



Improving the way Ofsted inspects education

Consultation: The Vegan Society Response

28 April 2025

Q6) What do you think about the layout of our new report cards?

The Vegan Society supports the clear layout of the report cards and particularly the opportunity to read more assessment details about inclusion by clicking on the inclusion box. However, the Society is concerned that assessment of inclusion leadership and practice, perhaps inadvertently, overlooks an examination of inclusive policy and practice regarding the needs of vegan pupils and families. The Society is concerned that a school could receive a "secure" or "strong" rating while continuing to overlook the needs of vegan learners whose beliefs differ from the traditional, dominant educational framework. To genuinely support inclusive education, the proposed reporting system must require schools to demonstrate how they are proactively identifying and addressing the needs of all learners, including vegans.

The Vegan Society emphasises that veganism is protected under the Human Rights Act 1998 and ethical veganism is a protected characteristic for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, which protects "religion or belief". This means that vegan learners holding ethical vegan beliefs are protected from discrimination in education and should receive the same respect that learners with religious faiths should receive, since these are considered equivalent in law. In addition, schools are under a legal duty to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires them to eliminate discrimination, create equality of opportunity including by taking steps to meet the needs of pupils with protected characteristics, and foster good relations between vegans and non-vegans: a measure partly in place to break down prejudice.

Despite the existence of protective measures for vegans in education, the Society receives a high volume of complaints from vegan families who inform us that they are not adequately accommodated and included in education. For example, some vegan parents complain that their children do not have access to plant-based milk alternatives in school, or that they do not receive food that aligns with their protected beliefs. Vegans eat a 100% plant-based diet, but The Vegan Society has evidence that vegan pupils have been given meat and dairy products by school staff and that the quality of some vegan food provision is very poor. We also receive complaints about the curriculum not being taught in a plural manner, and about non-inclusive extracurricular activities. Vegans are frequently excluded—often unintentionally—from food-related activities such as baking days,



international food weeks or celebratory meals, where plant-based alternatives are overlooked. These instances, though seemingly minor to some, can leave vegan learners feeling marginalised and disconnected from school life. Yet such exclusion is entirely avoidable. These experiences can cause distress and inconvenience for the parents of vegan pupils who subsequently look to The Vegan Society for assistance and support.

Dr Hayley Lugassy's doctoral research explores the educational experiences of vegan young people in England and further evidences this concern (Lugassy, 2022). Her findings show that vegan learners do not always feel safe or supported in school environments, and that many struggle with the lack of institutional recognition of their beliefs. In particular, the absence of a consistent whole-school ethos that values and accommodates vegan learners can contribute to social isolation, discomfort in lessons and a lack of trust in the institution's ability to uphold their rights.

In terms of vegan inclusion, an example of best practice might include a school that, after engaging with vegan learners and their families, implements a whole-school review of food provision, curriculum materials and enrichment activities. As a result, the school introduces inclusive food technology units that explore plant-based nutrition, ensures that assemblies and PSHE lessons acknowledge veganism and adapts school events—such as bake sales and charity fundraisers—to ensure that vegan learners can participate fully. These changes should not be one-off gestures but regarded as inclusive measures that flow from a true culture of inclusion entrenched in school policy and the process of regular review, staff training and a sustained, reflective commitment to inclusion.

The Vegan Society therefore calls on Ofsted to support true inclusion by being mindful of the needs of vegan learners when they assess inclusion leadership, policy and practice. Ofsted's support in this area of inclusive provision will help education providers, many of which lack awareness of the needs of vegan learners in areas such as school meals, curriculum content and extracurricular activities. A proactive approach by Ofsted to the assessment of vegan inclusion in education will help to address systemic challenges that require sustained intervention (Schuelka 2018) and help create a better educational experience for vegan pupils.

The proposed easy-read report cards promise to provide parents, guardians and education providers with the information they need, but to function adequately and effectively, it is vital that the needs of vegan pupils and families do not go unnoticed in Ofsted's inspection of and reporting on inclusion culture, policy and practice. To be effective, Ofsted must proactively consider the philosophical belief element of the protected characteristic "religion or belief" under the Equality Act 2010.

References

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *The Index for Inclusion: A Guide to School Development Led by Inclusive Values*. 3rd ed. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2011.



Equality Act 2010, c. 15. *Legislation.gov.uk*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

Schuelka, Matthew J. *Implementing Inclusive Education*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2018. <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/implementing-inclusive-education>.

