



Centre for Research in  
Education Inclusion  
and Diversity



## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY: SCOTLAND NATIONAL REPORT**

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## INTRODUCTION

Aspects of identity based on religion and belief have increasingly come to be recognised as major forces driving social action. In the light of ethnic and religious tensions in the UK as elsewhere in Europe, questions have been raised about the balance between recognising diversity and achieving social cohesion (Levey and Modood, 2009; Weatherell, 2009). This research considers the role of schools in multicultural societies, in particular in relation to their teaching of religious and moral education (RME). The report draws on a review of policy and statistics and in-depth case studies of 21 families in five primary schools.

The report discusses the theoretical context of the study and subsequently uses data from the Scottish Census to illustrate patterns of religious identification in Scotland. Historical and cultural factors are outlined which have shaped the Scottish school system and which are reflected in the teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME). Most children in Scotland (around 95%) attend state schools, the majority of which (about 80%) are non-denominational, whilst a minority are denominational. Almost all faith schools in Scotland are Roman Catholic, with a very small number affiliated to other religions and denominations (1 Jewish school and 3 Episcopalian Christian). The extent to which religion is a factor in parents' choice of school is explored, and children's involvement in these choices is also considered.

The report then considers the way in which parents and children construct their position in relation to religion and belief, and the social and biographical factors which affect their ongoing negotiation of identity. It also explores the relationship between children's and parents' belief systems. These negotiations clearly do not occur in a social and cultural vacuum, and the report examines the part played by the school in the social construction of religious and moral identity through RME and the wider curriculum. The way in which teachers understand and manage diversity and inclusion in denominational and non-denominational settings is considered. Finally, the report discusses the way in which schools, parents and communities interact around the teaching of religion and the negotiation of identity, and the points of tension which arise.

## THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The Religious Education in a Multicultural Society (REMC) study does not attempt to establish a single understanding of religion, but rather seeks to investigate the way in which religion and belief are understood by different institutions and actors in particular contexts. At the same time, in outlining patterns of religious identification, modernist or categorical understandings of religion are also employed. The broad theoretical underpinnings of the study are indicated below.

### **Modernist/categorical understandings of religion/belief**

Classical social science saw identity as being stable and shaped by an individual's position within wider economic and social structures. This is reflected in traditional social science studies of social class (for example, the work of Halsey et al, 1980), which regarded family social class as being determined by the father's occupation. The broad principles of this 'political arithmetic' tradition persist, and are used in studies of social mobility. Work on religion and social mobility in Scotland (Paterson and Iannelli, 2006) uses the questions on religion in the Scottish Household Survey 2001 to analyse the relative social mobility of different religious groups in Scotland and the contribution of education to this process. However, Paterson and Iannelli acknowledge the inherent problems in adopting a categorical approach, noting that 'the data do not allow us to distinguish among different meanings of the religious labels, for example as a set of personal beliefs, or as an institutional practice, or as a

cultural allegiance’.

The Scottish Census conducted in 2001 employs categories in relation to religion, race and so on, and individuals are invited to self-identify. In relation to religion, for the first time in 2001, individuals were asked to state their religion of upbringing and, separately, their current religion of belonging. The use of categories in this way thus implicitly recognises that an individual’s religious identity may shift over time, but clearly census questions are unable to investigate these shifts in interpretation. The categories used in the Scottish Census are shown in Table 1 (below). Categorical labels such as these are used by schools on admission forms to check a child’s religious affiliation, and may be used to decide on admission priorities if a school is over-subscribed. The Scottish Government uses a categorical system in allocating a particular status to a school (almost exclusively Roman Catholic or non-denominational). The categorical approach used in the designation of schools is also applied to arrangements for teacher education. There are seven institutions which offer initial teacher education in Scotland and, one of these, Glasgow University has a particular mission to teach Religious Education rooted in the traditions of Roman Catholic Christianity. Applicants to the primary education programme at Glasgow University are informed that priority will be given to those signalling their intention to teach in Roman Catholic primary schools and to seek the Catholic Teachers’ Certificate in Primary Education, which is only awarded to Catholic students. All appointments to Roman Catholic schools are approved by the bishop of the diocese. Churches tend to promote categorical and uni-dimensional understandings of religious belonging, for example, within the Roman Catholic and Muslim traditions it would not be possible to belong to both religions simultaneously. The idea of Roman Catholics as a separate and discrete group is strongly promoted by the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland in order to defend the existence of a separate Roman Catholic education sector.

### **Interpretive understandings of religion/belief**

In the qualitative elements of our study, an interpretive approach has been adopted, focusing on how particular religious categories are understood by particular actors in specific contexts, and how these interact with the categorical approaches adopted by churches as institutions. This is in line with much recent work in social theory relating to social class, which sees social class identity as unstable, shifting and subjectively experienced (e.g. Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Lash & Urry, 1993; Reay, 1999; Skeggs, 1997). In relation to religion, theoreticians such as Davie (1994; 2000, 2004) have emphasised the growing importance of the subjective understanding of religion and religious membership. As noted by Dommel (2008), within Europe there is growing empirical evidence that individuals adopt diverse religious, spiritual and secular beliefs and practices (McGuire, 2008). Studies have also noted that many individuals choose to practise ‘belonging without believing’ (Francis & Robbins 2004) or conversely, ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie 1994).

According to Barnes (2006), religious education in the UK tends to be informed by interpretive understandings, but some individuals and religious groups may find the relativism implicit in these approaches somewhat problematic. Reviewing changes over previous decades, Barnes notes that there is general agreement on the ‘direction of travel’, with confessionalism giving way to neutrality and indoctrination to education. This, he suggests, should be seen as a reflection of the liberal Protestant position, within which religion is interpreted in terms of inner subjectivity. This means that the particular religion chosen by an individual is almost irrelevant, since all faiths may be regarded as potentially offering similar spiritual experiences to the individual. Barnes maintains that much religious education in UK schools reflects this position, describing the contours of religions and according them parity of esteem, but certainly not pitting their truth claims against each other. However, he notes, this position may not fit well

with the beliefs of some Christian groups or members of other world religions, who may believe that their religion represents an absolute, rather than relative form of truth. As we will demonstrate below, in Scotland there are clear differences of approach to the teaching of religious and moral education in Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools, with Roman Catholic schools continuing to adopt a neo-confessional approach in contrast with a greater degree of neutrality in non-denominational schools.

### **Legal definitions of religion and belief**

As the body of equality and human rights legislation has grown, its underpinning conceptualisation of religion and belief has become increasingly influential. As public sector institutions, schools and local authorities in Scotland are aware of the legislation on religion and belief which underpins their work. The European legislative and regulatory framework appears to reflect a categorical understanding of these concepts. However, no absolute definition of religion is offered in the European Convention on Human Rights, subsequently incorporated into UK domestic legislation. Similarly, the European Employment Equality Regulations, enacted in 2003 and subsequently incorporated into the Equality Act 2006, state that the concept of religion and belief may be applied to any religious or belief system, including no belief, thus allowing courts and tribunals very wide scope to interpret the legislation. In relation to human rights legislation, there are ongoing debates about whether a clearer definition of religion and belief is required (Gunn, 2003). It is evident that there is inconsistency in the interpretation of equality and human rights legislative provisions relating to religion and belief. For example, in Scotland, as elsewhere in the UK, the Government provides a guarantee of freedom in relation to religious expression, including freedom for parents to choose the nature of religious education which their children will receive in school. However, in some settings this is interpreted as allowing parents to withdraw their children from religious education classes, rather than ensuring the provision of religious and moral education suitable for those of all and no religious belief. Employment of teachers has proved to be one controversial issue in relation to religion and belief. With the establishment of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2007, public sector bodies are paying increasing attention to their legal duties. The extension of the public sector duty to all six equality strands in 2008, with the requirement for all public sector bodies to actively promote equality for people of all and no religious belief, is likely to have a further impact on school and local authority practice.

To summarise, this study uses categorical, interpretive and legal conceptualisations of religion and belief to understand the treatment of religious and moral education in Scotland's multicultural society.

## **THE BROADER SCOTTISH CONTEXT**

### **Patterns of religious identification in Scotland**

The provision of religious and moral education in Scotland, as in other European countries, is shaped by the country's culture and history. As summarised in Table 1, in the 2001 Scottish Census, 42% of the Scottish population identified themselves as members of the Church of Scotland and 16% reported that they were members of the Roman Catholic Church. Seven per cent of the population identified themselves as Other Christian, and about 1% belonged to other faiths. Twenty seven per cent said that they had no religion.

