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Author(s): Leslie J. Francis and Mandy Robbins

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**Teachers at Faith Schools in England and Wales: State of research**

Leslie J. Francis\*

University of Warwick

and

Mandy Robbins

University of Warwick

Author note:

\*Corresponding author:

Leslie J Francis

Warwick Religions & Education Research Unit

Institute of Education

The University of Warwick

Coventry CV4 7AL United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)24 7652 2539

Fax: +44 (0)24 7657 2638

Email: [leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:leslie.francis@warwick.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

This study begins by distinguishing between three kinds of ‘faith schools’ (known as schools with a religious character) within England and Wales: faith schools that operate within the state-maintained sector and had their origin in voluntary church-related initiatives prior to the Education Act 1870; ‘traditional’ independent faith schools, many of which had their roots in or before the nineteenth century; and ‘new’ independent faith schools, particularly Christian and Muslim schools, following the Rochester initiative in 1969. Second, this study draws attention to and summarises a quantitative research tradition established in 1982 concerned with identifying the attitudes and values of teachers working specifically within Anglican faith schools within the state-maintained sector, and with modelling the influence of personal and religious factors in shaping their attitudes. Third, this study reanalyses a new database profiling the views of subject leaders in religious education across a broad range of primary schools with a religious character in England. These new analyses demonstrate the different priorities given to different aims of religious education by teachers in this sector, and illustrates the relative influence of personal factors (age, sex and church attendance), professional factors (years teaching, qualifications, and continuing professional development) and contextual factors (type of school).

## **Introduction**

### **Faith schools in England and Wales**

The history of education and educational legislation within Great Britain embraces three very different constituencies: Ireland, Scotland, and England and Wales (combined together). Constitutionally, the Westminster Government legislated for England and Wales as a single unit, with clearly separate educational policies only emerging following the arrival of the Welsh Assembly Government toward the end of the twentieth century. Religiously, the Church of England was the established Church for England and Wales, until disestablishment in Wales at the beginning of the twentieth century (Price, 1990).

Currently the notion of ‘faith schools’ in England and Wales embraces three very different kinds of schools, which are technically referred to by the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 as schools that have a ‘religious character’. These three kinds of schools are: state-maintained schools, ‘traditional’ independent schools, and the so-called ‘new’ independent schools. Each of these three kinds of schools has its own peculiar history.

The largest number of schools with a religious character are those within the state maintained sector, and trace their origin to the fact that the original initiative for the provision of ‘public’ education in England and Wales came not from the State but from the Churches, through voluntary societies like the National Society founded by the Church of England in 1811 (Burgess, 1958), the British and Foreign School Society founded largely by Non-conformist Churches in 1814, and the Catholic Poor School Committee founded in 1847 (see Cruickshank, 1963; Murphy, 1971; Chadwick, 1997). When the Government first voted public money for schools in 1833 it did so by distributing these funds through the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society. When the Education Act 1870

established secular machinery to found schools, it did so not to supplant the initiatives of the church-related societies, but to fill the gaps within voluntary provision (Murphy, 1972).

Against this background, the major determinant in shaping the current provision of faith schools within the state-maintained sector was provided by the Education Act 1944 (Dent, 1947). This Act acknowledged the Churches' historic investment in schools, but also recognised that the Churches were in no position to bring all these schools up to a required standard for post-war educational reconstruction. The ingenious compromise solution of the Education Act 1944 was to ensure that the Churches had a statutory role in shaping religious education throughout the whole state maintained system and to offer the Churches a choice between two different futures for their voluntary church schools. Voluntary schools were individually given the choice between 'aided' or 'controlled' status. This choice enabled schools which could afford to retain a high level of independence to do so (aided status), while those that either could not afford or did not desire to retain such a high level of independence could nevertheless retain something of their church-related character (controlled status).

In the case of aided status, the churches were responsible for the capital expenditure and retained the right to appoint the majority of the governors, to appoint the headteacher, and to provide denominational religious instruction and denominational worship. In the case of controlled schools, the churches were absolved of ongoing financial liability, but retained the right to appoint a minority of the governors, to provide denominational religious worship, and to offer denominational religious instruction for those children whose parents requested it. At the time of the Education Act 1944, the Non-conformist Churches largely opted out of the church school system, the Roman Catholic Church opted entirely for aided status, and the Church of England went for a mixed economy of aided and controlled status according to local preferences.

