

## **Press release 12-November-2011**

### **Faith schools and the fight over religious education**

FAITH schools have never been more popular with parents, politicians and crusaders for a non-secular education. Backed by excellent academic results, defenders of faith schools say they instil not only belief but discipline, self-belief and respect among pupils.

To their detractors they represent a distortion of educational values which sap much-needed resources from an overstretched state system and inculcate outdated values to pupils over issues such as homosexuality and science.

The Manchester Salon is hosting a debate on the role of faith schools in society and their locus as ideological battleground of ideas between secularists and promoters of religious education.

Leading the debate is Rania Hafez, director of Muslim Women in Education, and Dennis Hayes, professor of education at Derby University, who will discuss whether faith schools lead to an education ghetto.

They will ask if this is a re-run of the 19th century battle between religion and secularism, or is there a more contemporary explanation? In this salon debate Dennis Hayes will argue that the current militant atheism is not about religion at all, and attacks on religion show that 'It's not belief in god but belief in humanity that is dead.' In opposition, Rania Hafez will argue that it is exactly the deeper beliefs in religion that appeals to people today and that what atheists fear is

religious truths.

**Date:** Wednesday, 23 November, 2011, at 6.45pm, £5 entry.

**Venue:** Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street, Manchester, M2 1NL.

For further details on the event and Manchester Salon's activities, contact Simon Belt at [eve  
nts@manchestersalon.org.uk](mailto:evnts@manchestersalon.org.uk)