

We welcome the call in this report for greater religious literacy and the highlighting of the scale of social action by the Church - as well as its recommendation that where a religious organisation is best placed to deliver a social good, it should not be disadvantaged.

"We also welcome the acknowledgement that the establishment of the Church of England has helped the integration of non-Christian perspectives in British society and helped them to make their voices heard in the public sphere. The Church of England, through its dioceses, parishes and at national level has been at the forefront of work to increase understanding between the different faiths.

"We are however disappointed that the report misunderstands the role of Church of England schools in providing a rounded education to more than a million pupils from all backgrounds as part of our commitment to the common good. If there is a significant problem with our schools it is that many of them are so popular that they are oversubscribed and not every parent who wants to can send their children to one.

"The report also misunderstands collective worship in schools. We believe that if the law on collective worship were repealed schools would risk losing this vital element of shaping a community that reflects the full breadth of human experience. We know, for example, that the response of many schools to the horror of the Paris attacks will have been in the context of collective worship.

"The report is dominated by the old fashioned view that traditional religion is declining in importance and that non-adherence to a religion is the same as humanism or secularism.

"In a fortnight where we have seen overwhelming public support for the Church of England over the Lord's Prayer cinema advert, it is important to remember that most public opinion is strongly opposed to the marginalisation of Christianity.

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