The *basic* framework provided by the Education Act 1944 has remained unchanged by subsequent legislation. Currently faith schools of this nature account for a third of state-maintained primary schools and a tenth of state-maintained secondary schools. The real issue concerning these schools relates to the admissions policy. In principle, the Roman Catholic Church has seen the main purpose of its schools as that of providing an alternative educational system for parents who wish a 'Catholic' education for their children. Following the language of the Durham Report (1970), the Church of England has maintained a twin function for its schools: on the one hand, the *general* function of serving the nation through the provision of neighbourhood schools, often in single school areas; and on the other hand, the *domestic* function of providing a distinctive Anglican education for the children of parents who seek it. At the time of the Education Act 1944, a small number of Jewish schools claimed voluntary aided status, and in recent years a small number of Islamic schools have also been added to this category.

The 'traditional' independent schools with a religious character trace their origins to a wide range of historic initiatives, including those directly by churches, by religious communities, by religious societies, and by private benefactors wishing to secure a religious connection. Alongside Anglican and Catholic traditional independent schools, there are some well-known Methodist and Quaker schools in this category.

The 'new' independent schools with a religious character trace their origin to a Christian foundation opened in Rochester in 1969 (Deakin, 1989). Within this context, the new independent Christian schools, often associated with the Christian Schools Trust, were variously founded by local churches or by consortia of parents. Such schools set out to offer a radical alternative to the 'secular' values of the broad state-maintained sector of schools. A parallel initiative was undertaken by the Islamic community in founding independent schools,

some of which were linked by the Association of Muslim Schools UK. Among the registered independent schools with a religious character are Buddhist and Hindu schools.

### **Listening to teachers**

Over the past decades several studies, working largely within a quantitative tradition, have examined the views of pupils (and former pupils) attending schools with a religious character in England and Wales, including studies concerned with Anglican schools (Francis 1986a, 1987a; Francis & Jewell, 1992; Lankshear, 2005). Catholic schools (Brothers, 1964; Lawlor, 1965; Hornsby-Smith, 1978; Egan & Francis, 1986; Egan, 1988; Francis, 2002) and independent Christian schools (O’Keeffe, 1992; Francis, 2005; ap Siôn, Francis & Baker (2007, 2009). The research literature (within a quantitative tradition) on listening to those who teach in such schools is, however, less well developed.

The most systematic attempt to define (and to model the influences on) the attitudes of teachers working within schools with a religious character in England and Wales was initiated by Francis in the early 1980s with reference to Anglican schools within the state maintained sector. In the first study in a series, Francis (1986b) reported on a survey conducted in 1982 that set out to map the attitudes and values of 338 teachers (65% response rate) employed in the 20 Church of England voluntary aided and 91 voluntary controlled first, primary and middle schools in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Alongside detailed information about the views of these teachers across 25 specific topics, Francis (1986b) identified three main attitudinal clusters and constructed an attitude scale to measure each of these areas. Then he employed path analysis to model the major influences on the scores recorded on each of these scales.

The first attitude scale set out to identify the issues which are best able to distinguish between those teachers who are *in favour of the church school system* and those who are not in favour of it. The statistical procedures of item analysis selected the sixteen items which

cohered most satisfactorily to assess this dimension, producing an alpha coefficient of 0.85. These sixteen items demonstrate that those who are most in favour of the church school system tend to say things like ‘I applied for my present post specifically because it was in a Church of England school’, ‘Anglican parents should be encouraged to send their children to a Church of England school’, and ‘the Church of England should develop more secondary/middle/upper schools’. Those who are most hostile to the church school system say things like, ‘the Church of England school system has outlived its usefulness’, ‘Church of England schools should be given over to the state’, and ‘the Church of England has too many schools’. Closely associated with the individual teachers’ stand on these polarising issues are their views on the relationship between church and school and the relationship between religion and education. Those in favour of church schools tend to believe that the school system should teach about the church and encourage pupils to accept and practise the Christian faith, while those against church schools tend to believe that the task of Christian education should rest with the churches and with parents rather than with the school system and that it is inappropriate for schools to ask pupils to participate in signs of religious commitment like worship and prayer.

The construct validity of this scale was checked against the preferences expressed by individual teachers for working in different types of schools. Teachers who stated their preference as working in a Church of England aided school scored 65.4 points on the scale; those who opted for a Church of England controlled school scored 57.6 points; those who opted for a school without a religious character (known as ‘county’ schools) scored 49.5 points. Those who said that they had no real preference between a church school and a school without a religious character scored 53.8 points, a score higher than those who opted for a county school, but lower than those who opted for a controlled school.