It is evident that all of the Christian churches have experienced a decline in membership, with older people much more likely to report a religious affiliation than those in younger age groups. As shown in Figure 1, amongst people under thirty, 48% report that they have no religious identification, compared with 2% of the 75+ age

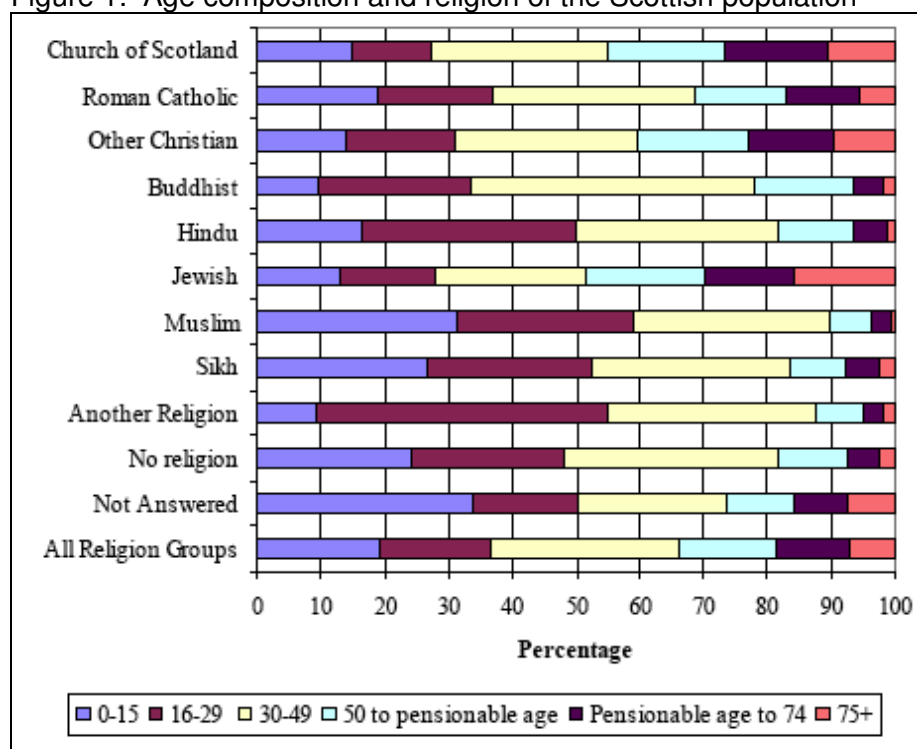
group. The decline in religious identification has been particularly steep for the Church of Scotland, whose members tend to be older than those of the other churches. The proportion of those with no religion has been growing rapidly, increasing by 50% between 1975 and 2000. The picture of declining religious identification is further supported by Brierley's (2002) analysis of church attendance in Scotland. He noted that Mass attendance peaked in the 1950s and remained stable for a period of time, declining rapidly from the 1970s onwards. Between 1984 and 2002, Church of Scotland attendance fell by 37%. Over the same period, the Roman Catholic Church recorded a drop of 42%. Religious observance for other groups in Scotland has not been measured.

Table 1: Current religion and religion of upbringing for the whole population, percentage

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Religion now</i>	<i>Religion of upbringing</i>	<i>Percentage change</i>
Church of Scotland	42.40	47.27	- 4.87
Roman Catholic	15.88	16.98	- 1.10
Other Christian	6.81	8.38	-1.57
Buddhist	0.13	0.09	+ 0.04
Hindu	0.11	0.12	- 0.01
Jewish	0.13	0.15	- 0.02
Muslim	0.84	0.83	+ 0.01
Sikh	0.13	0.13	0.00
Another religion	0.53	0.17	+ 0.37
<i>All religions</i>	<i>66.96</i>	<i>74.12</i>	<i>- 7.16</i>
No religion	27.55	17.53	+ 10.02
Not answered	5.49	8.35	-2.86
<i>All no religion/not answered</i>	<i>33.04</i>	<i>25.88</i>	<i>+ 7.16</i>
Base	5,062,011	5,062,011	-

Source: Scottish Executive 2005

Figure 1: Age composition and religion of the Scottish population



Source: Scottish Executive 2005

Bruce and Glendinning (2003) report on findings from an additional module to the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2001, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). One of the aims of the module was to assess the extent to which Scots were adopting forms of spirituality other than Christianity. Based on their analysis of these data, they argued that Scotland is a former Christian society with a large minority of active Christians within it. A large proportion of the sample said they believed in God, but when this was later tested it emerged that respondents were employing a very broad definition of spirituality, many believing that 'something is there'. There was little evidence of taking up new age spirituality, and those who were interested in this area tended to equate it with alternative therapy or exercise regimes such as yoga or tai chi. University educated women who were under 55 were particularly interested in these dimensions of spirituality.

### **The position of Roman Catholics in Scottish society**

There are ongoing debates about the extent to which Scottish Catholics are systemically disadvantaged in Scottish society. Most Scottish Catholics can trace their roots back to Irish immigration into Scotland in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Attracted by better employment opportunities in Scotland and depressed economic conditions in Ireland, many people arrived with very low levels of educational qualifications.

Geography, as well as age, contributes to the complexity of the picture; more Catholics live in the declining industrial heartland of the west central belt, where there are far lower levels of economic activity compared with other parts of Scotland (20% of the male working age population of Glasgow is economically inactive). In Glasgow, a lower percentage of people are in the higher social class groups compared with the rest of Scotland, but, as in the rest of Scotland, the difference between Catholics and those brought up in the Church of Scotland is relatively small. Over time, the gap between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland has narrowed, and, on present trend, is likely to disappear. By way of contrast, those in the 'other religion' category are more likely to be employed in non-manual occupations than others. This group is diverse, ranging from Episcopalians to Muslims and Buddhists. Muslims, however, make up a significant proportion within the category and appear to be quite socially disadvantaged.

Paterson and Iannelli (2006), using Scottish Household Survey data from 2001, investigated the extent to which Scottish Catholics enjoyed the same degree of absolute and relative social mobility compared with Protestants. They concluded that, in younger cohorts, there is no religious difference in social status, and that in older cohorts, Catholics are generally of lower status than Protestants and the non-religious. The reason for convergence in social status is attributed to the equalising of educational attainment among the groups, with Catholics having benefited particularly from the introduction of comprehensive schools in the 1960s. These reforms opened up access to advanced level education which had previously been denied to many pupils in less socially advantaged areas of Scotland. Because Catholics tended to be concentrated in particular parts of the west central belt, the advent of comprehensive schools had a particularly marked impact on their educational opportunities and outcomes. Paterson and Iannelli also found that there is no evidence for any of the cohorts that the labour market rewards to education differ by religion. Walls and Williams (2003), by way of contrast, using qualitative data maintain that, even if Catholics are less disadvantaged than they used to be, there is still a strong perception of unequal treatment in the workplace.

### **Faith schools in Scotland**

The religious profile of Scottish schools (majority non-denominational, minority denominational, almost all of which are Roman Catholic) is attributable to the historical



conditions under which independent religious schools entered the state system. From the sixteenth century Reformation until 1872, the Church of Scotland was responsible for the provision of elementary education in Scotland. Church of Scotland schools were transferred to local authority control under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872 and from this time became non-denominational, although the Church of Scotland retained a role in their management. In the case of Roman Catholic schools, the shift into local authority management took place as a result of the Education (Scotland) Act 1918. Unlike Church of Scotland schools, when Roman Catholic schools joined the state system, they retained their original terms of reference, in particular the right to provide denominational guidance and observance. Faith schools in Scotland are all managed by the local authority in the interests of the particular religious group with which they are associated.

In the primary sector, there are currently 329 Roman Catholic primary schools, 1 Jewish primary school and 3 Episcopalian primary schools. Most Roman Catholic schools are in the west central belt, for example, just over 15,000 pupils out of about 38,000 pupils in Glasgow City are educated in Roman Catholic schools. This represents 40% of the primary school population in the city, a much higher proportion than elsewhere. There have been demands from some within the Scottish Muslim population for Muslim faith schools; the Scottish Government has expressed support for this but it has not translated into the establishment of a Muslim state funded school.

The methodology is outlined below and this is followed by the findings from the project.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted a qualitative approach based on key informant interviews and case studies of denominational and non-denominational primary schools. The case studies included interviews with teachers, parents and children as well as observations. Additional data were gathered from secondary sources such as school policies, official statistics and information. Schools within two Scottish local authorities were selected to provide contrasting geographic locations, demographics and population in terms of religion and belief. Advice on selection of schools was provided by the project Advisory Committee. Table 2 provides an overview of the methods used and the number of interviews completed.

**Table 2: Details of methods used**

Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literature Review including the conceptual framework</li> <li>Country Report providing contextual information about religion in Scottish society and teaching of religious and moral education in state primary schools</li> </ul>
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with 11 key informants selected to reflect a range of influential positions in relation to religious and moral education in Scotland.</li> </ul>
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured interviews with head teachers (5) one of these also taught RE, class teachers responsible for religious education (4), parents (24) and children (20) in the 5 primary schools reflecting a range of religious faiths including no faith.</li> <li>Observations of R(M)E classes (2) and school assembly (1)</li> </ul>

Table 3 provides an overview of the schools and their catchment areas. Greenhill, North Winterton and St. Helens were located in a large, affluent city (Sea City) that has pockets of deprivation. The city has a higher than national average number of graduates occupying professional and managerial positions. It has a relatively small Roman Catholic population and above the national average of people with no religion and belief. The case study schools represented a range in terms of levels of

deprivation. By contrast, the second authority (Northshire) included one school from an urban and one from a semi-rural area. It has a lower proportion of graduates in its population, the area was traditionally an industrial region but has seen a long-term decline in industry. It has a relatively high proportion of Roman Catholics in its population. The case study schools reflect this in the level of deprivation of the catchment area. More detailed information about the area that the school was located in is provided in table A1 in the appendix.