UNESCO. *Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education*. Paris: UNESCO, 2017. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248254e.pdf>.

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London: Rowman and Littlefield 2022).

Q7) Which specific evaluation areas would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

The Vegan Society wishes to comment on inclusion and the reporting of inclusion across relevant evaluation areas. The UK Department for Education (DfE) upholds key principles of inclusive education, which should be reflected in how Ofsted evaluates inclusion across all educational settings. These principles include a strength-based and personalised curriculum, flexibility and responsiveness, collaboration and communication, predictability and structure and child-centered approaches (Devon County Council 2024; Monash University 2024). Therefore, the accommodation of vegan needs and vegan-inclusive education should be embedded within each stage of education, ensuring that it is not treated as a supplementary consideration but as a fundamental principle guiding educational policies, practices and evaluations. Importantly, inclusion must be considered in the context of the parental right to education that respects their convictions, the prohibition on discrimination and equality measures required under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

References

Devon County Council 2024. *Key Principles for Inclusive Education and Practice*.
<https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/ordinarily-available-inclusive-provision/devons-key-principles-for-inclusive-education-and-practice>.

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. *Legislation.gov.uk*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.



Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London: Rowman and Littlefield 2022).

Early Years Evaluation Areas:

Early Years education is the foundation for shaping attitudes towards diversity, equity and inclusion. It is crucial that Ofsted's evaluation framework ensures that Early Years settings actively uphold and embed inclusive practices, particularly for pupils with protected philosophical beliefs, such as ethical veganism.

A meaningful evaluation of inclusion must assess whether Early Years settings proactively create environments where all learners can participate fully. Inclusion reporting should require providers to demonstrate how they ensure equitable meal provision so that all children – including vegans and those from vegan families – have access to suitable food without requiring special arrangements. It should also assess how curriculum materials and classroom discussions reflect diverse philosophical perspectives, recognising veganism as a valid worldview and evaluating how activities are planned to avoid indirectly excluding learners with protected beliefs, ensuring equal participation for all.

For instance, chick-hatching projects—though popular in Early Years settings—can present a significant conflict for vegan families, whose beliefs oppose the use of non-human animals. Without inclusive alternatives or the opportunity to opt out meaningfully, children may feel isolated. However, by replacing such projects with compassionate, ethics-aligned activities—such as exploring lifecycles through nature walks, plant growth or digital resources—educators can uphold the principles of inclusion while meeting learning objectives. With thoughtful adaptation, meaningful participation for all learners becomes entirely achievable.

While much of early years inclusion policy focuses on physical access and neurodiversity, philosophical belief-based inclusion must not be overlooked. Early Years educators play a formative role in reinforcing or dismantling exclusionary norms through the way they structure learning environments and frame discussions. The DfE's principle of child-centered learning (Devon County Council, 2024) should be applied to ensure that all learners, including those who are vegan or from vegan households, are supported from the outset.

The Vegan Society believe belief-based inclusion must be explicitly evaluated in inclusion reporting because, despite legal protections, there is no specific requirement in the current framework for Early Years settings to demonstrate how they support learners with protected beliefs. This systemic gap allows indirect discrimination to persist, potentially leaving vegan pupils without appropriate accommodations in their educational experience. Such discrimination may not be



overt but can take the form of standard classroom practices that unintentionally exclude, such as celebrating festivals with animal-based crafts, using storybooks that reinforce normative views of non-human animal use or organising animal farm visits without offering alternative learning experiences. These practices, if unexamined, can marginalise learners whose beliefs differ from the dominant majority, highlighting the urgent need for a more inclusive and accountable framework.

For inclusion reporting to be credible and enforceable, the evaluation framework must require Early Years providers to show evidence of inclusive policies and adaptations for all learners, including those with protected philosophical beliefs such as vegans. Staff training should include awareness of such beliefs to prevent unintentional bias or exclusion, and providers must demonstrate how they promote an inclusive culture that respects diverse worldviews, including veganism.

References

Devon County Council. 2024. *Key Principles for Inclusive Education and Practice*. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/ordinarily-available-inclusive-provision/devons-key-principles-for-inclusive-education-and-practice>.

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. *Legislation.gov.uk*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

Monash University. 2024. *Five Principles of Inclusive Education*.
<https://www.monash.edu/education/teachspace/articles/five-principles-of-inclusive-education>.

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London; Rowman and Littlefield 2022).

