

SEXUAL ABUSE IN NYC SCHOOLS v. CATHOLIC CHURCH

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No institution today has a better record handling the sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church. Its record from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s was bad, but given the reforms initiated in 2002, it has all but eradicated this offense. The same is not true of other institutions, and none has made less progress than the public schools.

Recently, New York City has made a good effort to check this problem, but serious issues remain. Legislation passed on January 29, 2026 allows victims of sexual misconduct to file a civil claim against perpetrators; an 18-month lookback window exists until July 29, 2027. It applies to any form of “gender-motivated violence.” Survivors can also bring claims against institutions that enabled these offenses.

While this should have been done decades ago, it is a step in the right direction. Still, there is cause for concern.

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigations for the New York City School District recently issued its annual report for 2025. There were 11,775 complaints, 897 of which were for sexual misconduct or inappropriate behavior. A total of 157 were investigated, 62 of which were substantiated.

This means that only 17.5 percent of the complaints for sexual abuse were investigated. In the Catholic Church, 100 percent of these complaints are investigated.

Following the Catholic Church, New York City public schools have a training course on sexual harassment. In the academic year that ended in August 2022, 62 percent of those who were required to take the course did so; this is down from 79

percent the previous year. In the Catholic Church, 100 percent regularly do so.

It took until May 2025 before New York State had a rule suspending teaching licenses over sexual abuse claims; before that school districts had to file charges with the state to have a tenured educator fired, and that took forever. In the Catholic Church, a priest is removed from ministry once an accusation has been deemed credible.

We need public data on the fate of public school employees who refuse to participate in training programs. In the Catholic Church, there is no tolerance for failing to comply.

If the Catholic Church sported these abysmal numbers, the media would be all over it. But because New York City public schools are the guilty ones, there is little interest in reporting on this story.

It has been clear for a long time that the most vocal critics of the Catholic Church have never really been interested in protecting minors from predators. No, their primary interest all along has been “getting the Church.” This would make for a great news story, but don’t hold your breath waiting for it.