The second attitude scale set out to identify the characteristics of church schools which are most likely to be emphasised by those who wish to assert *the distinctiveness of the church school*. Again, the statistical procedures of item analysis selected the sixteen items which most satisfactorily distinguish between those teachers who say that church schools are or should be different from county schools and those who say that church schools and county schools should be doing exactly the same sort of job, with the same kind of priorities. This scale produced an alpha coefficient of 0.94

These sixteen items demonstrate that those who wish to emphasise the distinctiveness of church schools tend to talk in terms of the specifically religious characteristics of the school. Right at the top of their list they tend to place the ideas of providing a regular Christian assembly and teaching about Christianity, God and Jesus. They also consider it important to teach about the Bible and the Church. They feel that church schools should have committed Christians on the staff and develop close contacts with the local clergy. They believe that prayer has a place in the classroom. They argue that the church school should be a place for putting Christian values into practice and for providing an atmosphere of Christian community.

The construct validity of this scale was also checked against the preferences expressed by individual teachers for working in different kinds of schools. Teachers who stated their preference as teaching in a Church of England aided school scored 73.8 points on the scale; those who opted for Church of England controlled schools scored 66.3 points; those who opted for a county school scored 52.7 points. Those who said that they had no real preference between a church school and a county school scored 63.9 points, a score higher than those who opted for a county school, but lower than those who opted for a controlled school.

The third attitude scale set out to identify the teaching preferences of those who would characterise themselves as *favouring traditional teaching methods*, rather than progressive

teaching methods. Again, the statistical procedures of item analysis selected the sixteen items which most satisfactorily distinguished between those in favour of traditional teaching methods and those in favour of progressive teaching methods, producing an alpha coefficient of 0.88.

These sixteen items demonstrate that those who value traditional teaching methods place a high priority on teaching children to know their multiplication tables by heart, giving regular maths tests and giving regular spelling tests. They believe in training children in hard work, teaching children to be tidy and adopting firm discipline. They like to follow a regular timetable for different lessons. They emphasise the importance of bringing the best out of bright pupils and of rewarding good work by giving stars and other credit marks. They expect children to seek permission before leaving the classroom, and they expect children to be punished for persistent disruptive behaviour.

Two key findings emerged from the path analysis conducted on these attitude scales. The first finding was that preference for traditional teaching methods was independent of the individual teacher's age or religious commitment. Decisions about teaching styles appear to be thoroughly professional matters uninfluenced by more personal issues. The second finding was that views about church schools were clearly not independent of the individual teacher's age or religious commitment. Decisions about the distinctiveness of church schools and whether or not church schools are viewed favourably are influenced by more personal issues.

The scale of attitudes toward the church school system demonstrated that, while many teachers who find themselves working in the church school system still show considerable goodwill towards that system, their goodwill towards church schools is also clearly associated with their goodwill towards the Church in general. The statistical model suggests that the younger teachers are less likely to be churchgoers and that the teachers who are not churchgoers are less likely to be favourably disposed towards the church school system. This

model could imply that the next generation of teachers in church schools is likely to be less favourably disposed towards the church school system than the present generation.

The scale of attitudes toward the distinctiveness of church schools demonstrated that, while many teachers who find themselves working in the church school system still argue in favour of the distinctiveness of church schools, this notion of distinctiveness is not only related to the individual teachers' attitudes toward the Church, but also to their age.

In the case of their attitude toward the church school system, younger churchgoing teachers are just as likely to be favourably disposed to the Church's involvement in education as older churchgoing teachers. It is simply the case that fewer young teachers go to church. In the case of their attitude toward the distinctiveness of church schools, younger churchgoing teachers are less likely to support the Christian distinctiveness of church schools than older churchgoing teachers. This model could imply that the belief among teachers in church schools that church schools should be different is likely to disappear more rapidly, as the next generation of church school teachers emerges, than their general goodwill towards the Church's continued involvement in education.

Francis' (1986b) findings in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich were later tested by Wilcox and Francis (1996) in a second study conducted in the Diocese of Newcastle during 1992. This time the same question as used in the original study was completed by 145 teachers (63% response rate) employed within Church of England voluntary schools in the Diocese of Newcastle. This second study, conducted a decade later and in a different part of England, confirmed the finding that older teachers and teachers who attend church hold a more positive attitude toward church schools and are more likely to wish to emphasise the distinctiveness of church schools. This study, too, could therefore suggest that the distinctiveness of church schools would weaken as an older generation of teachers is gradually replaced by a younger generation.

In 1996, Francis and Grindle (2001) returned to the teachers in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich to replicate the 1982 study. In the meantime the stock of aided schools had reduced from 20 to 18 and the stock of controlled schools from 91 to 73 as a consequence of reorganisation involving the closure of small schools. This time responses were received from 290 teachers (56% response rate).