Schools Evaluation Areas:

The Vegan Society wishes to comment on the reporting of inclusion within schools under Ofsted's proposed inspection reforms. Inclusion must be embedded as a fundamental principle throughout the evaluation framework, ensuring it is not treated as an optional or supplementary consideration. All schools must be held accountable for demonstrating how they accommodate pupils and educators with protected philosophical beliefs, including vegans.

The proposed 5-point grading scale and more detailed reporting system offer an opportunity to strengthen transparency but only if inclusion is explicitly evaluated



across all relevant areas. The framework should require schools to demonstrate how they provide appropriate food options; ensure curriculum materials reflect vegan ethical perspectives and respond effectively to concerns raised by vegan pupils and families. Additionally, staff training must explicitly include awareness of ethical veganism as a protected characteristic to effectively identify and address discriminatory practices.

Without standardised evaluation criteria that recognises the needs of vegan pupils, there is a risk that schools will continue to approach inclusion inconsistently, prioritising more visible aspects of diversity while overlooking the needs of vegans. For example, a school may have comprehensive policies in place for supporting learners with disabilities or neurodivergence, while simultaneously requiring all pupils to take part in animal-based science experiments without offering alternatives. A vegan pupil may be expected to dissect hearts or observe procedures involving non-human animal testing, despite these activities conflicting directly with their protected beliefs. The lack of alternative assignments—such as digital simulations or ethically sourced plant-based models—not only places the learner in a difficult position but may also affect their academic engagement and progression. Such oversights, though often unintentional, can exclude pupils with philosophical beliefs and signal a limited understanding of what meaningful inclusion entails.

Embedding clear accountability measures within the inspection process will help ensure that schools uphold equality and diversity principles and create environments where all pupils can participate fully without unnecessary barriers.

Further Education (FE) and Skills Evaluation

The proposed changes to the Further Education (FE) and Skills Evaluation framework risk weakening the assessment of inclusion by prioritising broad institutional performance metrics over meaningful measures of belief inclusion. If the grading system focuses primarily on academic outcomes, employability rates or general compliance with limited or restricted equality policies without requiring explicit evidence of the recognition of the legal category ‘philosophical belief’, the specific challenges faced by vegan learners in vocational training and work placements may be overlooked.

To ensure a genuinely inclusive approach, the framework must require FE providers to demonstrate how philosophical beliefs are considered in curriculum design. Without this, institutions may continue to exclude vegans by failing to offer alternatives like plant-based catering modules or non-animal-based agricultural studies, thereby restricting opportunities for vegan learners. In agricultural courses, for example, learners are often expected to participate in modules focused on animal husbandry, including livestock management, slaughter



practices or dairy production, which directly conflict with their protected philosophical beliefs and convictions.

Requiring vegan students to engage in practices they fundamentally oppose can create discomfort and a sense of disconnection from their studies, potentially impacting their educational engagement and wellbeing. It may also deter them from pursuing qualifications in land-based industries altogether, contributing to a lack of diversity in sectors where sustainability and innovation are increasingly important. A genuinely inclusive approach would see agricultural courses offer plant-based pathways—focusing on soil health, organic crop production, vertical farming or plant-based innovation—ensuring that learners can meet learning objectives without compromising their beliefs. Similarly, if grading criteria do not assess access to ethical work placements, learners may be placed in roles that conflict with their values, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, healthcare and science where ethical tensions frequently arise. A well-designed framework would ensure all learners are provided with meaningful, belief-compatible opportunities to succeed.

To avoid entrenching systemic exclusion further, the assessment of inclusion must distinguish between different protected characteristics to avoid prioritising more visible needs, such as physical access and neurodiversity. Assessing how a provider accommodates the needs of vegans and recommending enhancements will support vegan learners to pursue their education without unnecessary barriers.

References

Legislation.gov.uk. *Equality Act 2010*. 2010.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London: Rowman and Littlefield 2022).

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Evaluation Areas

Teacher training plays a pivotal role in shaping inclusive school environments, yet newly qualified teachers often enter the profession without sufficient preparation to support vegan pupils. Without explicit training in the needs of vegan pupils and students, systemic exclusion will persist.

A model of inclusion within Initial Teacher Education (ITE) could take the form of a clearly embedded, whole-institution approach where respect for protected philosophical beliefs is consistently integrated across training, policy and practice. For example, ITE providers might include dedicated modules or sessions on



inclusion that explicitly address philosophical beliefs, using real-world scenarios—such as planning lessons that accommodate vegan learners—to encourage critical reflection and practical application. The Society would welcome an opportunity to work with the Department for Education and Ofsted in creating these modules.

