All Faiths and None:

School leadership and religion in multifaith societies

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

The report offers a snapshot of school leaders' practice concerning the inclusion of learners of diverse faiths in England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. The purpose of the report is to stimulate reflection and debate to develop leadership practice.

The assumption underpinning the report is that faith or secular belief is a significant part of the lives of many learners and is increasingly contentious in society. To build stable societies, schools must engage meaningfully with faith and belief systems.

As faith intersects with socioeconomic class, gender and sexuality, these issues are also discussed as they relate to inclusion for faith. Though faith is the primary focus, it is also a litmus paper for the intentions and practice of school leaders in an ever-more diverse society.

The research comprised interviews with a range of leaders, primarily principals but also other roles, in six schools in England and Wales and six in the Republic of Ireland. A small number of learners also contributed. Both primary and secondary, those affiliated to a faith and nondenominational community schools were included.

The United Kingdom and Ireland present very different contexts. In England and Wales, a complex system of school categories and legislation offer schools varying degrees of freedom, for example in admissions criteria and religious education. Faith schools are expanding. In the Republic of Ireland, the Catholic Church still dominates education as the majority of schools (95%) are under its patronage. Recent debates concern the reduction of the dominance of faith schools and the influence of Churches with, as yet, limited impact on patterns of patronage.

Leaders in England and Wales were driven by professional and, sometimes, faith values to address the social inequalities that their learners experienced, including the stigmas attached to faith. The aim of the majority was not primarily to drive up accredited outcomes but to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and confidence to thrive in a diverse and multifaith twenty-first-century society.

Leaders grappled with the language of social justice as a means of sustaining discussion, shared understanding and commitment to inclusion. Language was perceived as a primary means of embedding inclusion in the everyday practice of school.

The curriculum embedded opportunities to engage deeply with spirituality, faiths and secular beliefs, and to equip learners with the confidence and skills to critically assess and challenge prejudice and discrimination. Religious education was a valued specific subject, yet was embedded in a much broader way throughout the entire curriculum.

Leaders approached sometimes contentious issues related to sexuality or displays of faith in different ways. All were focused on inclusion as the primary goal, using a set of human values that were wider than that of a single faith or nation.

Learners in England agreed that a multifaith school was of great advantage in preparing for their future. They also valued acquiring skills to enable them to engage critically but respectfully with those of different beliefs.

Leaders in the Republic of Ireland showed different orientations to their school's mission. In Catholic-ethos schools, an accommodation of other faiths typically developed in response to diversity or lack of diversity among the learner population. In some cases, a fully developed approach to accommodating faith diversity was considered unnecessary because the learners were largely Catholic. In other cases, leaders negotiated practice with parents or worked to ensure that no faith dominated within their school.

The level of subscription was significant. Where schools are oversubscribed, admissions criteria allow the enrolment of only Catholics. Where there is undersubscription, children of different faiths may enrol, but maintaining the overall Catholic ethos can mean that these learners are not always included to the same degree as their Catholic peers. Their small number is sometimes used as justification for unequal provision.

Notwithstanding these issues, in both Catholic and nondenominational schools in Ireland there were leaders who, in different ways, work to be fully inclusive of the whole school community. As in the United Kingdom, leadership rather than faith affiliation was the most significant factor in determining how the issues of faith mediated the school experience for learners.

Lessons can be drawn from leaders' practice:

- Engaging deeply across the curriculum with diverse perspectives and beliefs, including faith beliefs, is equally relevant whether or not a school's learner profile appears visibly diverse or has multiple faiths. In schools that do not have the advantage of a diverse school population, this is particularly critical.

- Learners must be enabled to develop a deep and respectful understanding of faiths and, if they wish, to pursue their own faith or beliefs. Such understanding comes from an embedded approach across the curriculum, not just from efforts in religious education.

- Learners need critical skills that will enable them to confidently challenge prejudice and discrimination.

- Leadership is key. Where leadership is strong enough neither national policy and structures nor the teachings of any specific religion are necessarily an impediment to achieving inclusion in a multifaith society.

