

# Atheist Ireland

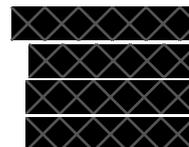
Promoting atheism, reason and ethical secularism

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c/o John Hamill



21<sup>st</sup> February 2018

**Attn:** Mr Benjamin O’Gorman  
Office of the Information Commissioner  
18 Lower Lesson Street,  
Dublin 2,  
D02 HE97.

## Re: Application for Review by the Information Commissioner

Dear Mr O’Gorman,

I would like to make a formal application for a review by the Information Commissioner, into whether or not the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) is a public body as defined by Section 6 of the Freedom of Information Act.

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018, I made a request of the PDST for non-personal information, according to Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. I have attached a copy of this request for your information. Specifically, I had become aware of several in-service days for religion teachers that were hosted by the Catholic Church, for which the agenda included presentations by both representatives of the Catholic Church and representatives of the PDST. Such events are frequently advertised by the Catholic Church through their own communication channels, such as their web sites and their Diocesan Advisors. My request sought a list of all such events within a narrowly defined time period, along with any communications between the Catholic Church and the PDST during the same time period.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the PDST provided a response to my request. I have attached a copy of this correspondence for your information. The PDST response indicated that there were no events or communications that the PDST was aware of, which matched the description in my original request. I believed this to be inaccurate, as I was already aware of some events matching the criteria in my request, such that my request merely sought an exhaustive list of other such events within a narrowly defined time period. As such,



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on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 I wrote again to the PDST, requesting a review of my original application by senior representatives of the PDST. I have attached a copy of this request for review, which highlights where I believe that the original response from the PDST was inaccurate.

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2018, I received an email from the PDST, explaining why their initial response indicated that there were no events or communications matching my original request. I have attached this email correspondence for your information. This explanation outlined the following information:

- The PDST states that from time to time, they are asked to attend events by Catholic diocesan bodies. This seems to confirm that there are communications between the PDST and the Catholic Church, consistent with my original request. However, there is no indication why in their original response to my request, the PDST stated that no such communications existed.
- The PDST states that they typically accept invitations Catholic diocesan bodies to attend at, and speak at, various events. This seems to confirm that there are events that have been jointly attended by the PDST and representatives of the Catholic Church, consistent with my original request. However, there is no indication why in their original response to my request, the PDST stated that no such events took place.

On 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the PDST responded to my application for a review of my original request by senior members of their organization. This response indicated that the PDST is not a public body as defined by Section 6 of the Freedom of Information Act. I have attached this correspondence for your information. I believe that this is incorrect, as the PDST is a fully State-funded organization that is a function of the Department of Education and Skills. As such, I would be grateful if the Information Commissioner could carry out a review as to whether or not the PDST is a public body as defined by Section 6 of the Freedom of Information Act. I would also be grateful if you could confirm for me if you will be able to initiate such a review based on the enclosed information, or whether you require any further details from me.

Yours Sincerely,

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John Hamill.