Six main conclusions emerge from the 1996 study of the attitudes of teachers working in church schools, when compared with the findings of the earlier study conducted in the same diocese in 1982. First, analysis of the 1982 data indicated that younger teachers were less likely to attend church than older teachers and that the teachers who attended church less frequently were also likely to hold a less positive attitude toward the Church school system. On the basis of this finding, Francis (1986b) predicted that the next generation of teachers in church schools would be less favourably disposed toward the church school system than the generation in post in 1982. Analyses of the 1996 cohort of teachers confirms this prediction. Overall, teachers working in church schools in 1996 held a less positive attitude toward the church school system than teachers working in church schools in 1982.

Second, the multiple regression model exploring the predictors of individual differences in teacher attitude toward the church school system in 1996 confirms that there remains a close relationship between teachers' personal religious commitment and their views on the church school system. Churchgoing teachers are still inclined to hold a more positive attitude toward the church school system than teachers who do not attend church. This finding underlines the clear interrelationship between personal commitment and professional judgement and calls into question the view that educational decisions are professional matters uninfluenced by personal beliefs.

Third, while Francis' (1986b) original study in 1982 found that the younger teachers were less likely to be churchgoers than the older teachers, this finding was replicated neither

in the 1996 replication study, nor in the study by Wilcox and Francis (1996). Moreover, the 1996 study found no direct path between age and attitude toward the church school system as found by Wilcox and Francis (1996).

Fourth, analysis of the 1982 data indicated that younger teachers and teachers who attended church less frequently were also likely to hold a less positive attitude toward the distinctiveness of church schools. On the basis of this finding, Francis (1986b) predicted that the next generation of teachers in church schools was likely to be less favourably disposed toward the distinctiveness of church schools. Francis' prediction, however, was unable to foresee the potential impact of the denominational system of inspections introduced by the 1992 Education (Schools) Act on the self-conscious development of distinctiveness within church schools. Analysis of the 1996 cohort of teachers not only fails to confirm Francis' prediction but demonstrates that change had occurred in the direction opposite to that predicted. Overall, teachers working in church schools in 1996 held a more positive view of the distinctiveness of church schools than teachers working in church schools in 1982.

Fifth, Francis (1986b) and Wilcox and Francis (1996) found that teacher attitudes toward the distinctiveness of church schools were predicted by two personal characteristics. Older teachers and churchgoing teachers were more likely to emphasise the distinctiveness of church schools than younger teachers and teachers who did not attend church. This finding is not replicated in the 1996 study. Among the 1996 cohort of teachers both age and church attendance are irrelevant to teachers' views on the distinctiveness of church schools. The difference between the findings in 1982 and 1996 suggests that the process of denominational inspection and the in-service training associated with such inspection may have been successful in raising the debate regarding the distinctiveness of church schools from the level of personal preference to the level of professional judgement.

Sixth, comparison of the two studies conducted in 1982 and 1996 demonstrates that there had been no overall shift in attitude toward traditional teaching methods over this period of time. What is evident in 1996, however, which was not the case in 1982, is a clearer pattern of differences between teachers who put more emphasis on traditional teaching methods and those who put less emphasis on these methods. Traditional methods were supported in 1996 most by churchgoing teachers working in aided schools which operated a selective admissions policy. It is precisely these schools which are able to promote the most distinctive educational ethos and market this ethos to parents who specifically wish to select a distinctive educational environment for their children. In that sense, the espousal of church commitment and traditional methods seem to go hand in hand.

This study has demonstrated the value of replicating a survey among teachers working within the same church schools both in 1982 and 1996 in order to monitor the way in which teacher attitudes toward various aspects of teaching in church schools have changed from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s. Further replication is now desirable within the same schools in order to monitor changing attitudes toward church schools into the twenty-first century.

Building on the 1982 study conducted among teachers in voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Francis (1987b) conducted a more broadly based survey among the primary school headteachers within Gloucestershire, including Anglican schools, Roman Catholic schools, and schools without a religious character. A study of this nature broadened the research agenda in three ways: by setting headteachers in church schools alongside headteachers in schools without a religious character; by comparing the church-related characteristics of church schools with the church-related characteristics of schools without a religious character; and by modelling the comparative influences of the school foundation (secular or religious) and of the religious convictions of the headteachers in shaping the church-related characteristics of individual

schools. The Gloucestershire project received a remarkably high response rate from the headteachers, generating replies from 68 Church of England controlled schools (93% response), 107 county schools (96%) response, 41 Church of England aided schools (100% response), and 8 Roman Catholic Schools (100%) response.