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Why focus on faith and inclusion?

This report focuses on leading for inclusion of learners of diverse faiths in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and draws on the experience and practice of school leaders.

The role of faith in schools has always been an issue of debate,[1] but it has become increasingly contested. Long-standing controversies, such as the integration of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland[2] or the clustering of the socioeconomically advantaged in some faith schools,[3] have been overlaid by new concerns as the diversity of the population has increased in many states.[4] Stereotyping, prejudice and related disadvantage continue to surface in schools,[5] often connected to essentialising communities on the grounds of faith and ethnicity and linking them to security threats.

The overall aim of the report is to offer a stimulus for reflection to enable those who lead in schools to develop their practice. The assumption underlying the report is that leaders of all schools, whether affiliated to a faith or not, whether serving a visibly diverse community or not, need to consider how to achieve inclusion in relation to faith in order to serve their learners appropriately and fit them to thrive in societies of the future. Given often deeply embedded perceptions of the connection between faith and ethnicity, gender and attitudes to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) learners, the report also considers these issues as they intersect with faith. Although faith is the primary focus, it is also a proxy or litmus paper for the attitudes, intentions and practice of school leaders in an ever-more diverse society.

The report sketches in the relevant concepts in use in schools, describes the methods of research, sets out the context in the United Kingdom and in Ireland and explores the experience of a sample of leaders. It concludes by reflecting on the challenges in leading schools in multifaith societies and offers ideas for ways forward. The report is intended primarily for practitioners. It uses only part of the very rich data provided by those who participated in the project. Further articles will continue to communicate what has been learned.

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1   Dinham, A. & Shaw, M. (2015).
2   Mitchell, C. (2017).
3   Allen, R. & West, A. (2011).
4   Sian, K.P. (2015); O'Donnell, A. (2016).
5   Mirza, H.S. (2015).

Theories in Action

Faith and religion

Spirituality, religion and faith are some of the most contested and difficult concepts to define. Some argue that they are different, some that they overlap and some that they are interchangeable in meaning.[6] For the purposes of this report, spirituality is understood as the overarching concept, a search for meaning in life that goes beyond the human sphere and which takes many forms, some of which relate to a divine power. Religion gives shape to spirituality and codifies it, leading to sacred texts, rituals and ethics for living.[7] Over time, these may develop more broadly into cultural traditions. Faith is described by many as a personal and strongly held conviction relating to the quest for spirituality.

At policy level, for example in measuring demographic change, the term 'religion' tends to be used. Within education practice, the three concepts are often used interchangeably. This report generally uses the term 'faith', reflecting the term most prevalent in schools. Occasionally, when it is helpful to reflect the language in use, educators for example still refer to religious rather than faith education, the terms 'religion' and 'spirituality' are adopted. Two areas of education are most closely related to long-standing debates about faith: religious education and faith schools – that is, schools affiliated to a particular religious tradition.

Religious education[8] is subject to lively disagreement, for example on whether the majority religion of the country should form the primary element of religious education or whether a broader, more inclusive approach is needed. Also subject to discussion is whether religion should be taught in schools as a foundational reality or as a cultural/psychological phenomenon, to be replaced by ethical and humanist values. The assumption underlying this study is that, whatever school leaders' personal beliefs, faith is a central aspect in the lives of many children and their families, consequently religious education, in its broadest sense, is an essential component of preparing future citizens.

Faith schools date back to the introduction of State education in both the United Kingdom and Ireland.[9] In these contexts, State funding assisted the provision of schools by Church groups and religious orders on a voluntary, charitable basis. This system continues in the case of both jurisdictions. The difference, however, is that, while a range of alternative models and providers of education developed in England and Wales, this did not happen in the case of the Republic of Ireland. The two systems are moving in different directions; there is evidence of an expansion of faith schools in the United Kingdom, the most recent being the establishment of a Muslim State-school sector in England.[10] The opposite is the case in Ireland, where many deliberate yet unsuccessful attempts have been made to divest schools of their religious patronage.