**Table 3: Characteristics of schools and catchment areas**

School	Pupil population	% FSME <sup>1</sup>	Religious composition of ward – current religion <sup>2</sup>	Key elements of school ethos <sup>3</sup>	Relationship with church
<b>Greenhill</b> Non-denominational 6 <sup>th</sup> decile <sup>4</sup>	170 (incl nursery); large immigrant population	nearly 30%	No faith 42%; Church of Scotland 21%; Catholic 13%; Other Christian 10%; Other religions 5%; Muslim 3%	Inclusion & multi-culturalism, dedicated places for children with additional support needs	Church of Scotland mainly. Visits to other places of worship
<b>North Winterton</b> Non-denominational 1 <sup>st</sup> decile <sup>4</sup>	650 (incl nursery)	Less than 1%	Church of Scotland 38%; No faith 36%; Other Christians 11%; Catholic 9%; Other religions 1%	Inclusion. Key values: fairness, equality, respect, enjoyment and achievement	Church of Scotland mainly. Visits to other religious places of worship
<b>St Helen's</b> Denominational 7 <sup>th</sup> decile <sup>4</sup>	200 (incl nursery)	12%	Church of Scotland 40%; No faith 32%; Catholic 13%; Other Christians 7%; Other religions 4%	Promoted the Catholic faith in line with the Gospel values of care and respect	Close relationship with local RC church
<b>Meadow view</b> Non-denominational 4 <sup>th</sup> decile <sup>4</sup>	320 (plus 60 in nursery); 10% immigrants		Church of Scotland 35%; Catholic 27%; No faith 25%; Other Christian faith 5%; Other faiths 3%	Inclusion, care and respect	Protestant clergy Visits to other religious places of worship
<b>St Patricks</b> Denominational 7 <sup>th</sup> decile <sup>4</sup>	266	16%	Catholic 80%; No faith 8%; Church of Scotland 6% Other Christian 1%; Other religions 1%	Respect for others and respect for others' faiths; discipline based on Catholic faith values	Close relationship with local RC church.

1. %FSME = free school meal estimate by HT, national average 16%
2. Percentages don't add up as non responses are not included; these amounted to around 5% in each ward
3. School ethos based on school staff's description of ethos
4. deprivation decile; 1 = least deprived and 10 = most deprived

Access to the school was requested first from the local authority. Individual headteachers were then approached and parents were contacted through a letter sent by the school to all children in the upper primary classes. Parents who opted into the study were also asked to consent for their children to take part in an interview. Table 4 provides an overview of interviews carried out with parents and their religious affiliation. A total of 21 families were represented but interviews were carried out with 24 parents as both parents were present in three of the interviews.

Most of the parent interviews were carried out in the home of the parent; interviews with teachers took place in the school. The school arranged the interviews with the children who were interviewed either in pairs or in groups of three with the exception of one case which was an individual interview. For further details of the parent case studies see Appendix Table A2.

**Table 4: Religious affiliation of case study parents by school**

Name and type of school	Greenhill Non-denominational	St Patrick's Denominational	North Winterton Non-denominational	St Helen's Denominational <sup>1</sup>	Meadowview Non-denominational <sup>1</sup>	Total
<b>Religion of parent</b>						
Church of Scotland			2		1	3
Roman Catholic	1	2		4		7
Episcopalian			1	2		2
Other Christian					1	1
Muslim/Jewish/Other			1 (Jewish)		2 (Muslim)	3
None	3		2	1	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>

1. Three interviews were with both parents; two in St. Helen's and one in Meadowview

Ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association were followed and the research was approved by the ethics committee at the School of Education, University of Edinburgh.

## FINDINGS

### REASONS FOR CHOICE OF SCHOOL

In our case studies, most parents had chosen to send their children to the neighbourhood primary school, on the grounds that they wanted their children to be strongly rooted in the local community. However, North Winterton, located in a middle class area and described by the head teacher as 'a prep school for the independent sector', was a magnet school for children from outwith the catchment area and was generally over-subscribed. Greenhill, in the centre of Sea City, had a mobile population and had been chosen by at least one parent as being very inclusive and offering strong support for a child with learning difficulties. In general, parents who had chosen to send their children to non-denominational schools supported the approach to RME (see below), but this did not appear to be the principal reason for their choice.

Unsurprisingly, religion was a much more important factor in the school choices of the case study parents who had opted into a faith school. In the two Roman Catholic schools, case study parents indicated that they were continuing a family tradition of Roman Catholic education. St Patrick's, in the west central belt, lay at the centre of a small and largely Roman Catholic village, described as 'a good wee community' by a parent who had herself attended the school. A significant proportion of families at St Helens were in the army, and had deliberately chosen a Roman Catholic school rather than the non-denominational school which was closer to the camp. Some parents who were not themselves Catholic had chosen a Roman Catholic school because of concerns that non-denominational schools were too secular and lacked the spiritual element and time 'to be quiet and reflective' (Mrs Forbes). This parent, a practising Episcopalian, commented:

I mean in an ideal world I wouldn't choose [for my children] to go to a denominational school, but I think because the non-denominational schools are so secular we opted for the denominational school. I mean in an ideal world I would prefer the children to be at school where there were all religions, but there is sort of faith element in it. (Mrs Forbes, Episcopalian, St Helens).

Two case study parents from minority religious groups (Jewish and Muslim) had chosen to send their children to non-denominational schools on the grounds that they did not want their children to be segregated. A Jewish parent at North Winterton, for example, commented:

I think probably if there was a Jewish school available I might send her to it but I'm not sure either. So I think it's fine for her, it's the society that she lives in so it's well worth understanding that it's the society that she lives in and get along with people from other backgrounds. Which she does. (Mr Sandberg, Jewish, North Winterton)

All of the parents we spoke to were happy overall with their choice of school, even if they had some issues about its approaches to religion.

Religion, then, was one of a number of factors influencing parents' choice of school, and was particularly salient for those who had opted into a faith school. It was evident that children had been only minimally involved in choice of primary school, but were likely to be more closely involved in secondary school choice. Mr Harper at North Winterton, for example, had taken his elder son to visit three secondary schools in the city, one Roman Catholic and two non-denominational. The boy had chosen the smaller Roman Catholic school, which had new premises and appeared to have a welcoming atmosphere. Mr Harper admitted concerns that his son might experience sectarian discrimination as a result of attending the school, but decided that this was unlikely to be an issue in modern Scotland. The younger son had decided to follow his brother into this school, even though none of his friends was going there. By way of contrast, a Catholic child at Greenhill said that her mother wanted her to move on to a Roman Catholic secondary school, but she would rather go with her friends to a non-denominational school. It was also clear that some parents were taking a very directive role in choosing a secondary school, and at North Winterton, the predominantly middle class primary school, social selection linked to academic achievement was the main motivator for choice of an independent school:

Interviewer: Are there any particular reasons why you chose to move him to the private sector?

Mr Green: Em yes. Obviously, we want to give him the best we possibly can. And, secondly, we feel that he is a sensitive child and he may, going to the high school, he may be influenced by some of the mixture of children that are there, put it that way. We feel that, sending him to the private school, the chances of him falling into the wrong hands are not so great. (Mr Green, Church of Scotland, North Winterton)

## **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY**

### **The salience of religion as an aspect of parents' identity**

Parents were asked about the importance and nature of their religious identity and many described how this had shifted over the years. Some Catholics talked about how they went to church more often since having children, whilst a Catholic mother described how her husband had become more devout since having children:

It's definitely had a major impact on my husband. 'Cause he wasn't really a practising Catholic when we got married. He would go along to mass just because I was going. But having children now, he definitely makes so much more of an effort. (Mrs McNeil, Roman Catholic, St Patrick's)

Very few husbands and wives had similar outlooks in relation to religion, and on the whole the women appeared to be more devout (this is echoed in Scottish Census

data, which reveals a strong association between gender and religion of belonging). Gender differences are reflected in the following conversation:

- Interviewer: How important is religion or belief to you compared to other aspects of your identity; nationality or gender and so on?
- Father: I don't know, you put the question that way I don't give it an awfully high importance.
- Mother: I probably would.
- Father: Would you? I like to belong to something but then at the end of the day the most important to me at the moment is doing a good job at work, earning money for the family, all the pressures of life, I am doing the best I can, so that's me being totally honest, religion is not even in my head.
- Mother: But religion is there in everything.
- Father: That's values.
- Mother: I connect it to religion.
- Father: I am not looking at the religion. I don't think it's as important as some things, my family are just the most important thing. (Mr and Mrs Calder, Roman Catholic, St Helens)

Hyphenated identities were very apparent. For example, one mother of a child at St Patricks said 'I'm Scottish and I'm Catholic'.

