in developing general advice.

We present a Christian view on policy to government and work with other organisations that influence education policy.

We brief politicians and civil servants on aspects of school governance and religious and sex education teaching relevant to the UK and Republic of Ireland. In recent years, these have included:

- The different forms of relationships and sex education teaching in place around the UK and Social, Personal and Health Education in Ireland;

- Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework;
- Independent school inspections and guidance for independent schools in England;
- The regulation of out-of-school settings in England;
- The registration of youth workers in Wales;
- Home education.

We network with Christians who influence education in the UK and bring an education perspective to meetings of other Christian groups concerned about harmful ideologies affecting young people.

CAMPAIGNING



In 2015, as part of efforts to counter extremism, the Westminster Government proposed giving schools' regulator Ofsted the legal power to investigate any setting in England providing instruction to children for more than six to eight hours in any week. This could have meant Ofsted inspection of Sunday schools and holiday clubs.

We worked with our supporters, MPs and civil servants to challenge this approach. We argued that counter-extremism efforts should target those places where children are known to be at risk of radicalisation.

As a result, the Government dropped its plans in 2018. Official guidance is now more clearly focused to protect children from true extremism rather than Christian beliefs, and churches remain free from this kind of state inspection.

We worked to secure exemptions in the Equality Act 2010 that allow schools with a religious designation to only employ staff who share the religious beliefs of the school.



The legal victory against the Scottish Government's Named Person scheme has prevented guidance for schools directing teachers to overrule parents, in breach of their rights to raise their children in accordance with their beliefs.



The landmark ruling in the Ashers Baking Company case means equality law cannot be used to compel people to support a cause they disagree with. This also helps protect Christian teachers.

WATCH

the.ci/Poppy





CASE STUDIES

? **Did you know?** Every year, the team gives confidential support and advice to around 200 parents, teachers, headteachers and governors from all across the British Isles on issues including:

- Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)
- LGBT ideology and Pride events
- Teachers' and pupils' rights concerning transgender names and pronouns
- What is required for Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity policies
- Maintaining the Christian ethos of a school
- Religious Education and collective worship
- Home education
- Setting up Christian schools



THE TEACHER

Julie* has been teaching in secondary schools for more than 25 years. She was asked to deliver a PSHE lesson that taught, without challenge, that there are multiple genders and sexualities.

She could not in good conscience deliver the lesson using the provided plan because she would be expressing ideas she knew to be wrong.

Julie called The Christian Institute for some advice. She wanted to know what her rights were and if she was allowed to express a view that differed

from the values promoted in the lesson plan.

The team talked through how the lesson could be amended to protect Julie's freedom of belief and expression, while also bringing it into line with the school's legal duties.

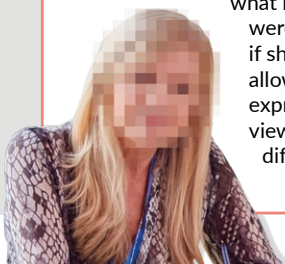
We informed Julie of relevant law, guidance and recent court cases to help her understand her rights. We also advised Julie about how to express her beliefs in class respectfully and sensitively as an employed member of staff in a position of trust.

Julie wanted to do something that would protect more pupils from one-sided teaching, so she arranged a meeting with the headteacher

to discuss her concerns. She also suggested some ways the materials could be changed to respect pupils' and staff's conscientious beliefs.

The headteacher had not seen the materials before and was sympathetic to Julie's position. He agreed the changes should be made and implemented across the school.

Julie told us that she was pleased to have acted. Although it was a small step, it helped raise awareness about some of the difficulties Christian teachers and pupils face. She said the support she had received from the Institute helped her not to be fearful and would empower her for the future.



THE GOVERNOR

Reshmee* is a parent and governor at a secondary school academy. She noticed there was a lack of parental engagement over RSE and that the school tended to approach issues of controversy – including understanding gender – from an ideological perspective, without exploring opposing views.

In response, she wrote a toolkit to help Christian parents engage with schools on RSE and is developing ways to help parents from a range of backgrounds and beliefs get involved. This work will enable the school

to better fulfil its legal duties to consult with parents on RSE and to provide teaching that is appropriate to pupils' religious background.

Reshmee also had concerns about policies relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. She worried that loose wording blurred the distinctions between biological sex, gender reassignment and the ideological concept of gender identity, and that this would inevitably



lead to a reining back of sex-based protections for pupils.

Our education team were able to provide Reshmee with accurate information about legislation and official guidance that she could present to the governing body in order to guide its approach in the future. Although some governors were initially surprised to hear this information, they took note. Reshmee's contributions have restrained the school from pursuing a radical approach towards gender-questioning pupils.



THE PARENT

David* wrote to his son's teacher after an A-level class discussing Fundamentalism. The teacher had included American Evangelicalism alongside several extreme examples, including Neo-Nazism.

David wrote to explain his family's beliefs to the teacher, including the conviction that all life is precious. He also

highlighted the many positive contributions Evangelicals have made to society and asked that Bible-believing Christians not get tarred with the same brush as extremist groups.

After receiving the email, the teacher immediately phoned and apologised, promising to review his material.

**Not their real names. All our enquiries are dealt with confidentially.*

PUBLICATIONS

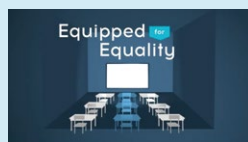
Equipped for equality

outlines what schools are, and are not, required to do in the name of equality and human rights law. The content is also available in a short video series at the.ci/equipped.



WATCH 

 the.ci/equipped



Our **Relationships and Sex Education** guide shows how the law and Government guidance give opportunities for Christian parents to engage constructively with schools, both to protect their own children and to encourage schools to adopt a positive approach which will benefit all.

For specific information regarding 'Relationships and Sex Education' in your area, please contact the team.

CONFERENCES

Our Salt and Light in Education half-day conferences explore what is going on in schools and how parents and churches can better engage with them. Churches can contact us to arrange an event.

Email: education@christian.org.uk
Phone: 0191 281 5664

The team has also been involved in speaking at online seminars, conferences, independent Christian schools, teachers' networks and to youth workers on issues ranging from equality and diversity to biblical wisdom in education.



Testimonials



"Thank you, again, for all your help. I could not have done it without you and feel a weight lifted off my shoulders".



"Thanks so much for all of this, it is so helpful to me. It is so positive having someone actually help me with this. I have felt quite alone trying to stand up for something I believe in very strongly".



"Thanks in large part to your research, our school is halting completely the social transition of the little girl. It is a cause of great joy. This was an astonishing few days. Thank you so much for your detail and timeliness."



"Just a brief note to thank you both for a super meeting ... today. I felt you both made the whole 'topic' very clear and directed us to very useful resources. I am most appreciative of all you and others at the CI do to keep us informed, prepared and able to be robust as needed."



"Thank you so much for your willingness to help us as we try to navigate this very clouded path. I am so thankful for what you and The Christian Institute are doing".

THE LATEST NEWS AND RESOURCES: **CHRISTIAN.ORG.UK**



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