Teacher trainees would be supported to recognise how exclusion and discrimination can occur in everyday teaching practices, from curriculum content to classroom discussions and school events. Ideally, vegan-inclusive practice would be modelled institutionally, including ensuring that course reading lists reflect a range of ethical perspectives, providing vegan options at catered events without requiring special requests, and offering belief-compatible school placements where trainees are not expected to compromise their values.

By taking this holistic and proactive approach, ITE institutions would not only meet their legal obligations but also prepare teachers to support diverse learners with confidence, empathy and respect from the very beginning of their careers. A strength-based and personalised model of training should be prioritised, enabling educators to recognise and respond to the varied needs of their learners, including those with protected philosophical beliefs (Monash University 2024). Without wider evaluation and assessment criteria, inclusion risks being treated as an afterthought rather than a fundamental aspect of teacher training, leaving future teachers ill-equipped to create genuinely inclusive classrooms for vegan pupils and families.

General Comments

The Vegan Society recommends that across all areas, the proposed report cards ensure that schools and institutions are held accountable for creating a culture of respect for all those with protected characteristics including protected religious or philosophical beliefs such as veganism. The framework should move beyond broad compliance measures and actively assess whether inclusion is embedded in everyday practice.

Key concerns include the risk of tokenistic inclusion, where schools meet only minimal expectations without actively removing barriers to participation (Booth and Ainscow 2011) and a grading system that prioritises surface-level compliance over meaningful engagement. These points may result in institutions fulfilling baseline requirements without ensuring that learners with protected philosophical beliefs experience genuine inclusion.

Ultimately, inclusion should be recognised as a core indicator of educational quality and effectiveness. The evaluation framework must reflect this by ensuring that all institutions—regardless of phase or type—are held accountable for upholding the rights of all learners, including those with philosophical beliefs such as veganism. Without explicit measures to assess how schools and colleges



respect and accommodate vegans, the new framework risks reinforcing, rather than dismantling, systemic exclusion.

References

Booth, Tony, and Mel Ainscow. *The Index for Inclusion: A Guide to School Development Led by Inclusive Values*. 3rd ed. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2011.

Devon County Council. 2024. *Key Principles for Inclusive Education and Practice*. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/support-schools-settings/ordinarily-available-inclusive-provision/devons-key-principles-for-inclusive-education-and-practice>.

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. Legislation.gov.uk. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

Schuelka, Matthew J. *Implementing Inclusive Education*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2018.

UNESCO. *Guide for Ensuring Inclusion and Equity in Education*. Paris: UNESCO, 2017. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248254e.pdf>

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London: Rowman and Littlefield 2022).

Q8) What do you think about our evaluation areas?

The Vegan Society welcomes the proposed new focus on inclusion across all evaluation areas, particularly the commitment to placing vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils and students at the centre of inspection. However, for this approach to be truly effective it must be sufficiently comprehensive to include *all* learners with protected characteristics, including recognising those with protected philosophical beliefs such as veganism.

At present, the proposals do not make explicit reference to the full scope of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, which risks reinforcing the misconception that inclusion only applies to a narrow group of learners. Veganism, as a protected philosophical belief, is often overlooked in educational policy and practice, despite its protection under human rights and equality law.

The Vegan Society is concerned that institutions pride themselves on being inclusive while perpetuating unintentional practices that exclude learners with vegan beliefs. For example, school meals may lack appropriate plant-based options, classroom discussions may reinforce dominant worldviews that conflict with vegan philosophy and school trips or science lessons may involve activities



that pose ethical challenges for vegan learners. These omissions, though often unintended, highlight the need for a more thorough and proactive interpretation of inclusion.

Q10) What do you think about our approach to 'exemplary' practice?

If a school is graded as *exemplary* in the area of inclusion, it *must* demonstrate that it recognises inclusion concerns *all* learners—this includes ethical vegans. Any framework that seeks to highlight and celebrate exemplary inclusion must recognise and treat pupils with protected characteristics equally.

Too often, philosophical belief is omitted from conversations about inclusion, despite its legal status and relevance to daily school life. An exemplary school should be required to show proactive, consistent efforts to recognise and accommodate vegan learners. This includes demonstrating how they anticipate the needs of vegan learners in curriculum planning and delivery, food provision, uniform policies and participation in activities such as science experiments or visits from mobile zoos.

