



CULHAM ST GABRIEL'S

MEDIA RELEASE

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Religion and philosophy a hot topic between parents and their children

Landmark survey on parents' views on religious education reveals three-quarters discuss life after death, the origins of the universe, and ideas affecting morality and decision making with their children.

A survey into attitudes among parents towards religious education has found that religious and philosophical themes are a major talking point at home between parents and their children.

- Around 8 in 10 discuss beliefs about the origins of life and the universe (78%)
- Around 7 in 10 discuss beliefs concerning what happens when we die (72%)
- Around 8 in 10 discuss beliefs that affect people's behaviour and decision making (77%)
- Around 7 in 10 discuss issues related to religious and non-religious worldviews that appear in the media (67%)

Aside from conversations of a religious or philosophical nature, the survey found that three in five parents teach their children a religious or non-religious worldview including agnostic, atheistic, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu Dharma, and Muslim perspectives.

Around seven in ten (67%) regarded what their child learnt in RE as important, with just 15% of parents saying they didn't see any value in teaching religious education.

School also emerged as the biggest source of information about different worldviews with seven in ten parents (69%) reporting that their child accessed information about religious and non-religious worldviews in the classroom. 65% of them also agreed with the approach taken by their child's RE teacher.

The survey also gathered a variety of qualitative responses, with 2,000 parents being asked to provide extended answers on religious education in their child's school.

Those who saw value in the subject praised its ability to teach values of respect and acceptance, provide children with an opportunity to explore different belief systems as well as positively impact the morality and values of children.

When asked about their concerns for the subject, many parents referred to a lack of RE specialist teachers in schools, worrying that this may give rise to 'bias' and a lack of opportunities to learn about other worldviews.

The most common criticism of the subject came from those with a non-religious worldview who had concerns about the importance of religion.

The survey was carried out by Culham St Gabriel's Trust who wanted to understand how parents see their children's religious education on the eve of the publication of the 2021 Census results that showed a decline in the number of people who wish to identify themselves with a single specific organised religion.

Parents were also asked to consider the Religion and Worldviews approach to RE. This new way of thinking about the subject reflects the recommendations in the 2018 Commission on RE report and is being developed in some schools.

Parents were mostly supportive of the approach, with an average of seven in ten parents agreeing with its four core principles, including teaching the historical and social context of religion as well as providing children with the opportunity to explore similarities and differences between worldviews.

Commenting on the results, Dr Kathryn Wright, Chief Executive of Culham St Gabriel's Trust, a charity that promotes a broad-based, critical and reflective education in religion and worldviews, said:

“The results of this survey confirm what we’ve long suspected in speaking to parents and carers across the country. Religious and non-religious worldviews continue to play an important part in the lives of their children. The conversations taking place between parents, carers and their children at home touch on much of what is taught in a modern religious education curriculum. Beliefs about morality, what happens after death, and the origins of the universe are at the centre of every worldview.

“Importantly, it shows that when the components of a modern RE curriculum are communicated clearly to parents and carers, they broadly agree with the direction it is taking their child’s learning. The research shows that a strong majority are supportive of the Religion and Worldviews approach to RE - particularly the idea that every child has their own unique worldview. RE teachers are crucial in helping young people understand and explore these different worldviews and ultimately find their place in modern Britain and the wider world.”

To find out more about the survey, visit <https://www.cstg.org.uk/activities/campaigns/parent-survey>

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Notes for editors:

Research background

The research was conducted by Savanta on behalf of Culham St Gabriel’s Trust in August 2022. A nationally representative survey of 2000 UK parents (defined as having at least one child at school between the ages of 5-18) was carried out to understand how often, and in what ways, parents in the UK engage with their children on issues relating to religious and non-religious worldviews, how parents currently perceive the RE taught to their children in school, and assess their opinions on the new approach to RE and gauge if there’s anything missing from its core pillars.

Further details of the research and datasets are available on request.

Culham St Gabriel's Trust

Culham St Gabriel's is an endowed charitable foundation. The Trust is committed to providing teachers of religion and worldviews and other professionals with the support, connections, challenges and professional development they need. It wants all partners, such as parents, school governors, faith/belief communities and policy makers, to be positively aware of the benefits of a high-quality study of religion and worldviews. It also supports work that promotes the links between school ethos, values, leadership and school improvement.

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