The first step in operationalising this broader research agenda involved extracting from the headteachers' questionnaire (by means of factor analyses and other exploratory correlational techniques) a scale capable of distinguishing between schools that follow a church-related approach to education and schools that do not follow such an approach. The end result of this process was to identify the following 22 pieces of information, listed according to the factor weightings (from high to low).

Frequency of clergy visits to school	.58
Frequency of clergy contributions to RE lessons	.51
Visit Christian churches as part of RE	.46
Frequency of clergy contribution to assemblies	.43
Pupils hear passages from the bible in assemblies	.41
Present music, dance or drama in church	.39
Visit church to talk with clergy	.38
Hold a school service	.38
Pupils hear Christian stories in assemblies	.36
Take part in a weekday church service	.35
Use copies of the bible in RE lessons	.34
Pupils say the Lord's Prayer in assemblies	.34
Pupils read their own prayers in assemblies	.33
Pupils sing psalms or canticles in assemblies	.33
Religious emphases of assemblies	.29
Relationship between assemblies and church's year	.28
Visit to church to look at the building	.26
Visit to church to study the purpose of the church	.25
Relationship between hymns in assemblies and local churches	.24
Take part in a Sunday church service	.24

Make a display of pupils' work in church	.24
Class sets of modern bibles	.20

These statistics show that, within the available indicators in the questionnaire, contact with clergy emerged as the most central feature distinguishing schools that adopts a church-related approach to education. The scale demonstrates that schools which encourage contact with clergy also emphasise other aspects of the religious life of the school differently from schools which do not encourage contact with the clergy. Schools which encourage contact with clergy also have more contact with local churches; they hold more explicitly Christian assemblies and relate these assemblies more explicitly to the life of the church; they give more emphasis to the church-related aspect of religious education.

The second step in operationalising this broader research agenda involved creating multi-variate models to examine the factors that helped to shape the extent to which individual schools displayed the characteristics of providing a church-related approach to education. Such analysis identified three main conclusions.

First, there was considerable variation in the church-related character both of church schools and of county schools. Indeed in some county schools there were signs of church-related character than within some church schools.

Second, overall, headteachers both in church schools and in county schools displayed a high level of church attendance. The levels of headteacher church attendance were, however, higher in church schools than in county schools, indicating that religious practice seemed to play a part in the selection process for headteachers within church schools.

Third, both in church schools and in county schools the headteacher's level of church attendance was significantly correlated with the extent to which individual schools displayed church-related characteristics. In other words, the religious commitment of headteachers



seems to influence educational practice not only within faith schools, but also within schools that have no religious character.

### **Research agenda**

In view of the paucity of empirical research on the attitudes and values of teachers working within schools with a religious character in England and Wales (and on the factors influencing these attitudes), the present study now turns attention to the reanalysis of a recent database assembled under the initiative of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (Jackson *et al*, 2010). This database focussed on the subject leaders for religious education, and included assessment of their understanding of the aims of religious education. Reanalyses of these data would permit concentration on the responses of subject leaders working within schools with a religious character, identification of the priorities established for religious education within this (diverse) sector, and examination of the factors that shape individual differences in this field. Moreover, the database contains sufficient variables to model the relative influence on views concerning religious education exerted by personal factors (including age, sex, and church attendance), professional factors (including teaching experience, initial qualifications, and continuing professional development), and contextual factors (including different types of schools).

## **Method**

### **Research context**

The Department for Children, Schools and Families commissioned a survey of subject leaders in religious education throughout the state-maintained and independent sectors in England at both primary and secondary levels, as part of a broader evaluation of materials available for and used within religious education. (for further details see Jackson *et al*, 2010)

### **Sample frame**

A stratified sample was proposed to ensure sufficient representation of the minority schools. In sectors where there were fewer than 250 schools, a population study was undertaken. In sectors where there were 250 or more schools, random sampling of these sectors was undertaken from the database managed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to generate a pool of 250 schools.

### **Response rate**

Unanticipated difficulties in receiving authorisation for the sampling strategy by the Department for Children, Schools and Families resulted in inadequate time being available to maximise the response rate. A total of 2723 questionnaires were despatched, and 627 thoroughly completed responses were received before the end of the school term, representing a 23% response rate.

### **Measures**

In addition to sex, age, and years of teaching experience, the following measures were employed in the present analyses.

*Attendance* at a public place of worship (apart from weddings, funerals, or school occasions) was assessed on a five-point scale: weekly, monthly, at least six times a year, at least once a year, and never.

*Qualifications* in religious education were assessed by the following options: BA(QTS) in religion or RE; BA, BEd, etc. in religion or RE; PGCE in RE; other teaching qualifications in RE; MA, MEd in religion; Doctorate in religion; professional qualification in religion (e.g. ordination); and no specific qualification in RE.