A number of key issues can be identified in relation to faith schools, including what additionality they add to the overall school experience, the degree to which they offer a necessary safe haven for the faith of stigmatised groups, admissions and intersections with class, race and ethnicity,[11] their contribution to social cohesion[12] and the degree of the alignment of some faiths with social laws that are aimed at an

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6   Harris, A.H., Howell, D.S. & Spurgeon, D.W. (2018).
7   Bellah, R.N. (1970) p.21.
8   Torevell, D., Felderhof, M.C. & Thompson, M.P. (2013).
9   Cush, D. (2005); Jackson, R. (2006); Tuohy, D. (2013).
10   Flint, J. (2007); Hammad, W. & Shah, S. (2018).
11   King, C. (2010).
12   Jackson, R. (2006).

equitable and tolerant society.[13] All these areas raise questions for the State as well as for school leaders, and are discussed in the chapter that outlines the background of this research in England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland ('Schools and Faith: National Contexts').

For faith schools, there are also practical issues relating to the supply of school leaders with sufficient commitment to their faith to lead a school on its faith-based mission.[14] Many faiths expect school leaders to be faith leaders; in Catholic schools, school leaders are expected to be practising Catholics who lead by example, and in Jewish and Muslim schools a similar commitment is expected. However, in the United Kingdom, principals of a different faith from that to which the school is affiliated have been appointed, for example a Jewish principal of a Church of England school with a majority of Muslim pupils.[15] There are also very many instances where the majority faith of the learners is different from that of the principal. The resulting expectations and challenges of leadership are not often explored in research. Nor are the secular, more pluralist dimensions that are to the forefront of leadership scholarship often questioned,[16] leaving the sector without secure, research-informed, baseline knowledge.

In many parts of the world, the aim is to shape an educative process that focuses on an explicitly inclusive approach to difference and diversity. This need not deny a faith-based experience for children and young people, but it may require some regulation to ensure that both community and faith schools educate for a multifaith and secular beliefs society. It also undoubtedly presents great challenges to leadership. This study explores what an appropriate leadership might involve and addresses the blind spot of faith and leadership in educational leadership research.

Diversity

Faith is one of very many characteristics by which others discern diversity; that is, differences between people. However, there is overwhelming research to show that some differences matter a great deal more than others.[17] Difference can be categorised as visible or non-visible. For example, marital status is not evident unless the individual chooses to disclose it. However, just as a ring may signal marital status, so specific jewellery or clothing, such as a cross or headscarf, may render faith visible. In the perception of many, even without such signs a visible ethnic heritage equates to a particular faith so that it appears discernible, although this is an assumption rather than fact.

Visible differences inevitably provoke a reaction. Those whose clothing signals an adherence to a faith, those with disabilities, Black and minority ethnic (BME) learners and staff may encounter stereotyping and consequent discrimination that will deeply affect their experience of school. Goffman[18] explores the notion of a stigmatised identity. A stigma is defined as 'a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention', causing a kind of momentary pause in reaction. The individual, reacting, first recalls general assumptions about an individual or group and then chooses to accept them as true or reject them, determined to respond more objectively. Though this process may be almost instantaneous, it complicates the relationships between those who consider themselves part of a majority or norm and those who hold a stigmatised identity. Increasingly, faith is a stigmatising characteristic.[19] Educators generally consider that they do not behave in this way, yet there is considerable evidence that they do, though the process may be unconscious.[20]

13   King, C. (2010).
14   Bon, S.C. (2009); Scott, S. & McNeish, D. (2012) for an overview of the leadership dimensions.
15   Sherwood, H. (2015).
16   Grace, G. (2009).
17   Milliken, F.J. & Martins, L.L. (1996).
18   Goffman, E. (2009).
19   Shah, S. & Shaikh, J. (2010).
20   Moule, J. (2009); Bon, S.C. (2009).

