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[Blog article](#) by **Geraldine McGahey, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission**

Act Now on Teachers' Exception from Fair Employment Laws

It was great to see unity of purpose across the Assembly chamber on Monday 17 May in the debate on removing the exception of teachers from the fair employment laws. It was clear that everyone in the Chamber agreed that teachers deserve the protection of the law at work just as much as everyone else.

It is the Commission's view is that all teachers should be able to enjoy the same legislative protections as other workers, and that it is no longer acceptable to exclude the entire teaching workforce from the provisions of the fair employment legislation.

As things stand, it is not unlawful for schools to discriminate on the grounds of religious belief in the appointment and promotion of teachers. It also means that schools are not required to monitor the community composition of teachers, nor consider whether they are providing fair participation in the employment of teachers.

For all these reasons, the Commission has recommended the removal of the exception consistently since publishing research and a subsequent investigation into the issue in 2004. It is our view that the exception should be abolished at secondary level, with early consideration given to whether the exception should also be removed in primary schools.

Since then we have continued to call for action – including for example in our 'Proposals for legislative reform' submitted to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in 2009; our 2015 recommendations on 'Sharing in education' and our 2016 recommendations for the Programme for Government and Budget, as well as other consultation responses and engagements over the years.

Now it is our sincerest hope that this long-standing equality deficit will be addressed and I urge all our politicians to act for equality in the employment of teachers.

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