Recognition of exemplary status must not rest solely on compliance with broad policies or positive academic outcomes. It must reflect a school's demonstrable commitment to inclusive practice that extends to all protected characteristics. Exemplary schools should be those that model best practice in embedding inclusion across their ethos, policies and everyday decision-making—where learners from all backgrounds and beliefs, including vegans feel seen, respected and able to participate fully.

Schools that demonstrate how they have made meaningful adjustments for vegan learners—such as by providing alternative science modules, ensuring plant-based meal options are standard rather than exceptional and adapting events to ensure belief-compatible participation—should be highlighted as examples of exemplary provision.

References

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. *Legislation.gov.uk*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*, Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf.

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London; Rowman and Littlefield 2022)



Q11) What do you think about the other evaluation scales we have considered? (these are set out in the consultation document)

The Vegan Society is concerned that the proposed evaluation scales, while well-intentioned, continue to overlook the importance of evaluating inclusion across the full range of protected characteristics, particularly *philosophical belief*, which is legally distinct but the protection of which, in law, is equal to religious beliefs. Without explicit reference to the protection of the protected characteristic 'religious or philosophical belief' within the evaluation criteria, there is a significant risk that schools may receive high ratings for inclusion—such as “strong” or “exemplary”—while continuing to disregard the needs of learners with philosophical beliefs such as veganism.

A school may, for example, be deemed inclusive for its support of pupils with SEND or different cultural backgrounds while simultaneously failing to make adjustments for vegan learners in key areas such as curriculum content, school meals, science modules or extracurricular activities. This is not a hypothetical concern. The Vegan Society has encountered schools where staff believed they were modelling inclusion yet were unaware that activities such as chick-hatching projects or non-human animal dissections directly conflicted with the protected beliefs of vegan learners. In one instance, a learner felt deeply uncomfortable ahead of a farm visit that included discussions of animal slaughter but did not know how to decline participation, and no alternative learning opportunity was offered. When concerns were raised, the response was defensive rather than reflective, highlighting the need for stronger inspection criteria that recognise and evaluate these gaps.

If Ofsted is to adopt differentiated evaluation scales, it must ensure that all protected characteristics under the Equality Act are meaningfully embedded in the descriptors. A school should not be graded as “strong” for inclusion unless it can demonstrate that it has proactively considered and addressed the needs of *all* learners, including those whose protected beliefs may challenge dominant cultural or historical and traditional pedagogical practices.

Q13) What do you think about including data alongside report cards, for example information about how well children and learners achieve?

At present, there is a significant gap in the collection and analysis of data relating to learners with protected philosophical beliefs. Vegan learners, for example, are frequently unrecorded and unrecognised in school-level data, which means their experiences—including exclusion from curriculum content, limited participation in practical subjects or unaccommodated dietary needs—remain invisible to inspectors and policymakers. This invisibility contributes to systemic failures in



inclusion and allows schools to be rated positively despite failing to meet their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

If Ofsted intends to include data alongside report cards, it must also commit to strengthening the collection of data on inclusion in a way that reflects *all* protected characteristics. This should include qualitative as well as quantitative insights—such as learner and family voice—so that experiences of discrimination can be properly understood and addressed. Data on achievement alone will not reflect whether learners are comfortable to reveal their feelings and concerns or have had equitable access to appropriate teaching, materials and school life.

The Vegan Society urges Ofsted to ensure that data supports transparency and accountability in the context of legal compliance. It must not reinforce the current blind spots that leave vegan learners unrecognised in reporting and in recommendations for better inclusive practice.

References

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. *Legislation.gov.uk*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*, Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London; Rowman and Littlefield 2022)

Part 2: how we inspect

The current concept and application of inclusion in education typically overlooks vegan learners. Despite ethical veganism being recognised as a protected philosophical belief under human rights and equality law, vegans remain largely invisible in concept, policy and practice within educational settings. This systemic exclusion is a serious and ongoing failing that must be addressed explicitly in both what is inspected and how inspections are carried out.

Schools are public bodies and, as such, are legally required to have due regard for all protected characteristics under the Public Sector Equality Duty. However, The Vegan Society frequently encounters schools that fail to recognise philosophical belief as equal to religion under law within their equality policies. Vegan learners are often excluded—albeit unintentionally—through curriculum content that reinforces normative animal use, food provision that does not accommodate plant-based needs as standard and activities that disregard ethical objections, such as chick-hatching projects or animal-based science lessons. In some cases,



children have been served food that directly contradicts their protected belief, including meat products. These examples are not simply oversights—they are violations of the principles of inclusion and legal protections.