*Continuing professional development* in RE received during the past 12 months was quantified on a six-point scale: none; 1-8 hours; 10-19 hours; 20-29 hours; 30-39 hours; and 40+ hours.

The *Aims of Religious Education Inventory (AREI)* proposed five short scales defined as: Understanding (three items), Values (three items), Community cohesion (three items), World religions (two items), and Nurture (two items). Participants were asked to assess ‘how important are the following aims of RE to your school to teach pupils’, rated on a five-point scale: very important, unimportant, no opinion, important, and very important.

### **Analysis**

The present analyses draw on the data provided by subject leaders working within schools with a religious character within the primary sector, a total of 218 individuals. Further details concerning the participating schools are provided in Table 1.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Meeting the teachers**

The first step in analysing the data from the survey involves introducing the teachers who serve as subject leaders in religious education and who responded to the survey, in terms of their personal profile, their professional background, and their religious commitment.

In terms of *personal profile*, of the 218 participants, 54 were male, 155 were female, and 9 preferred not to disclose their sex; 11 were in their twenties, 37 were in their thirties, 65 were in their forties, 88 were in their fifties, 6 were in their sixties, and 11 preferred not to disclose their age.

In terms of *professional background*, of the 218 participants, 14 had served as a teacher for 5 years or less, 30 for 6 - 10 years, 26 for 11 - 15 years, 39 for 16 - 20 years, 99 for more than 20 years, and 10 preferred not to disclose their length of professional service; 154 held a qualification relevant for serving as a subject leader in religious education, 60 held no such qualification, and 4 preferred not to disclose their level of qualification in this area. Hours given to continuing professional development in religious education within the past 12 months varied greatly: 72 participants had undertaken no continuing professional

development in this field, 99 had undertaken up to 9 hours, 28 had undertaken between 10 and 19 hours, 12 had taken 20 or more hours, and 7 preferred not to disclose their experience of continuing professional development within the past 12 months.

In terms of their *religious commitment*, of the 218 participants, 185 responded to the question ‘What is your religion?’ by checking the category ‘Christian’, 1 ‘Jewish’, 4 ‘Muslim’, 2 ‘Other’ and 10 ‘none’; a further 16 preferred not to disclose information concerning their religious affiliation. Responding to the question how often they ‘attend a public place of worship (apart from weddings, funerals, etc., or school occasions)’, 135 reported weekly attendance, 17 monthly attendance, 29 attendance at least six times a year, and 11 attendance once a year, while 11 reported never attending and 15 preferred not to disclose their level of attendance.

### **Identifying the schools**

The second step in analysing the data from the survey involves identifying the primary schools with a religious character that responded to the invitation to participate in the enquiry. Table 1 places the schools within the categories used by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Given the large number of categories of schools (8) and the relatively small number of schools within some categories, the following analyses propose to collapse categories into three dummy variables, taking the two categories of Church of England schools within the state-maintained sector (voluntary controlled schools and voluntary aided schools) collapsed into the reference point. The three dummy variables are designed to capture the Roman Catholic schools (collapsing voluntary aided and independent), to capture the traditional independent schools (collapsing Church of England independent and Roman Catholic independent), and to capture the new independent faith schools (collapsing Christian, Muslim and Jewish). In creating these dummy variables it is important to note that the Roman Catholic independent schools have been incorporated within two of the dummy variables.

-insert Table 1 here -

### **Establishing the aims of religious education**

The third step in analysing the data from the survey involves examining the Aims of Religious Education Inventory (AREI). Table 2 displays the scale properties of the five short instruments designed to distinguish between five recognised aims of religious education,

defined as *Understanding* (to promote understanding of religion), as *Values* (to promote personal and social values), as *Community cohesion* (to promote community cohesion), as *World religions* (to promote learning of world religions), and as *Nurture* (to promote religious and spiritual nurture). These data demonstrate that all of these scales return a very satisfactory alpha coefficient for such short instruments (De Vellis, 2003), that the full range of scores has been used for each scale, and that in all cases the mean scores are in the upper range of the scales.

