

1. Talk to your child

Find out what is being taught in these classes, and which children are opting out. Find out where the opting-out children go, and what activities they do during that time.

Those children's parents are ones most likely to be your allies. Talk to them, and refer them to the "Keep Religion out of School (NZ)" Facebook page.

2. Talk to other parents

Educate parents, and rock the boat a little.

- How do they feel about having the school officially "closed" for religious instruction?
- Do they know what is being taught to their children, and does it align with their own beliefs?
- Could they think of better ways that this 20 hours of school time could be used?
- Do they support teaching all the major world religions, or at least those represented by the pupils in the school, as a useful way of increasing cultural awareness?
- Would they support a non-religious ethics class like the Primary Ethics curriculum being introduced in NSW (www.primaryethics.com.au)?

This approach counters the influence of any one particular religion, is eminently reasonable, and kick-starts the discussion for change.

3. Talk to the teacher or school head

Understand what they feel about the existing religious program, and whether it reflects the cultural roots of all the pupils.

- Ask about the 32% of New Zealanders who stated that they had no religion at the last census.
- Ask whether all the school's children could be catered for by introducing a non-religious ethics program to the school, similar to the NSW Primary Ethics curriculum.

This will reveal if they support a broad ethics component for their pupils, or are actually pushing a narrow religious agenda.

4. Get onto the Board of Trustees

Very preferably with other like-minded parents running for the board as well, in support. BOT's are notoriously cliquey, and a single "outsider" trying to force change can be ostracised.

Having said that, make a strong election statement about the school teaching Primary Ethics, or having an 'opt in' policy for religious instruction, along with teaching about all the major religions represented at

the school. This will get printed on the nominees list sent out with voting forms, which can influence parents and the new board even if you do not get elected.

5. Write to your MP and the Minister of Education

It is election year - so your voice counts!

- Object to the schools being officially "closed" as a blatantly dishonest way of circumventing their secular purpose.
- Ask how the Education Act 1989 can be amended to get religion out of NZ schools for good.
- Ask how we can implement the NSW Primary Ethics curriculum in NZ.

Contact details: www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/GetInvolved/Contact

6. Contact the School Trustees Assoc.

You may have found by this time that you are getting stonewalled by the Board of Trustees and some parents who cannot see what you are complaining about. In fact, in their eyes you are the problem!

This will give you something to write to the School Trustees Association about, highlighting the divisive nature of the religious agenda being imposed on your secular school - www.nzsta.org.nz/contact-us.

7. Phone talkback radio

Complain that the school is officially “closed” for 20 hours a year, which equates to about one whole week of school lost every year to religious indoctrination by one particular religion, namely Christianity.

- Talk about cultural awareness, and learning about other religions in this multi-cultural world - including learning about those New Zealanders who have chosen to have no religion, which was 32% at the last census (2006). That is over 1 million people, or one in three.
- Talk about the non-religious Primary Ethics program starting in Australia.
- Mention the “Keep Religion out of School (NZ)” Facebook page, so other like-minded people can find us.

8. Write a letter to the editor

Particularly in response to any education issue that demands more of teachers.

If you remove external religious programs from schools that will give back a week of time to teachers and children per year!

Some schools already incorporate the teaching of values as part of their normal coursework. We should hand the religious component back to parents where it belongs.

Don't forget to add your comments to online articles where you can, such as TV3's news site (www.3news.co.nz).

9. Use the internet

Use all your usual social media to spread the word. This might include sharing relevant news articles on your Facebook page if you have one.

Blog about this topic, and post your comments on other people's blogs.

“Like” articles to up-rate them, and re-tweet them if you are on Twitter. Use the twitter hash-tag “#noNZRI” to link tweets.

10. Join a critical thinking group for additional support

- The New Zealand Skeptics (www.skeptics.org.nz).
- The NZ Assoc. of Rationalists & Humanists (www.nzarh.org.nz)
- The Humanist Society of New Zealand (www.humanist.org.nz)
- Visit the Completely Unnecessary Skeptical Podcast (thecusp.org.nz)
- Join your local branch of NZ Skeptics in the Pub (skepticsinthepub.net.nz). There is one based in each of the four main centres.
- On Facebook - Keep Religion out of School (NZ)

10 Easy Things You Can Do To Keep Religion Out Of NZ Schools