A small number of parents described the centrality of religion in their social and cultural life, for example, Mr Sandberg commented:

And so there is a lot of emphasis on community support and not just interaction. ...it's often not appreciated that Judaism is not just religion, it's more like religion of the Jewish people. Right so there is a large cultural aspect as well. And part of what I do is actually involved with a Jewish literary society. Which is, has been running in Scotland for, I think it's our 121<sup>st</sup> year this year. And that was originally started in order to help Jewish immigrants culturalise, to become familiar with their surroundings. And now what it's...predominantly non religious aspects of Jewish culture that they talk about. (Mr Sandberg, Jewish, North Winterton)

He expressed some frustration that people were insensitive to the fact that the family did not celebrate Christmas and did not appreciate the sending of Christmas cards.

Several parents who sent their children to Roman Catholic schools believed that the school could take the major role in instilling religious values and culture:

This is going to sound really bad, but it takes a bit of pressure off us as well, because we know he is going to get that [religious education and Catholic values] from the school, then he can make his own mind up as he gets older, whether he wants to pursue that himself, if he wants to go to chapel or not. (Mr Calder, Roman Catholic, St Helens)

For other minority groups, integration was more important than building solidarity with others of the same religious group. Mrs Kahn, originally from Pakistan, explained that she liked to socialise with her 'wee group of Scottish friends', with whom she had more in common than Muslims from Egypt and Malaysia, who spoke different languages and had different cultures. For Mr and Mrs Kahn, religion was a private matter which did not require attendance at the mosque. However, in contrast with the importance of choice emphasised by many Scottish families, the permanence of Muslim identity was stressed:

It is very important that whatever we share, the children should also follow that. I mean we are here so we keep on reminding her, 'Remember that we're Muslims. So don't forget that', I mean for future obviously. She has to find some one who is Muslim. (Mrs Kahn, Meadowview, Muslim)

Unhappy childhood situations clearly contributed to adults' later rejection of religion. For example, a mother who was brought up in the Church of Scotland described her conscious decision to build a different adult identity:

One of the reasons I became an atheist was because, and this is again no disrespect to my family, we went to church as a habit. And bit by bit I realised that I thought 'There's nothing there' and 'Why are we here?' And when we had the children, I really sort of thought ...I had to be ready with answers as to why. It's not a matter of neglect. It's not that I used to believe and just can't be bothered any more. It's the fact that I've made a decision that there isn't anything there. (Mrs Milne, atheist, Greenhill.)

Overall, religion and belief clearly constituted an important aspect of parents' identity, although this manifested in many different ways.

### **Formal and informal transmission of beliefs in the home**

In all the schools, it was evident that what happened within the home was strongly instrumental in transmitting beliefs to children. Some families routinely sat down and discussed a whole range of topics, including religion, and children would challenge parents' beliefs, values and action. For example, Mrs Owen at North Winterton described how she had been accused of racism by her children because she had made an adverse comment about the smell of some Indian cooking. Sometimes, when religion was directly discussed, parents attempted to steer their children in a particular direction, for example, a liberal Muslim family allowed the children to choose whether to pray or fast, but explained to them that they must always respect their religion. Rarely, parents were authoritarian in insisting on certain types of religious observance, for example, at North Winterton, Mr Green insisted that his son attend Sunday School, as he had done as a boy, but admitted that as an adult he rarely went to Church himself and his faith had waned.

More common than these direct forms of communication about religion, however, was the informal transmission of beliefs through family practices. Most religious parents wanted their children to develop a love of faith, although one Catholic parent bemoaned the fact that fear was no longer used sufficiently to make children want to attend Mass. For some parents, it was evident that their religious, social and cultural lives were deeply entwined. Jessica, a pupil at North Winterton, described her warm associations with Jewish religious festivals:

I love winter because I like snow and I also like winter festivals and most of the Jewish festivals are in winter and my birthday's in winter and Hanukkah there's this big candle, and I love it and sometimes I even get to light it.... We play this game. I think Christians call it 'a top' except it's not really 'a top' because it's the same shape as 'a top' and you spin it the same way except you can spin it upside down too and there's Hebrew letters and there's these, you play with sweets and you start with five and you spin and if it lands on 'gimmel' you're very lucky because it means you get all of the sweets. (Jessica, Jewish, North Winterton)

Another North Winterton parent explained how the underlying Christian traditions shaped family life, although she and her children were no longer believers:

- Mrs Owen: So yes, we follow the Christian calendar I suppose. So does our society, so does Scotland with our holidays.
- Interviewer: Did you ever consider not following the Christian calendar?
- Mrs Owen: No, probably because of the holiday aspect, also we keep fun things for the children, hypocritical aren't we? And we have a Christmas tree, it is quite secular now, well it's very secular, Christmas. I feel sorry for the Christians who believe in everything surrounding it; it's not really very nice for them, is it?
- Interviewer: What about singing or reading the bible?
- Mrs Owen: I don't think I have ever read the bible to my children. I have got my bible that my father gave me when I was young, and I have shown it to them and they just laugh. We tend to like our holidays and we were very adventurous in our holidays, go to different parts of the world, and we always recognise the religion of the country and try and understand that, and explain to the children. We are the first to go and visit religious places and things. One of our favourite places is Santiago de Compostella in Spain, northern Spain. That's a very religious place, so they are taught respect and tolerance and try to understand, but they have never said to me 'But why are we not religious mum?' Never, any of them has said that to me. (Mrs Owen, humanist, North Winterton)

The families' various relationships with religion were reflected in the after school activities they encouraged their children to undertake. A minority of Church of Scotland parents sent their children to Sunday School, and the Catholic children at St Patricks described their duties as altar servers. Jessica attended Jewish school on Sunday. A number of activities had their roots in religious youth movements, such as boy scouts and girl guides, although the religious aspects of these activities were generally downplayed. One parent at North Winterton, Mrs Owen, had taken her children to Woodcraft Folk, which was established as a secular alternative to scouts and guides and was popular with middle class parents in Sea City.

There were some interesting differences in expectations of Mass attendance for girls and boys at St Helens. Football, for the boys took place on Sunday morning, and this took priority over Children's Liturgy which took place at the same time. Since the boys were team members, the parents thought it was important that the children had the opportunity to participate. Enforcing church attendance, they thought, would cause resentment and make religion seem tedious and unattractive. One parent bemoaned the lack of more Christian out of school activities which were appealing to children:

I think there could be more fun activities, I think it's a difficulty of getting leaders and getting people who want to support them. Just fun activities. It could be craft activities or football, or activities that would bring children together and could be a little bit of Christian teaching at the end. (Mrs Peterman, Episcopalian, St Helens)

### **Children's negotiation of identity**

Discussions with children indicated that they were well aware of having to make decisions about their religious identity, and knew that this might differ from that of their parents:

- Aileen: Well me and my mum and dad don't really have a religion and mum says that when I grow up I can decide which religion I want to be, if I want to be a religion but I can just stay what I am at the moment.
- Interviewer: So you're going to wait until you're much older and decide whether you want to do it or not, yep [to Aileen], how about you, because your parents are Catholic, are both your parents Catholic?

- Morag: Well no Dad isn't, my mum is and my auntie and my uncle, but it's weird because my dad's mum and dad they're like kind of Catholic but my dad isn't so...
- Interviewer: so do you think you are going to stay Catholic or think you might change your mind?
- Morag: Yes I'm going to just stay Catholic.
- Interviewer: And is that because you think it's particularly good for you or any particular reason?
- Morag: No particular reason, just want to stay with my Catholic because of my mum but we'll see. (Greenhill Primary pupils).

In the two Roman Catholic schools, the children felt that if the family was not religious, then it was up to the child to choose a religious identity if they wanted to, but otherwise the expectation was that they would remain Catholic. There was a strong sense of cultural heritage associated with religion and some children expressed a fear that abandoning a parent's religion would lead to isolation from the community. This appeared to be something which could be contemplated at an older age, but not as a child:

- Cara: Well my mum and dad choose that because all my mum and dad's family are Christians and I'd be like the odd one out and they wouldn't, I wouldn't be able to go to church so I would have to get somebody to look after me. I would have to grow up and they would say, 'You're not Catholic. You do that in St Patrick's'... They would know more about Jesus than I would and I would have to go to another school because this is a Catholic school.
- Mungo: ...You should be able to choose at any part of your life but when you're leaving high school some people think Mass isn't that fun and boring and when you're 15.... Then you start to be not a Catholic probably. (St Patricks pupils)

A Jewish child who identified strongly with the family religion described a sense of alienation from the prevailing culture of the classroom, even though it appeared that efforts had been made to include her and recognise her culture:

Some times I'm a bit confused if I've been learning about not my religion and I sort of feel like I'm being sort of, me and my other Jewish friends, sort of feel like we're being attacked by Christians because like there's no other Jews in my class. (Jessica, North Winterton)

Although children believed in the principles of freedom of choice, they felt that in practice they were likely to adopt the same religious identity as their parents. For example, Jessica was asked if she thought she would like to choose her own religion or adopt that of her parents and she replied: 'I want to be the same'.