For inspections to be meaningful, they must assess whether schools and other settings have taken proactive steps to include learners with protected philosophical beliefs. Inspectors must be trained to identify the absence of consideration for vegan learners and to examine not only the presence of inclusion policies but their actual implementation in school life. Generic statements or superficial gestures should not be seen as evidence of inclusive practice.

While we welcome the shift toward more detailed report cards and evaluation scales, this approach will only succeed if inclusion is fully and consistently defined. It is vital that the inspection process includes clear, rigorous criteria for assessing how schools accommodate all protected characteristics—not just the most visible or commonly referenced.

References

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. *Legislation.gov.uk*.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*, Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf

Rowley, Jeanette, and Bowles, Edie. 'Veganism, Law and Education in the United Kingdom' in *Law and Veganism: International Perspective on the Human Right to Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Jeanette Rowley and Carlo Prisco, (London; Rowman and Littlefield 2022).

-ends-



Public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010)

Please refer to the equality impact assessment text when completing this question.

Q15) Please tell us how you think our proposals may or may not impact equality.

While the proposals make reference to the Equality Act 2010 and suggest greater flexibility in considering protected characteristics, they do not go far enough to ensure that equality is meaningfully addressed—particularly in relation to *philosophical belief*. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) accompanying these proposals does identify "religion and belief" as a protected characteristic. However, beyond a single generalised statement, it offers no specific assurance that Ofsted recognises *ethical* veganism as a protected philosophical belief that will be recognised or assessed as a matter of inclusion during inspection.

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals from discrimination in education and schools, which are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. However, in practice, belief—particularly in the form of veganism—remains poorly understood and inconsistently addressed across the education sector. This failure is reflected in the absence of vegan-inclusive policies in many schools, the marginalisation of vegan learners in curriculum content, in teaching and food provision, and in the lack of awareness among staff that failing to accommodate vegan learners has led to breaches of equality policy and law.

Despite legal protections, vegan learners are routinely overlooked in both school policy and practice. The Vegan Society has supported families whose children have been served non-vegan food, placed in compulsory science or agricultural modules that contradict their beliefs, or excluded from trips and practical lessons without a satisfactory educational alternative. These experiences are not rare, and they are not being picked up through the current inspection process.

Ofsted's evaluation guidance must include specific measures to assess whether schools are meeting their legal duties in relation to philosophical belief.

If Ofsted is to effectively optimise inclusion in education, it must recognise that the protected characteristic "religion or belief" includes non-religious philosophical convictions such as veganism and ensure that the concept, inspection and reporting of inclusion explicitly includes vegans—rather than continues to render them invisible.

References

Equality Act 2010, c. 15. [Legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk).
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>



European Court of Human Rights. *European Convention on Human Rights*, Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

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Feedback

We are committed to making sure that our consultations are accessible.

Q16) To enable us to improve our consultation processes and reach, would you be willing to tell us a bit about yourself and how you found this survey?

Yes

We ask a little bit about yourself and what you thought about the survey. We will use the information you give to help us improve consultation and our reach in the future.

Your feedback here will be processed separately from your consultation response.

Q17) How did you find the consultation?

a) I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

b) I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

c) I had enough information about the consultation topic.

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

d) I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.



Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

- e) Is there anything you would like us to improve on or do differently for future consultations?



Q18) Additional questions about you

Your answers to the following questions will help us to evaluate how successfully we are gathering views from all sections of society. We would like to assure you that all responses are confidential and you do not have to answer every question.

a) Sex

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe:

b) Age

14-18

19-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 and over

Prefer not to say



c) How would you describe your ethnic group?

Asian or Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background (specify below if you wish)

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

Caribbean

African

Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background (specify below if you wish)

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background (specify below if you wish)

White

English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

Irish

Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Roma

Any other White background (specify below if you wish)

Other ethnic group

Arab

Any other ethnic group (specify below if you wish)

Other ethnic group



d) Sexual orientation

Straight/Heterosexual

Gay or lesbian

Bisexual

Prefer not to say

Prefer to self-describe:

e) Religion/belief

Other (please specify):

Veganism (philosophical belief e.g. under the Equality Act 2010).

f) Do you consider yourself to have special educational needs?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

g) Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

You have completed the survey

Would you like to submit your response now?