Such reactions impact on learners' status. Even if educators are aware of the disadvantage suffered by particular groups and wish to remedy it, they risk, without meaning to, emphasising further a perceived difference between this individual or group and others. Leaders and teachers then face a conundrum. They cannot ignore the disadvantage suffered by those with stigmatised characteristics, yet differentiating them marks them out further. The challenge is neatly summarised by Reindal's paradoxical aim of inclusion: 'Treat all children as the same while at the same time aiming to treat them differently.'[21]

The school leaders who contributed to this project grappled with such challenges, translated always through the contested language of the field of social justice. Terms such as diversity, inclusion, respect, acceptance and tolerance were differently understood and variously adopted or rejected. Leaders are faced with a minefield of intellectual and practical choices. The aim may be agreed, in general terms, as articulated here by a learner who contributed to the project:

> It doesn't matter what you believe in or who you are, what you are into, you are entitled, because at the end of the day we are all equal in what we believe in, and I don't think anyone that I have seen has ever questioned whether they are worthy of the school, the school's facilities, the school's care or acceptance. (Learner, Birch School)

A school should be equally welcoming and equally supportive of the learning and development of all pupils and staff. The leaders who contributed to this project experienced the challenges in practice of working towards such an end.

Intersectionality

In the past, the most visible manifestation of difference in schools in the United Kingdom and Ireland was gender. The response was a segregated system of single-sex schools and different curricula for boys and girls in mixed-gender schools. Ethnicity, too, increasingly featured as a very visible form of diversity, and education policies attest to a range of various attempts to address the issue of 'race', for example the rise and fall of integrated education in the United States[22] and the widespread patterns of housing in many countries, which resulted in homogenous communities related to ethnicity and class.[23] The consequences of both historic and current policies persist, resulting in schools that are very often ethnically or socioeconomically homogenous. Though not a similarly visible characteristic, faith has also been a factor that segregates the population. Within the United Kingdom and Ireland, this has largely been along the lines of Catholic and Protestant communities, but increasingly in the twentieth century a wider range of faiths came into play.

Dissatisfaction with the separate focus on each stigmatised identity, gender, ethnicity, faith and disability has a long history stretching back to the start of the twentieth century.[24] Concerns were rooted in activism around the idea of 'race' that did not recognise the different experiences of Black men and women, or feminist writing that was largely about the White middle class and ignored the working class and Black women. A conceptual development from within critical race feminist scholarship addresses this concern.[25] The concept of intersectionality is used to help to explain how difference is experienced; that is, how the different characteristics of an individual, for example ethnicity and gender or faith and ethnicity, work together or intersect to shape an individual's experience.[26] Attempts to explain the relationship between different identities, such as a White working-class Protestant boy or a Muslim girl, are complex, and the use of the term 'intersectionality' and its application are the subject of some

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21   Reindal, S.M. (2016).
22   Carroll A.W. (1967).
23   Grotti, R., Russell, H., Fahey, É. & Maître, B. (2018).
24   Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903/1968).
25   Núñez, A. (2014).
26   Cho, S., Crenshaw, K.W. & McCall, L. (2013).

disagreement in scholarship.[27] Nevertheless, an intersectionality framework has been used now in many studies of education to explore variations in educational experiences and to focus, in particular, on how an individual's experience privileges or marginalises, on the basis of various combinations of stigmatised identities.[28] In summary, this perspective moves the discussion away from the focus of the past, that of a single characteristic, to a more multidimensional exploration of the outcomes of education. Recent work on intersectionality focuses on the interplay of stigmatised characteristics and how this impacts on life chances.[29] Though this report focuses primarily on faith, the latter cannot be fully understood unless its intersections with socioeconomic class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and disability are also taken into account.