Teachers said that they were aware of children adopting a questioning approach as they got older, although at the Roman Catholic primary schools it was believed that discussion of secular belief systems was a more appropriate topic for secondary school pupils:

I've noticed, when the boys are around P7, you can see them starting to think, but we don't say anything about that much. I've seen them not saying the prayer. (Head Teacher, St Helen's)



Like the children of religious parents, those whose parents were atheist or agnostic were likely to reflect these beliefs. North Winterton pupils whose parents were sceptical about religion were also clearly questioning religious practices in school:

Interviewer: Do you think they should be allowed to opt out of the religion or the RME at school if they don't believe in it?

Johnny: Yeah actually yeah cause then they should go into a different room if they don't, cause that's what happens in Ireland if they don't want Christianity.

Interviewer: What in Ireland, in Catholic schools?

Johnny: Yeah.

Sean: When we're in assembly we always like, we used to sing but like more but not as much now. But we used to sing like 'Jesus is our Lord' and like 'Jesus is the best in the world'. And things like that. But when like most of us like don't even sing it because we don't believe it. (North Winterton pupils)

Children appeared to have a firm understanding of religious identity, and, like their parents, this was extremely varied, ranging from very religious to strongly secular. Children's religious identity often reflected that of their parents.

## **THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGION AND BELIEF IN SCHOOL**

### **The treatment of religious and moral education in Scottish schools**

Under the terms of the SOED circular 6/91, children in Scottish primary schools must spend a minimum of 10% of their time on religious and moral education, from which they may be withdrawn by their parents. Both Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools observe the 5-14 guidelines, now being replaced by the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), which is similar in content. The CfE guidelines state:

Religious and moral education is a process where children and young people engage in a search for meaning, value and purpose in life. This involves both the exploration of beliefs and values and the study of how such beliefs and values are expressed. (Scottish Government 2009: p1).

It was evident that, in some non-denominational schools, teaching of RME was thematic, for example, in one of the schools visited Judaism was taught as part of a topic on the Second World War.

In Roman Catholic schools, the content of the syllabus is approved by the Roman Catholic bishops, and about 15% of class time is spent on religious education. The specific teaching resource used for religious and moral education in Roman Catholic schools is the Veritas 'Alive-O' programme, which specifies the teaching and activities to be carried out at particular times.

The head teacher of St Helens explained the approach in her school:

We identify ourselves as Christians and the school promotes the Catholic faith. So when we talk about other religions we say, 'This is how members of the Islam faith...worship, this is how their faith affects their lives' etc. So...we're doing it from our position as Christians...We acknowledge Eid, but we don't celebrate, no, we don't celebrate other festivals. (Head teacher, St Helens Primary)

In relation to education on secular traditions in Roman Catholic schools, a distinction was drawn between what might happen at primary and secondary stages:

In the secondary school, as the students mature more, in the philosophical debate about truths and understandings and beliefs and values and so on, there's more opportunity to grapple with what people who don't have a religious affiliation believe, how they can still be people of values, there are still value systems etc. (Scottish Catholic Education Service respondent)

In non-denominational schools, RME focussed on understanding the central principles underlying all religions and learning respect for other people's beliefs. However, the fact that Christianity permeates Scottish culture, and also the teaching of religious and moral education, was acknowledged. A class teacher explained:

Well they [non-denominational schools] are not Christian schools in the sense that ...there's no preaching of the Christian faith.... But the Scottish education system comes from that. So I suppose there's all these underlying, sort of expectations, that the roles have been set already. (Class teacher, North Winterton)

Similar contrasts in approaches between Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools were evident in relation to religious observance, which is a legal requirement under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The 5-14 Curriculum Guidelines stated that in non-denominational schools, religious observance should be of a broadly Christian character, but in faith schools, would take the form of an act of worship. Concerns were increasingly raised by head teachers in non-denominational schools that the religious observance requirements were difficult to meet in the context of an increasingly diverse student body. As a result, the Scottish Government commissioned a review of religious observance (Scottish Executive, 2004), which recommended that this should reflect more closely the values of the local community, and might in some contexts involve ethical rather than religious reflection. The Report re-defines religious observance in Scottish schools as:

community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.

It is understood that the term 'spiritual' applies to all and applies to 'something fundamental in the human condition ... it has to do with their unique search for human identity'.

This was illustrated by one Head Teacher, who said:

My assemblies tend to be more moral assemblies about how to behave and to treat each other rather than either Christian or [other] religions, although we do celebrate Eid and Divali and other [religious festivals] as the year goes on. (Head Teacher, Greenhill)

The humanist key informant felt that there was a severe problem with religious observance, because there was 'no recognition of parity of esteem of alternative views', and, particularly in primary schools, religious beliefs were conveyed to children as if they were facts. He also noted that despite the opt-out clause, schools rarely provided appropriate alternative activities for children whose parents did not wish them to participate. The head teacher of North Winterton also reported that a number of parents had objected to what they saw as Christian 'proselytising'.

### **Parents' responses to RME in denominational and non-denominational schools**

Parents were broadly content with the approach to RME in Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools, but, as discussed below, they also made a variety of critical

and questioning comments. In Roman Catholic schools, it was emphasised that at enrolment, parents were informed that the teaching of Religious Education would focus mainly on the Roman Catholic faith, and they were advised to enrol their children in a different school if this might constitute a problem: 'because it's not very good for the child if they'd have been in the class doing everything, and then the parents say 'I want them out of that'' (Head teacher, St Helen's). Most parents in Roman Catholic schools opted for their children to participate in preparation for the sacraments, although they were aware that this was non-obligatory. The sense of community with peers was seen as important here:

We chose for our children to go through the sacraments which was an option, but we chose for them to do that as part of their class which we liked the idea of for them to do it with their peers...[Reconciliation] was well taught and it was very good, and I actually passed it on to my church for the Sunday school (Mrs Forbes, Episcopalian, St Helens)

Similarly, in the non-denominational schools, parents were broadly supportive of the treatment of world religions as social phenomena, and the fact that assemblies were by and large secular:

I am satisfied with what they do now which is to cover a range of religions, and teach the kids about what the people of those faiths believe and the customs that they follow. But as far as I know they don't prescribe a particular faith to any of the children, and they don't teach religions as a faith, they teach it as a school topic. (Ms MacLeod, non-believer, Greenhill)

This view was strongly endorsed by Pakistani Muslim parents, who were living in Scotland to allow the father to complete a course at a nearby university. In Pakistan, their children had attended a Roman Catholic school and been taught by nuns, so the children were well versed in the principles of Catholicism and Islam before they arrived in Scotland. Mrs Kahn had obtained a job as an SEN (special educational needs) assistant, and was very impressed by the multicultural approach adopted in the school, which contrasted with her experiences in Pakistan, where the focus was only on Islam and Christianity.

In the non-denominational schools, parents of secular and minority religious beliefs became alarmed when they felt that the school was no longer educating about religions in general but was instead promoting a particular religion as offering a superior version of the truth:

Well I know they do comparative religions. And I don't really mind that because I can view religion as a cultural phenomenon. I am a little disturbed when they try to pass off Christianity as a fact. And sometimes they do that and we've had to correct him [referring to her son]. You know, in that claiming, you know, that there is a god. And that's a certainty. And if a teacher says that that's a disturbing thing for a parent, you know. (Miss Milne, non-believer, Greenhill)

A father who was a member of a Jewish community felt that teachers in the non-denominational school his daughter attended lacked adequate knowledge of world religions to teach them effectively:

What can be a concern is if they start having particular interpretations of texts, because Christians and Jews share common texts. And Muslims to a more indirect degree cause the Koran is based on a lot of Jewish characters. But the stories are actually not the same thing, not identical stories. They don't

accept the bible, only the Koran. Which are variations of the stories. But...my ongoing concern is that they will teach particular interpretations of stories from Jewish origin and not the Jewish interpretation. And that will leave her confused. (Mr Sandberg, Jewish, North Winterton)

Christine Paterson, a Catholic parent in a non-denominational school, also complained that inadequate attention was paid to the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism, since they were bundled together under the Christian umbrella. To her the term 'Christian' was used mainly to refer to the Protestant faith. She was pleased that her daughter had been asked to tell her class about Holy Communion. However, she commented negatively on the fact that the minister from the Church of Scotland was involved in the school but not the local Roman Catholic priest. She also mentioned having to explain differences in religious practices to her daughter who would bring up the topic at home. One example quoted was in relation to the Lord's Prayer or Communion:

Every time we go to a different chapel, or well, different church, and the ending [of the Lord's Prayer] is different, she will say, 'Why is that?' And we receive the Holy Communion every Sunday. But in other churches sometimes they only do it once a month. (Mrs Paterson, Roman Catholic, Greenhill)

A minority view, expressed by a humanist parent at North Winterton, was that Scottish schools should be entirely secular to get round the problem of paying different amounts of attention to different faiths:

Interviewer: How do you think schools should accommodate different belief systems or do you think they should?

