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**Working together to strengthen the provision of religious education in schools, colleges and universities**

**Embargoed until 00.01am, 11 June 2012**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **RE for good – wide public support for RE in schools**

New research published today reflects public endorsement for high quality Religious Education (RE) in our schools. Good quality RE is widely understood to be at risk of being squeezed out of the curriculum despite it being highly valued. This new research shows over half (53%) of all adults in England and Wales who gave an opinion say RE should remain a compulsory subject. 58% agreed it is beneficial for all pupils to participate in RE lessons. This rose to a majority (63%) among 18-24 year olds.

Today's research on attitudes to RE was conducted by YouGov on behalf of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) and results are announced as MPs prepare to attend the first meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE. The views of all those who expressed an opinion on RE are:

- Over half (53%) of all adults in England and Wales think that RE should remain a compulsory subject in state funded schools
- 58% think it is beneficial for pupils to study RE
- The above two percentages rise to 63% in each case among 18–24 year olds
- 1 in 2 adults think RE provides a valuable space in the school day where young people can learn about all religious and non-religious beliefs

With religious and non-religious diversity increasing, these figures reflect the value adults attach to young people being able to articulate their own beliefs, as well as engaging with, respecting and understanding others. 50% of those who gave an opinion said RE was an essential component of a multi-faith society, as it promotes mutual respect, tolerance and understanding. This rose to over half among 18-24 year olds (52%) and 25-34 year olds (56%). In contrast, only 9% said they thought it was 'harmful' for pupils to study RE and only 13% thought it should not be taught in schools at all.

**Chair:** John Keast OBE   **Deputy Chair:** Dr Joyce Miller   **Treasurer:** Prof Trevor Cooling   **Secretary:** Deborah Weston  
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## **Higher support among younger adults**

RE has been on the curriculum since 1944 and in that time has changed from Biblical study to include world religions and non-religious worldviews. For children and young people, RE is an important opportunity in the school day when they are taught to recognise and respond to the challenges of growing up in a diverse, multi-cultural society. The research uncovered especially positive views of RE from those with most recent experience of school:

- Of those with an opinion, 60% of full time students agree RE is essential to a multi-faith society (a rise on 50% of all adults)
- 65% of full time students agree that it is beneficial for pupils to study RE (a rise on 58% of all adults)

In response to the survey and its findings John Keast, chair of the REC said:

"RE is a core part of the education system and we and our member bodies are committed to offering all the support we can muster to help schools deliver high value RE. Our ambition is to promote widespread understanding of how academically rigorous and personally inspiring good RE can be and how it equips young people to appreciate a range of religious and non-religious beliefs in our world. It's positive to see such a strong belief in the importance of the subject among the public.

"As part of the REC's on-going commitment to ensure RE teaching keeps up with proposed changes to the National Curriculum, we are working on a revised subject framework for RE. We look forward to now working with MPs in the newly-formed All Party Parliamentary Group on RE, informed by this new and encouraging research."

- ends -

**For further media information:**

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## **Notes to Editors**

1. Established in 1973, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (REC) brings together some fifty national organisations. These comprise academic and professional associations specialising in religions and religious education, as well as the individual religion and belief organisations inclusive of the range of faith communities found nationally, including the British Humanist Association. The REC's shared priority is to strengthen the quality of provision for the subject throughout the educational system.
2. The REC is a national organisation that represents a wide range of faiths and beliefs and members include the Church of England, the Catholic Church, the Free Churches, the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Zoroastrian and Bahá'í faiths, the British Humanist Association and professional teaching associations.
3. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1825 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all English and Welsh adults (aged 18+).
4. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education is chaired by Eastbourne and Willingdon MP Stephen Lloyd with its secretariat provided by the REC. The group will be formalised at an AGM and reception on 11 June 2012. For a media pass to this event please contact [info@3nine.co.uk](mailto:info@3nine.co.uk) or call 0207 736 1888.