Faith in education: global developments

There is a long history of philosophers and sociologists who have expected religion to become of less importance as societies develop. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, many assumed that the impact of religion would decline swiftly as attendance at church in developed economies fell.[30] The belief that religion would become largely irrelevant[31] to the State and simply a matter of private practice has proved mistaken. Religion, often allied to ethnic identity, has proved significant, both culturally and politically, in the new global world order. Fox's 2006 study of 152 countries shows unequivocally that religion has not disappeared from the public sphere and that, for example in the United States, in Muslim states and throughout Europe, it is very much an issue that concerns the State. Terrorism tends to draw a great deal of attention in the formulation of State policy yet, looked at objectively, this is a small element of a much larger project concerned with human rights that is intended 'to reduce the barriers and stigmas that have limited the ability of individuals to freely explore and express their identities'.[32]

Such global challenges to the State are, of course, reflected in challenges to education. States have adopted very differing positions in relation to the accommodation of religion and, particularly, minority faiths in schools. Collet and Bang[33] studied school policies on religion in schools in 20 Western democracies. Their analysis concluded that there were five clusters of policy approaches:

> *High religious freedom providers* (Australia, Canada and Sweden); *moderate religious freedom providers* (Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Denmark); *Christian-focused religious freedom providers* (Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom); *committed secularists* (France and Belgium); and *sensitive for religious freedom providers* (New Zealand and the United States). (p.351, original emphasis)

Each of these approaches is a response to tensions within the community that reflect different understandings of the nature of religion; for instance, for some it is an entirely private matter and for others it involves a public display of adherence to a faith. Such differences are more than intellectual issues. As with all diversity issues, they involve emotional responses. As an example, wearing a headscarf makes some uncomfortable, believing that it is 'over-religionising (and specifically over-Islamising) the public sphere'.[34] This preference, which would be relatively easy, in practical terms, to accommodate, invokes an emotional response that entangles faith, ethnicity and notions of gender roles, and a perceived defence of 'national' culture. Leaders of schools worldwide find themselves at the centre of such politicised decisions that must meet the human rights of learners while accommodating the

27   Davis, K. (2008).
28   Núñez, A. (2014); Anthias, F. (2013).
29   Collins P.H. (2007); Anthias, F. (2013).
30   Juergensmeyer, M. (2005).
31   Fox, J. (2006).
32   Collet, B.A. & Bang, H. (2018) p.353.
33   Op cit. (2018) p.351.
34   Modood, T. & Calhoun, C. (2015) p.11.

requirements of wider society. Faith, in some schools, has become a testing ground for new world orders and the kind of society that schools are both to reflect and to create.

Research Methods

The aim of the project was to offer a snapshot of the state of play of the inclusion of learners of diverse beliefs, and so to support school leaders to develop policy and practice in response to issues that are becoming increasingly important and controversial throughout Europe.

The objectives were to examine critically in schools in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland:

1. The range of issues and dilemmas faced by leaders in relation to inclusion of the diverse and contested religious/secular beliefs of learners and their communities.
2. Organisational policy and practice in relation to religious inclusion.
3. The place of religious education in securing inclusion for increasingly diverse learners.
4. The extent to which national and Europe-wide policy and legislation prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of religion are reflected in school policy and practice.

Finding the terminology to distinguish between schools affiliated to a single faith and those that are not affiliated is problematic. Referring to the latter as multifaith schools is misleading, as there are often learners of many faiths in schools that are affiliated to a single faith. The term 'non-affiliated' would define schools by means of a negative, which appears inappropriate. Using the term 'community schools' may appear to imply that they are more focused on the community than faith schools, which is not necessarily the case, nevertheless it seems the least problematic term. For the purposes of this report, schools affiliated to a single faith are referred to as faith schools. Schools that are not affiliated to a single faith are referred to as community schools.

The research comprised a convenience sample of 12 schools: six in England and Wales and six in the Republic of Ireland. The sample includes faith schools, those with a designated religion and community schools – that is, those that are not affiliated to a particular faith. They were drawn from urban and rural areas, from higher and lower socioeconomic contexts and with learners of various age ranges. The purpose was not to provide a representative sample but a snapshot of a range of practice.

