

## Religious Education group to form

(UKPA) – Feb 16, 2012

Faith groups and politicians are to join forces in a bid to raise awareness of the importance of RE in schools.

The Religious Education Council of England and Wales said it was backing the creation of a new all party parliamentary group (APPG) on the issue. Once established, it is expected that the group will focus on protecting RE in schools and its value to young people.

It is also likely to lobby on related issues, such as calling for the subject to be included in the Government's new English Baccalaureate.

The EBacc, introduced by Education Secretary Michael Gove, is awarded to teenagers who score at least a C at GCSE in English, maths, science, a foreign language and a humanities subject - limited to history or geography.

The exclusion of RE created a storm of protest, with campaigners arguing the move could see the subject marginalised in schools.

The new APPG will be chaired by Stephen Lloyd, Lib Dem MP for Eastbourne and Willingdon, who last year tabled an early day motion calling for RE to be included in the EBacc. It attracted 115 signatures.

Mr Lloyd said: "I'm confident this new APPG will be able to provide real insight into the value of RE, especially as it helps young people leave school with an accurate grasp on the importance and relevance of religion."

"In today's world where our children can be open to an enormous amount of misleading information, I believe it is absolutely essential they are taught about different cultures and religions by trained, experienced RE teachers, allowing children to make informed choices."

John Keast, chairman of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, said: "The coalition Government is making policy decisions about academies, the national curriculum, qualifications and even teacher training provision."

"Directly or indirectly, all these will challenge how RE is taught to young people. It is extremely positive that there is such goodwill and interest in Westminster to support the subject in schools today."

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