-insert table 2 here -

Table 3 examines the five scales in closer detail, reporting the individual items, the correlation between each item and the sum of the remaining items (the item rest of scale correlation), and the proportion of teachers who rated each item as ‘very important’. The percentage endorsements indicate that the two aims of religious education rated most highly by the teachers are *Values* (to promote personal and social values) and *Nurture* (to promote religious and spiritual nurture). In terms of *Values*, 74% rate as very important promoting good personal values, 67% rate as very important promoting good social values, and 67% rate as very important promoting moral living. In terms of *Nurture*, 71% rate as very important promoting spiritual development, and 66% rate as very important developing a positive attitude toward religion. In third place comes the aim *Community cohesion* (to promote community cohesion). In this area 64% rate as very important helping to develop good citizens, 58% rate as very important combatting religious discrimination, and 54% rate as very important promoting community cohesion. In fourth place comes the aim *Understanding* (to promote understanding of religion). In this area, 48% rate as very important reflecting on ultimate questions, 36% rate as very important thinking critically about religion, and 34% rate as very important understanding the influence of religion in society. In bottom place comes the aim *World religions* (to promote learning of world religions). In this area, 30% rate

as very important learning *from* the religions of the world, and 26% rate as very important learning *about* the religions of the world.

### **Shaping the aims of religious education**

The fourth step in analysing the data from the survey involves examining the personal, professional and contextual factors correlated with the priority given by individual subject leaders to each of the five aims of religious education assessed by the AREI. Table 4 presents the correlation coefficients between each of the five aims of religious education and three personal factors (age, sex, and church attendance), three professional factors (years of experience as a teacher, holding a qualification in religious education, and continuing professional development), and three contextual factors (Roman Catholic schools, traditional independent sector schools, and 'new' independent faith schools, compared with Church of England schools). Intentionally these nine factors are being viewed in a bivariate context rather than in a multivariate context in order to profile their usefulness as independent indicators. Each of the five aims of religious education will now be examined in the order in which they were addressed in the previous section.

-insert table 4 here-

The aim rated most highly was that of *Values* (to promote personal and social values). Table 4 demonstrates that personal, professional and contextual factors are all implicated in accounting for individual differences in the priority given to this aim. Higher emphasis is placed on the *Values* aim by female subject leaders (personal), by subject leaders who have been engaged in the profession longest and who participate in continuing professional development (professional), and by subject leaders who work in Roman Catholic schools (contextual).

In second place (rated almost as highly as the first) was the aim of *Nurture* (to promote religious and spiritual nurture). Table 4 demonstrates that personal, professional and

contextual factors are implicated in accounting for individual differences in priority given to this aim. Higher emphasis is placed on the *Nurture* aim by subject leaders who frequently attended public worship (personal), and by subject leaders who work in Roman Catholic schools (contextual). Lower emphasis is placed on the *Nurture* aim by subject leaders who participate in continuing professional development (professional).

In third place was the aim of *Community cohesion* (to promote community cohesion). Table 4 demonstrates that personal, professional and contextual factors are all implicated in accounting for individual differences in the priority given to this aim. Higher emphasis is placed on the *Community cohesion* aim by female subject leaders (personal), by subject leaders who participate in continuing professional development (professional), and by subject leaders who work in Roman Catholic schools (contextual).

In fourth place was the aim of *Understanding* (to promote understanding of religion). Table 4 demonstrates that personal and contextual factors, but not professional factors, are implicated in accounting for individual differences in the priority given to this aim. Higher emphasis is placed on the *Understanding* aim by subject leaders who frequently attended public worship (personal) and by subject leaders who work in Roman Catholic schools (contextual).

In fifth place was the aim of *World religions* (to promote learning of world religions). Table 4 demonstrates that personal and professional factors, but not contextual factors, are implicated in accounting for individual differences in the priority given to this aim. Higher emphasis is placed on the *World religions* aim by older subject leaders (personal) and by subject leaders who have been engaged in the profession longest (professional). These two factors are, however, by their very nature, closely linked.

### **Conclusion**

The present study set out to address three aims: to clarify the complexity and variety of ways in which the notion of ‘faith schools’ may be applied in England and Wales; to identify the extent to which a quantitative research tradition has been established in England and Wales concerned with mapping and modelling the attitudes and values of teachers working within faith schools, and to explore the insights that can be generated from a new database commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, into the personal, professional and contextual factors that shape the understanding of subject leaders working in faith schools toward the aims of religious education. Five main conclusions emerge from the synthesis of previous research and the new empirical findings.

First, the situation regarding faith schools in England and Wales is complex, and there are significantly different findings that apply to different sectors within this broad category. Future research needs to continue to distinguish carefully and precisely between the different sectors. For example, significant differences may be expected between the findings of research conducted within Church of England voluntary controlled schools within the state-maintained sector and the new Christian schools within the independent sector.

Secondly, although the body of quantitative empirical data regarding teachers at faith schools in England and Wales remains very limited, the extant research at least demonstrates the value of building on this research tradition. While the historic initiative for this kind of research in England and Wales concentrated largely on Anglican schools within the state-maintained sector, future research may wish to give more attention to the newer (and in many ways less well understood) independent schools associated with bodies like the Christian Schools Trust and the Association of Muslim Schools UK.