This area is considered by some to be sensitive. Consequently, those who agreed to take part in England and Wales may have skewed the sample towards schools that are focused on relevant development more than the average, and are confident to contribute to this debate. Though efforts were made to include schools in Scotland, none agreed to take part. Northern Ireland has not been included, as it posed too complex a context to be encompassed properly in this small-scale work.

The sample of six schools in the Republic of Ireland was selected by three main criteria. The first criterion was to reflect the various categories of school. The majority model of schools is Catholic, and this model was well represented; four of the six schools are under Catholic patronage or have a Catholic ethos. The other two represent a small but growing group of schools that are multidenominational or nondenominational. These were Educate Together in the primary school and an Education and Training Board (ETB) community school in the second-level school selected. The second criterion related to the extent to which religion and religious diversity was a 'live' or current issue for the school leader. Religion and dealing with, or not having to deal with, religious diversity are key issues for all the schools in the sample. The third selection principle related to enrolment. Many schools in Ireland are either oversubscribed, with the result that they cannot cater for all the children in the local catchment area, or are undersubscribed, resulting in schools taking all children who apply, including those of a faith different from that to which school is affiliated. As the issues around enrolment are more prevalent at primary level, four of the six schools sampled were primary schools. Tables 1 and 2 below provide an overview of the sample.

Table 1: Range of case examples, England and Wales

Interviewee role	Age range	Learners involved	Faith status	Region/Socioeconomic status (SES)
Executive Principal & Principal	Primary		Church of England	Southeast – Low SES
Principal	Primary		Church of England	North West – Low SES
Principal	All age		Community	Midlands – Low SES
Principal & Head of Religious Education	Secondary	4	Community	North West – Low SES
Principal	Secondary	1	Catholic	North West – Low SES
Curriculum Access Team Leader	Secondary		Community	Wales – Low SES

Table 2: Range of case examples, Ireland

Interviewee role	Age range	Learners involved	Faith status	Region/Socioeconomic status (SES)
Principal	Primary	0	Catholic	Urban – High SES
Principal	Primary	0	Catholic	Urban – High SES
Principal	Primary	0	Catholic	Urban – Low SES
Principal	Primary	0	Educate Together	Urban – Mixed SES
Principal	Secondary	0	ETB (multidenominational)	Urban – Low SES
Principal & Deputy Principal	Secondary	0	ETB (Catholic)	Urban – High SES

The range of roles of those interviewed is indicated in Tables 1 and 2. In England and Wales the original intention was to interview the principal of each school, but in some cases, at the request of the school, others also participated, including learners in two schools and the head of religious education in one school. The principal of one school nominated the curriculum access team leader in her place. In another, both the executive principal and the principal of the school were interviewed.

In each case, the questions concerned leaders' understanding and experience of implementing inclusion; that is, the capacity of the school to ensure that all children, whatever their faith or secular stance, feel equally a part of the school, enjoy equitable educational experiences and are equipped to be open-minded and religiously literate citizens of the future. Religious education, concerned with equipping young people with a personal set of values/beliefs and understanding of a range of religions and belief systems in their country and more widely, was also discussed as a subset of inclusion.

In Ireland, the principal of each of the schools was interviewed. In one of the secondary schools the principal was joined by the deputy principal, and both participated in the interview. The questions asked were broadly similar to those asked in the English and Welsh schools, but the specific context of the denominational domination of Irish schools meant that there were different points of emphasis in the questions and different follow-up questions, in keeping with the iterative nature of open-ended interviews.[35]

Analysis was thematic and considered participants' philosophy of education, their understanding of diversity and inclusion and its translation into practice. The attitudes and input of the wider community,

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35   Seale, C. (2004) and King et al. (1994).

particularly those of its parents and carers, as perceived by those interviewed were also considered. The data are presented using school pseudonyms. In the United Kingdom, each school was given the name of a tree and, in Ireland, the pseudonyms used were the names of housing estates and apartment developments that have no association whatsoever with the localities of the schools.