Mrs Owen: Well I think it's a huge task if every individual religion has got to be catered for, would it not be easier to leave the religion outside school and then it takes all the differences away from the children, and they can just see each other as who they are rather than the little religious way of life they have? ....I don't think you should support religions, I don't think we should fund religion, just as I don't think that private schools should have charitable status, you know. It's just segregating kids all the time, and then they are going to be out in the big bad world and problems are going to be there. (Mrs Owen, Humanist, North Winterton)

It is also worth noting an undercurrent of resentment among a minority of parents in both Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools about the focus on world religions other than Christianity, and the messages of tolerance towards other religions, which, a minority believed, were not reciprocated. One parent objected to some Muslim girls' failure to comply with the school uniform by not wearing a skirt while another parent explained:

Interviewer: How close is what is being taught in school, in terms of religion or belief, to what you would teach Paul at home, on your own beliefs?

Mr Green: Well, of course, I don't know exactly what they, you know I get a very, very brief overview from him what he's taught. ...I think the one area that they don't portray, when they portray these other religions, is that we, as a Christian society, are being taught to be more tolerant to their religions; whereas, their religions are not teaching their children to be more tolerant to our religions. And I pick, particularly, the Islamic faith. (Mr Green, Church of Scotland, North Winterton)

Mr Green was also critical of Jehovah's Witnesses for not allowing their children to celebrate birthday parties and Christmas.

Clearly, balancing parents' diverse views of what should be taught in RME was challenging for schools. However, whilst parents were informed that they could withdraw their children from RME classes, very few chose to do so, and this was generally taken to indicate that parents were happy with the content and tone of RME:

... it says in my school handbook that you can opt out of RME lessons should you wish, and very few pupils do... for example an American couple in primary 1 said they didn't want to the child to join in with religious stories, so we explained the sort of things that we would be doing for religion about going to the church and all different things and then they let her join in the end ... I don't know what they had expected, I know Americans of course are like that,[their schools can] be much more, indoctrinating. (Head Teacher, Greenhill)

### **The informal transmission of religion and belief in school**

Teachers in Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools had very similar things to say about their broad goal, which is to create a harmonious and inclusive environment in which all pupils and staff feel valued. In Roman Catholic schools, messages about morality were underpinned by religion, reflected in the extensive use of iconography and ritual, for example, prayers at particular points of the day. The central role of belief in God in the religious and moral ethos of the school was stressed by the class teacher responsible for RE in one of the schools. The deputy head teacher also emphasised that school rules were enforced with reference to God:

We would want every child to fulfil their potential because we teach them that God made them, God wants them to fulfil their potential...We try to instil in to them.. we always want them to do their best so that if they do something that's not quite correct that they will be corrected for it and may be given a slight punishment but we would always try to be positive... we say to the parents not to tell them that they're bad, not to tell them that they've sinned...we would just automatically bring God into our chat. (Deputy Head Teacher, St Patricks, Northshire)

In non-denominational schools, school discipline tended to be based on encouraging children to empathise with others and asking them to consider how their actions might support or undermine collective well-being. There was a strong emphasis in many of the schools on inclusion, with one school specifically mentioning the need to include children with additional support needs, partly as an affirmation of the value of all individuals:

We're kind of going for an inclusive multicultural approach where everybody feels valued and welcome and part of the school. That's kind of my philosophy not to have either one area of the school be more important than others because we have quite a few different languages and different abilities in school. Our nursery has eight dedicated spaces for children with additional needs allocated through a pupil assessment group process in the city so they come by taxi from all over, who have communication difficulty but again they often stay in the school and so I want it to be an inclusive school. (Head teacher, Greenhill)

Wider community identity was fostered in Roman Catholic schools through attendance at Mass, and, for school leavers, a visit to the Cathedral for Mass with pupils from other Roman Catholic schools in the city. Connections with the wider Catholic community in Scotland were made in a number of ways, for example, two disabled

pupils went to Lourdes with the Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust.

In non-denominational schools, the Christian calendar was emphasised, to different degrees, in annual rituals. For example, at North Winterton the end of the Christmas term was marked by a visit to the local Church of Scotland followed by the singing of carols on the school stairs. There was clearly some ambivalence about which religious groups should be allowed access to the school for informal activities. At North Winterton, the head teacher explained that he had considered carefully the request of the Scripture Union to run lunch time sessions:

There is a lunchtime club operated by Scripture Union here. My feeling was when they approached me that I could see no reason why they shouldn't operate Scripture Union club, given it was voluntary, it didn't require the school to put any resources into it other than to provide them with a space. Were I to be approached by other groups I would judge it on the same basis. So there's a Scripture Union club. It seems to involve quite a lot of fun games, it attracts more girls than boys but it has maybe 20 or 30 who attend from primary 6 and 7, run by several parents. (Head teacher, North Winterton)

Interestingly, the head teacher of Greenhill had declined to allow the Scripture Union into the school.

### **Teachers' management of diversity and inclusion**

Inclusion and multiculturalism have been strongly emphasised in Scottish primary schools for at least fifteen years, and it was evident that most teachers made efforts to incorporate pluralist principles into their teaching approaches. In addition to education about world religions, it was clear that, particularly in the non-denominational schools, great efforts were made to engage on a personal level with children from other world religions and to encourage them to explain the religion and family rituals to the other children.

Efforts were also made to accommodate the cultural and religious requirements of minority groups. For example, at Meadowview Primary School, which included a number of Muslim children, a meeting was held with parents to agree on the colour of the head scarf which girls would wear as part of their school uniform. At Greenhill, a separate room was made available during Ramadan for Muslim children who were fasting, so that they would not have to see or smell food during the school day. The head teacher at North Winterton also described the efforts which were made in his school to accommodate the wishes of parents:

In my previous school ....the father felt it was completely inappropriate for his daughter to be in a room with males when sex and sexual reproduction was being discussed. The main thing we have in that respect is children not going to the church... we try and make sure that we can be as inclusive as we can even though we're in a Christian house of God and we do have a small number, a wee girl in primary 3 for example, she doesn't go to church. We have one Muslim family who don't wish their children to go to church and we have one family where they don't believe in organized religion of any sort, they don't feel that the church is an appropriate place whatever faith it happens to be, so that's about it..... We have one boy whose parents are quite devout evangelical Christians and they requested that he not go to the mosque and I'm pretty certain because I know them, I'm pretty certain it's because they disapprove of Islam and again that's a parental request. I'm not quite sure whether they've said the same thing about the synagogue, I don't believe they have, which is why I do think it's a particular anti, maybe anti the wrong word, but strong objections to Islam. (Head teacher, North Winterton)

At Greenhill, the head teacher reported that Muslim children were not allowed to go on the school trip for religious, rather than financial reasons. All of the head teachers recognised that parents had the right to withdraw their children from such activities, but at the same time they felt it was in the children's best interests to participate so that they were not isolated from their peers.

As with the parents, a small number of teachers in non-denominational schools felt that too much effort was being devoted to studying minority religions, and Christianity was being neglected:

One of the problems I find about the whole religious education thing is that we are very...strong in making sure that our children know about all the different world religions. But I think a lot of people, this is my own personal opinion, the attention to the Christian faith has been demoted. ....It doesn't get the same amount of attention as the other faiths because ...we really bend over backwards to make sure that everybody understands and tolerates all the other religions. And sometimes I think Christianity has taken a back seat in some ways. (Class teacher, North Winterton)

## **HOME-SCHOOL INTERACTION AND POTENTIAL TENSIONS**

Parents differed in their views of the congruence of home and school values. In non-denominational schools, parents who were secular or of a liberal religious disposition felt confident that the school would broadly reflect their position. For example, Muslim parents with children at Meadowview Primary in Northshire believed that the ideas underpinning world religions were broadly the same, and the important point was to educate children together and make them aware of moral values:

I don't think in fact the values which we want to give our children are in any contradiction to the school....because the Christianity also speaks the truth. So the minor, minor differences you know...They are just ignorable. But the values are almost identical, they are not contradicting each other (Mr Kahn, Muslim, Meadowview)

They did not expect their children to fast during the school day, because this would damage their ability to concentrate at school, and would not be fair either on the children or the teachers. They brought up their children to respect Islam, but wanted the children's religious experience to be happy rather than driven by fear:

I've told you, we are not very strict Muslims. We are not like, 'You have to do this or you will burn in hell'. ...We just try to make religion a very acceptable and very pleasant thing. So that's what we try. So they are proud of what they are, instead of being like, 'Oh my God we are on the other side of the religion'. So for her, we just tell her whatever she wants to do. Like if she wants to pray, that's well and good. If she doesn't want to pray, that's her choice. (Mrs Kahn, Muslim, Meadowview Primary)

Mr Green, a Church of Scotland parent, identified considerable tensions between his values and those of the school.

