

**PE1623/G**

Edinburgh Secular Society Email of 22 November 2016

Edinburgh Secular Society support for Scottish Secular Society petition PE01623, "to remove the constitutional anomaly that imposes unelected Church appointees on Local Authority Education Committees"

Edinburgh Secular Society (ESS) is disappointed that since our own concerns about this issue, voiced in 2013, there has been no progress to redress this anachronism.

The Church has not owned our schools since 1872. With fewer than half of Scots now identifying as having any religious beliefs and Christians a further subset of those there is no mandate for it to retain this backdoor key.

These "religious representatives" are unelected, have full voting rights yet cannot be voted out. This is a democratic scandal. The nearest other country with this element of governmental Theocracy is Iran.

The churches argue that they bring a politically non-partisan wisdom to educational issues. This is an absurd claim.

In addition to using their unelected power to further religious ideas of sexuality and sex education ESS has uncovered examples of religious reps using their votes to veto the inception of joint-campus schools in maintenance of their own divisive sectarian agendas.

They argue that there are other non-party-political seats on Education Committees.

There are indeed other voices around the table: parents representatives, teachers representatives....people whose views are relevant to education !

ESS is not opposed to religious voices speaking out from the same platform as any other minority group.

Those who wish more religion in schools should stand for election on that ticket and we would warmly support their right to do so.