Even within this small sample there is a wide range of approach and practice, sufficient to stimulate consideration of how inclusion might look when implemented in the context of the reader's own school or group of schools.

Schools and Faith: National Contexts

The next two sections of the report outline the context in which English, Welsh and Irish schools operate. Basic information about the system in each is provided to orientate those unfamiliar with a specific nation's structure, before more detailed discussion of the place of faith in the school system.

Schools and faith: England and Wales

The system structure

The school systems in England and Wales are somewhat different. In England, from the 1988 Education Reform Act onwards, there has been a persistent trend towards removing the control of schools from the local authority and relocating it to the schools themselves, though some argue that the control has moved largely to central government. Competition between schools has become the norm, justified in policy as a strategy to raise standards and offer more choice to parents.[36] The pursuit of these aims has translated over the decades into an ever-more complex array of categories of school, the result of successive waves of legislation. The resulting system has been praised by some as responding to parents' wishes yet is criticised by others as being a 'liquorice allsorts'[37] of bewildering choices. The State funds 16,786 primary and 3,408 secondary schools at time of writing, including community, foundation, voluntary-aided, voluntary-controlled, free schools and academies. Table 3 indicates that a majority of primary schools and a minority of secondary schools are maintained by the local authority. Free schools are, as yet, few.

Table 3: Percentage of categories of schools, May 2018[38]

Type of establishment	Primary	Secondary	Total
Academies	28.2%	65.6%	34.50%
Free schools (including studio schools and UTCs)	0.9%	7.4%	2.00%
LA maintained	70.9%	27.0%	63.50%

Outlining the differences between these major categories of school and the larger range of subcategories, including those with very small numbers, such as university technology colleges, would take a great deal of space. Those interested in the detail can refer to https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school. The most relevant differences include whether the local authority, the national government, a trust, a charitable body or a commercial corporation exerts control in the matter of admissions; the degree to which a school has to follow the national curriculum; and special arrangements, for example in the appointment of staff and teaching in relation to religious education and equality laws.

State-maintained schools include: community schools, run by the local authority; foundation and trust schools, run by a governing body, a charitable foundation or a business; voluntary-aided schools, usually run by a charity, often a church; and voluntary-controlled schools, run by a partnership between local authority and, usually, a church. There are also different kinds of academies. Generally, these are existing schools that have changed to academy status and are run independently by sponsors. Free schools are brand new, and are often argued to be in response to local parental demand. Academies and free schools have a greater degree of control over many aspects of their policies.

Wales has not gone down this path. The system is smaller, with 1,330 primary schools and 207 secondary schools at the time of writing.[39] All schools follow the national curriculum, and there is not the diversity of

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36 Glatter, R. (2012).
37 Garner, R. (2011).
38 DfE (2018).
39 Statistics for Wales.

categories found in England. The influence of local authorities remains much stronger.

The law relating to religion in schools in England and Wales is complex. The range of types of school and differing arrangements for funding have resulted in varying obligations in the different categories of schools. In broad brush, schools in England and Wales are legally obliged to promote community cohesion. Within this remit, faith is an important component. All maintained and independent schools must comply with equality legislation and not discriminate against a learner on the grounds of religion. Schools designated as having a religious character are exempt, to the extent that when they are oversubscribed they can give priority to applicants with the faith of the school. However, entirely new academies and free schools with a religious character must allocate at least 50 per cent of places without reference to faith.

In all State-maintained schools, pupils must each day take part in an act of collective worship. The use of the term 'collective' is indicative of an intention to be inclusive of those of different faiths or no faith. The law allows for secular assemblies and assemblies containing elements of faiths other than Christianity, as long as the majority of collective worship is Christian in schools with no designated faith or where the designated faith is Christian. Schools with a designation of faith other than Christianity must still hold an act of collective worship in line with their own religion.

The issue of inclusion of diverse faiths relates to a significant number of learners. The 2011 UK Census asked about religion, including that of dependent children. A quarter of the population reported that they had no religion. This means that a large majority still believe themselves to have a religious affiliation, and for the greatest number by far this is Christian (59%). Table 4 below shows the number of dependent children whose parents consider them to be of a particular faith.