Interviewer: Any other particular values that you feel are fundamental to..?

Mr Green: Mmm! You're starting to get into very, very difficult areas. Very, what shall I say? Very provocative areas relating to sex, relating to gay community, relating to these type of things. For me, unfortunately, you know, I'm very, not very tolerant about homosexuality. So I can't help that, that's the way I am, that's my principles. That is the one area I

would try to influence my son on. But I wouldn't, not to the point of beating him over the head with it, but I would certainly try to get that basic principle there. Because I feel that there are, again, certain values and things that I believe in that I think are right. Other principles, really, yeah, is to be a good person. It's not to, you know, walk over people to get something you want. It's to try and, you know, be a good person. (Mr Green, Church of Scotland, North Winterton)

The Jewish parent of a child in a non-denominational school felt that teaching about religion should happen at home, this being an area of parental rather than school responsibility:

Outside of the RME class I'm not sure they really should do anything. I don't really see the need to send children to church services in school. ...If the parents want to take them to church services they take them to church services. I don't see why the school should have to do that.... I don't really like the nativity plays. They can do school plays, they have some moral lessons but I don't think that's the motivation. It's just a residue from what they used to do. They used to always have a nativity play for Christmas and parents like that. Maybe they should be finding some alternative to the play. (Mr Sandberg, Jewish, North Winterton)

Secular parents of children in non-denominational schools also expressed concerns about the Christian values promulgated in school, which clashed with their own world view. Sarah Milne, parent of a child at Greenhill, maintained that she had a clear set of values which governed many decisions ranging from what to buy in supermarkets to which charities to support. She felt that people should be able to make their own decisions on issues such as assisted dying and abortion without religious influence:

So the fact that religious people seem hell bent on fiddling about with my life and fiddling about, and my husband feels exactly the same. So the two of us [referring to her husband] do spend quite a lot of time [talking] about that. And it's mainly the clash between Catholicism and secularism in Scotland cause the Church of Scotland has packed up its tent and left. (Miss Milne, non-believer, Greenhill)

In the Roman Catholic schools, there were also some tensions between home and school in terms of values which were promoted. Some parents felt that they wanted to have their children exposed to Roman Catholic ideas in school, because this was part of their cultural heritage, and would allow them to make an informed choice about religious identification later in life. However, they also wanted the children to engage with these ideas critically:

I mean we certainly wouldn't teach that using condoms is wrong or anything, the strict Catholic teaching, we wouldn't be passing that on to our children. I mean we certainly taught both the children that we feel that sex within marriage is the best thing, we haven't said it's the only thing, but we have said that is what we would recommend really. ...I think the school taught that, in the video, it was very much sex within a loving relationship was important. (Mrs Forbes, Episcopalian, St Helens)

At the other end of the spectrum, some parents felt at odds with the religious teaching in Roman Catholic schools because it was not sufficiently strict and traditional. One parent interviewed at St Patricks, for example, felt that her child was not 'encouraged to go to confession as often as maybe he should'. She also felt that the old style of religious instruction based on the Catholic Catechism was better overall as it was



more 'rigorous'... adding 'they're not feared into going to mass'.

## CONCLUSION

As noted above, the research explored the extent to which religion was a factor in parents' school choice, parents' and children's construction of identity in relation to religion and belief and the way schools, parents and communities interact around the teaching of religion and belief. In this section, we review the main findings of the research and their implications for the teaching of religious and moral education.

Religion was one of a number of factors influencing choice of school, particularly for those choosing a faith school. In relation to non-denominational schools, parents were often keen for their child to attend the local school so that they would be rooted in their community. Some parents opted for a more distant school on academic grounds. Parents opting to place their children in denominational (Catholic) schools often talked about a family tradition, but also referred to the general atmosphere of the school or the small school size. Parents of other religious traditions sometimes chose a Roman Catholic school because of its religious ethos, even if this was not their own. Despite the fact that religious identification has declined, the proportion of children opting into Roman Catholic education has remained fairly constant.

Our study suggested that adults occupy a very wide range of positions in relation to religion and belief, with some identifying strongly with a particular religious tradition, whilst others were strongly secular. The latter group was critical of non-denominational schools if they appeared to be according higher status to any one belief system. In general, many adults took an individualistic approach to faith and placed importance on believing but not belonging.

Children also occupied very varied positions in relation to religion and belief, whilst often reflecting their parents' views. They tended to believe that children should be free to choose, but would often opt to belong to the same belief system as their parents (Frances and Robbins, 2004). In this way, they appeared to emphasise religious identification by cultural background and the '*sociological arrangements which serve to cultivate, celebrate, perpetuate and apply a meaning system*' (Bouma, 1992).

As discussed previously, funding of faith schools in Scotland is the result of historical compromises and it has been argued by some that it is likely to lead to an '*unwelcome fragmentation of society and a diversion of resources from schools committed to developing a common culture, while respecting a diversity of cultural identities*' (Judge, 2001). Clearly, different approaches to the teaching of religious and moral education were taken by faith schools, which focused on the promotion of one faith, and non-denominational schools, which adopted an open approach and a greater stress on teaching about all religions and multiculturalism. Although the emphasis in Roman Catholic schools is still on providing Roman Catholic education as its main mission, in the last twenty years, they have increasingly included teaching about world religions.

In the aftermath of September 11 2001, several academics highlighted the growth in concern about the vulnerability of Jews and Muslims to suspicion, harassment and attack (Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2001) and some argued that more religious schools were needed for the protection of vulnerable minority groups, particularly in England and Wales (Modood, 2008). In Scotland, possibly reflecting a smaller religious and minority ethnic population, there have been fewer calls for an increased number of faith schools. Interestingly, case study parents from minority religious groups had chosen to send their children to non-denominational schools, and were doubtful that they would have picked a Jewish or Muslim school for their children

even if one had been available.

It is evident from the accounts of both parents and teachers that there continues to be considerable debate about RME, given parents' and pupils' very diverse backgrounds and belief systems, particularly in non-denominational schools. A small number of parents and teachers in these schools believed that the open approach to teaching about world religions had gone too far, and appeared to favour a return to a view of the world in which the Church of Scotland was accorded privileged status. However, the majority appeared to be happy with the teaching of religions and belief as social and cultural phenomena.

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## APPENDIX

<b>Table A1: Religious affiliation according to Scottish Census Area Wards: religion during upbringing and current religious affiliation (number / %)</b> Data generated from Scottish Census (2001) Created May 2009												
Religious affiliation	Scotland		Greenhill		St Helen's		North Winterton		Meadowview		St Patrick's	
	Upbringing	Current	Upbringing	Current	Upbringing	Current	Upbringing	Current	Upbringing	Current	Upbringing	Current
<b>Total</b>	5062011 (100%)	5062011 (100%)	6563 (100%)	8100 (100%)	8100 (100%)	8033 (100%)	8033 (100%)	4501 (100%)	4501 (100%)	659 (100%)	659 (100%)	659 (100%)
<b>None</b>	887221 (18%)	1394460 (27%)	1797 (27%)	2737 (42%)	1901 (23%)	2610 (32%)	1478 (18%)	2860 (36%)	679 (15%)	1126 (25%)	31 (5%)	52 (8%)
<b>Church of Scotland</b>	2392601 (47%)	2146251 (42%)	1894 (29%)	1385 (21%)	3638 (45%)	3229 (40%)	3727 (46%)	1870 (42%)	1555 (35%)	43 (7%)	37 (6%)	
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	859503 (17%)	803732 (16%)	1095 (17%)	876 (13%)	1119 (14%)	1082 (13%)	925 (12%)	754 (9%)	1299 (29%)	517 (78%)	527 (80%)	
<b>Other Christian</b>	424221 (8%)	344562 (7%)	911 (14%)	641 (10%)	640 (8%)	599 (7%)	1350 (17%)	872 (11%)	188 (4%)	224 (5%)	9 (1%)	5 (1%)
<b>Buddhist</b>	4704 (0%)	6830 (0%)	33 (1%)	40 (1%)	11 (0%)	16 (0%)	9 (0%)	24 (0%)	11 (0%)	7 (0%)	0	0
<b>Hindu</b>	5921 (0%)	5564 (0%)	29 (3%)	26 (0%)	50 (1%)	48 (1%)	17 (0%)	17 (0%)	28 (1%)	28 (1%)	0	0
<b>Jewish</b>	7446 (0%)	6448 (0%)	31 (0%)	24 (0%)	3 (0%)	1 (0%)	29 (1%)	28 (0%)	2 (0%)	0	2 (0%)	0
<b>Muslim</b>	42264 (1%)	42557 (1%)	178 (3%)	184 (3%)	94 (1%)	102 (1%)	69 (1%)	66 (1%)	43 (1%)	43 (1%)	5 (1%)	5 (1%)
<b>Sikh</b>	6821 (0%)	6572 (0%)	10 (0%)	8 (0%)	3 (0%)	2 (1%)	7 (0%)	7 (0%)	7 (0%)	7 (0%)	1 (0%)	0
<b>Another Religion</b>	8447 (0%)	26974 (0%)	42 (1%)	239 (4%)	22 (0%)	51 (1%)	23 (0%)	73 (0%)	9 (0%)	26 (1%)	0	0
<b>No reply</b>	422862 (8%)	278061 (5%)	543 (1%)	403 (6%)	619 (8%)	360 (4%)	399 (4%)	289 (4%)	365 (8%)	255 (6%)	51 (8%)	33 (5%)

