

FAITH SCHOOLS – discussion led by Alan Rodway, 8th October 2018 - Notes

- Under the European Convention of Human Rights parents have an explicit right to bring up their children in the religion or belief of their choice without illegitimate interference from the State
- However they do NOT have a right to State funding for confessional religious teaching or faith schools that are in line with their own beliefs
- Separating children along fundamental lines of religious difference is divisive and can lead to religious, ethnic and socio-economic segregation
- Many faith schools can discriminate against pupils and teachers who do not share the faith of the school
- Despite a consistent and dramatic decline in church attendance and a growing majority of non-religious citizens, successive governments have paved the way for ever greater religious involvement in education – the House of Commons library shows that the proportion of State faith schools increased in England between 2000 and 2017 from 35% to 37% at primary level and from 16% to 19% at secondary level
- There is presently a 50% faith-based admissions cap which has provided some relief but Theresa May's government put forward plans to remove this – as a result of vigorous campaigning by secular organisations such as Humanists UK these plans have been abandoned for the time being but there is no guarantee that a future Conservative government will not try to re-introduce them
- In 2009 the Church of England stated that its ambition was to gain 100 new schools by 2014 – in 2013 it re-stated this aim as 200 new schools by 2019!
- Anecdotal evidence provides many instances of school places being contingent upon parents' regular attendance at church