Third, the group of studies reported by Francis (1986b), Wilcox and Francis (1996) and Francis and Grindle (2001) confirmed the value of carefully conducted replication studies in this field, in the senses both of replication over time and of replication within different



locations. In particular, the two studies conducted within the same schools in 1982 and 1996 demonstrated that not only significant changes in attitudes over this period, but also significant changes in the predictors of individual differences in attitudes. Future research may wish to replicate Francis' 1982 study for a second time in order to build up a sequence of comparable data.

Fourth, the body of available quantitative empirical data has demonstrated a correlation between personal religiosity and professional judgement among teachers working in faith schools in England and Wales. The scope of this conclusion is currently limited by two factors, by the restricted measures of religiosity employed, and by the range of professional judgements examined. Future research may wish to build on these foundations by extending the range of measures employed, both in terms of religiosity and in terms of professional attitudes, values and practices.

Fifth, the most interesting feature of the data to emerge from the new analyses undertaken in this paper concerns the distinctive impact of the contextual factor identified by the Roman Catholic schools. Further research specifically among teachers within Roman Catholic Schools is now required in order to account for these distinctive influences.

The reanalysis of data commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and reported by Jackson *et al* (2010) has extended knowledge in the specific field of the association between setting the aims of religious education and a limited range of personal, professional and contextual factors. Such knowledge needs to be set within the two limitations associated with the low response rate to this survey. First, the low response rate means that there were insufficient schools within certain categories needed to generate a more tightly nuanced evaluation of differences between the various forms of faith schools in England and Wales. Second, the low response rate may mean that the more highly committed teachers may be over-represented among the pool of respondents. Future research may wish

to implement strategies generally recognised as capable of enhancing response rates.

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Table 1

*Primary schools with a religious character participating in the survey, according to*

*DCSF categories*

School type	N
Church of England voluntary controlled schools	56
Church of England voluntary aided schools	54
Roman Catholic voluntary aided schools	43
Church of England independent schools	22
Roman Catholic independent schools	10
Christian independent schools	28
Muslim independent schools	4
Jewish independent schools	1

Table 2

*The aims of religious education: scale properties*

	N items	range	alpha	mean	sd
To promote understanding of religion	3	3-15	.76	12.61	1.95
To promote personal and social values	3	3-15	.94	13.83	2.02
To promote community cohesion	3	3-15	.86	13.39	2.06
To promote learning of world religions	2	2-10	.81	8.34	1.23
To promote religious and spiritual nurture	2	2-10	.81	9.20	1.32

Table 3

*The aims of religious education: item endorsement and item rest of scale correlations*

	IR <i>r</i>	VI %
<u>To promote understanding of religion</u>		
to understand the influence of religion in society	.53	34
to think critically about religion	.67	36
to reflect on ultimate questions	.56	48
<u>To promote personal and social values</u>		
to promote good personal values	.86	74
to promote good social values	.94	67
to promote moral living	.84	67
<u>To promote community cohesion</u>		
to promote community cohesion	.78	54
to combat religious discrimination	.74	58
to help develop good citizens	.69	64
<u>To promote learning of world religions</u>		
to learn about the religions of the world	.67	26
to learn from the religions of the world	.67	30
<u>To promote religious and spiritual nurture</u>		
to develop a positive attitude toward religion	.68	66
to promote spiritual development	.68	71

Note: IR = the correlation between the individual item and the sum of the remaining items.

VI = the proportion of teachers who rated the individual item as 'very important'



Table 4

*Bivariate correlations*

	Values	Nurture	Co-co	Under	World
<u>Personal factors</u>					
Sex of subject leader	.14*	.08	.14*	-.12	.05
Age of subject leader	.10	.01	.08	.07	.15*
Personal worship attendance	.02	.14*	.01	.20**	-.09
<u>Professional factors</u>					
Years of teaching experience	.14*	.03	.10	.06	.17*
Qualification in RE	.02	-.02	.01	-.12	.06
Continuing Professional Development	.21**	-.19**	.15*	.11	.12
<u>Contextual factors</u>					
Roman Catholic school	.18**	.16*	.15*	.15*	-.04
Independent sector	.09	.05	.06	.11	-.12
Independent faith school	-.09	-.05	-.08	-.06	-.07

Note: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$

values = to promote personal and social values

nurture = to promote religious and spiritual nurture

co-co = to promote community cohesion

under = to promote understanding of religion

world = to promote world religions