**Table A2 Information about the participants**

Child	Class	Parent/Carer interviewed	Parents' religious belief	Additional information
<b>Greenhill (Sea City, non-denominational) parents and children</b>				
Morag	P7	Mrs Paterson	Mother: Practising Catholic Father: raised a Catholic but no longer practising	Mother born and raised in another part of the city. She was a devout Catholic and Morag attended church with her mother every week. Morag had been baptised and confirmed. The father had been raised in a Catholic family but was not a practising Catholic. There was a strong sense that the religion provided an important bond between mother and daughter. This was something they did together without husband being involved though he did not object.
Stuart	P7	Ms Forrester	Mother: brought up Church of Scotland believer without belonging	Mother had been brought up in the Church of Scotland. No longer attended church but stated that she still believed in (a) God. Keen for her son to have a belief and had tried taking him to church but was afraid of putting him off.
Aileen	P6	Miss MacLeod	Mother: brought up Catholic, now non-believer	Mother grew up in the United States, had been raised as Catholic but now described herself as a non-believer; she was strongly antagonistic towards the Catholic church. She emphasised to her daughter that she had to make her own choice in relation to religion. Her mother was still religious but had switched from the Catholic church to the Anglican church.
Sam Child not interviewed		Ms Milne	Mother: brought up Church of Scotland – now atheist	Mother had been brought up in the Church of Scotland and had attended church regularly as child. Now strongly antagonistic to the established church and to any religious practices. Felt that the church (referring mainly to the Roman Catholic church) was possibly becoming more powerful and was trying to enforce its values on the rest of society.
<b>North Winterton (Sea City, non-denominational) parents and children</b>				
Johnny	P7	Mr Harper	Father: Raised Church of Scotland Mother: Raised Catholic; Christian but not regular church attenders	Father's family – Church of Scotland – grandfather is a Minister. Family attends church (Episcopal or RC) at Christmas and Easter. Child transferring to RC secondary – because of pleasant new building plus caring ethos. Elder son already at RC secondary – chooses to attend church services. Many RC children not strongly religious so children don't feel different.
Paul	P7	Mr Green	Father: Strict Church of Scotland upbringing. No longer regular attender Mother: Church of Scotland attender	Father had strict Presbyterian upbringing. No longer has strong faith, but thinks son should be brought up in same religion. Father thinks parents should make more effort to send children to church and Sunday school, as he does. Father unhappy about school's teaching on sexual morality, particularly on gay relationships. P will transfer to independent school.
Louise	P7	Mrs Watson	Mother & father: Scottish Episcopal Church attenders	Parents found Episcopal church when living abroad. Mother teachers Sunday School & Louise closely involved. Does readings at church. Will probably transfer to independent secondary because 'wants to wear uniform'. Mother approves of questioning approach adopted by school. Family has liberal approach to gay relationships and attended partnership ceremony.

Jessica	P7	Mr Sandberg	Father: Liberal Jewish tradition Mother: Raised Catholic, now attends synagogue as Friend	Father Jewish, mother brought up RC, but family practises Judaism – strong community links. Father questions dominance of Church of Scotland and Christian festivals and practices e.g. nativity plays. Withdraws child from church services. Thinks different versions of bible stories should be taught – but academic approach may be confusing for child. Appreciates teacher’s effort to ask J questions. J feels ‘attacked’ because only Jewish girl in class.
Emma	P7	Mrs Eckberg	Mother: Raised Catholic. Believer without belonging	Mother brought up RC; spiritual but rejects authoritarian religion. Mother likes questioning approach adopted by school. Elder son thinks primary teachers are too authoritarian and talk down to children.
Sean	P7	Mrs Owen	Mother: No religion/ humanist. Father: no religion – first hand experience of sectarianism in Northern Ireland	Sean described by mother as having learning difficulties. Children critical of traditional approach to religion in school – think it should be secular. Mother strongly secular and critical of religion. S. will transfer to local comprehensive. Her religion is ‘not to eat meat’ and admires Richard Dawkins.
<b>St Helens (Sea City, denominational) parents and children</b>				
Tracy	P6	Mrs Blackwood	Grandmother: Practising Roman Catholic Father: Protestant	Tracy’s mother died when Tracy was around 5 years old and she has since been cared for by her grandmother who is a devout Catholic. Tracy has a younger sister in the school. Since her mother’s death, Tracy is critical of God. Tracy still has contact with her father who is a Protestant
Julie	P6	Mr and Mrs Affleck	Mother: Catholic Father: Church of England Neither is regular church attender; Believing without belonging	Julie’s father is in the army and this is the second school Julie attends. Julie is an only child. Her mother is Irish Catholic and her father is Church of England. Since they got married in the Catholic Church they committed to raise Julie as a Catholic. Occasionally attend RC Church services.
Charles	P6	Mrs Forbes	Mother: Episcopalian Father: Catholic Neither is practising (believing without belonging)	Charles lives outside the catchment area of the school. He has one older sister who also attended the school. Charles’s mother is Episcopalian and his father is Catholic. They refer to themselves as Christian and feel that the Christian values are more important than denomination. The whole family practices their religion together and attend church regularly but Charles is allowed to play rugby on Sunday mornings.
Andrew	P6	Mrs Peterman	Mother: raised Catholic but not practising or believing. Father: raised Church of Scotland but non- attender	Andrew is an only child. His mother currently works at the school nursery, but did not do so when Andrew started. The mother was raised a Catholic and his father Church of Scotland. The parents had since separated and the mother stated that none of them were religious. However they had made the decision to raise Andrew as a Catholic.
James	P7	Mr and Mrs Calder	Both mother and father raised Catholic. Mother attends occasionally,	James is the oldest of the children interviewed. His parents are both Catholic and used to attend church, although less so since their children were born. James has three brothers and sisters that all attended the school. During the interview it



			father less frequently	emerged that the mother was a more devout Catholic than the father. James was previously bullied in the school. The class has since received a new teacher and the problems have disappeared.
<b>Meadowview (Northshire, non-denominational) parents &amp; children</b>				
Aneela	P7	Mrs Kahn	Mother & father both liberal Muslim. Do not attend Mosque	Aneela started at the school in P4 when the family moved to Scotland from Pakistan. She had previously attended Catholic school in Pakistan. She has one older sister in secondary school and a brother who also attends the primary school. Her parents come from Pakistan and her father is currently pursuing a PhD at a local university. The family has stayed in Scotland for around 5 years and do not have any plans for whether they will remain in the country on completion of the course. They define themselves as liberal Muslims and welcome new experiences and for Aneela to learn about other cultures.
Stephanie		Mrs Burns	Mother: Cultural Christians but non-practising	Stephanie has one younger sister who also attends the school. She lives outside the catchment area but started at the school since her mother works there. Her parents were both brought up as Catholics but got married in the Church of Scotland. Religion is viewed as a part of Scottish culture, but they do not practise.
Robert		Mr Armstrong	Father: Practising Pentecostals	Robert and his brother had been at the school since nursery. His parents were practising within the Pentecostal church. Although having a firm Christian faith, the father valued the opportunities the school provided Robert to interact with people from different religions and backgrounds.
Judith		Mrs Anderson	Mother: non-practising Church of Scotland Father: non-practising Catholic	Judith had been at the school since nursery. She had one younger sister who also attended the school. Her mother identified as Church of Scotland and her father as a Catholic, however none of them were practising.
<b>St Patricks (Northshire, non-denominational) parents and children</b>				
Cara	P6	Mrs McNeil	Mother & father: practising Catholic	Both parents are Catholic, not originally from the town. Daughter came to school as result of placing request. After school care provision also helped make this decision. Cara described as a clever but shy girl. Mother is a Maths teacher at local Catholic secondary school, currently seconded to teach social skills. Daughter will transfer to Catholic secondary but mum happy that she chooses which one. Mum feels the school is very good.
Mungo	P6	Mrs McArthur	Mother & father: practising Catholic	Both parents are Catholic, not originally from the town. Mother is a teacher in the school and son came to this school in P2. Mungo described as a good boy but one who doesn't like school. Mum plans that son will transfer to the associated Catholic secondary school at end of P7. Mum draws comparison with own, much stricter, Catholic upbringing. Keen to recognise festivals and special occasions in other religions and to teach her children about them.