Table 4: Religion and sex of dependent children, 2011 Census

	All persons	Males	Females
All categories: Religion	12,077,665	6,169,554	5,908,111
Christian	6,119,335	3,083,228	3,036,107
Buddhist	33,366	16,487	16,879
Hindu	173,084	88,458	84,626
Jewish	59,413	30,182	29,231
Muslim	1,001,567	512,207	489,360
Sikh	101,182	52,744	48,438
Other religion	24,338	11,782	12,556
No religion	3,620,095	1,886,765	1,733,330
Religion not stated	945,285	487,701	457,584

Source: Office for National Statistics[40]

The table includes figures from Northern Ireland and Scotland, as well as from England and Wales. These figures can only be indicative, given the years since the 2011 Census. Nevertheless, the very large number of children in the system whose families have at least some connection to a particular faith is evident, as is the overall system majority of a Christian heritage.

School choice

Offering parents a choice of school has been promoted as a core feature of education policy in England and Wales for several decades, in rhetoric if not always in practice. At primary level, it seems that being

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40　　　Office for National Statistics (2011).

near a school and academic standards count most strongly in parents' choice.[41] At secondary level, distance becomes less of a factor, though academic standards remain a strong reason to select a school. Religious character is not often a priority reason for choosing a school. While there may be intense competition to get a child into, for example, a Church of England secondary school, it is likely to relate, for most, to the academic standards of the school rather than its religious nature.[42] The number of families that do not achieve their first school choice varies by geographic area, but is around one in six nationally. Black and Asian households are less likely to have an offer from their first-choice school than White British parents.[43]

Faith schools

About a third of State-funded schools have a faith character. They are often perceived in a rather misleading way as a homogeneous group, despite the variety that they exhibit. The media tend to focus on those that serve minority religions, though by far the largest number is Church of England schools. In January 2017, 37 per cent (6,176) of all State-funded primaries and 19 per cent (637) of all State-funded secondaries in England were faith schools, a slight increase from 35 per cent of primaries and 16 per cent of secondaries in January 2000. Of all the primary schools, 26 per cent are Church of England. Some 9 per cent of secondary schools are Roman Catholic. Faith schools other than Christian are few: 48 Jewish, 27 Muslim, 11 Sikh and five Hindu, at the time of writing. The relative rate of growth among non-Christian faith schools is higher than that of Christian schools. Since 2007, 11 Jewish, 20 Muslim, nine Sikh and all the Hindu schools have opened, but the total number remains very small.[44] The Welsh Assembly has stated its commitment to supporting the role of faith schools within the overall system, but does not publish the statistics on the numbers of schools designated as having a religious character.

Faith schools have their supporters and detractors, some strongly vociferous. Surveys have found, over time, that about a third of the general population supports the availability of faith schools. However, when this is broken down to distinguish between Christian and other religions, support for Islamic, Jewish and Hindu and Sikh schools drops to around 20 per cent.[45] About a quarter of parents wish to have the option of sending their child to a faith school. Though this is a minority, it amounts to millions of families who wish the State to support such choice.

The arguments in support of the availability of faith schools include the belief that faith schools can provide a very positive environment and support for learners, particularly those who are likely to experience discrimination and/or racism in schools. There is considerable evidence that, for example, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism make some schools a negative environment for some learners and staff.[46] Faith schools are also argued to have a broader purpose that goes beyond supporting individual learners. They are seen as an engine for sustaining the culture, moral standards and identity of groups whose members fear that the pressure to adapt and assimilate in order to be accepted by the majority threatens the religious beliefs, values and traditions that they hold dear. A review of Ofsted inspection reports concluded that faith schools, rather than segregating communities, as some fear, achieve greater cohesion than do community schools.[47] It is also argued that minority faith schools have the knowledge and experience to teach their own faith truly, and are consequently less likely to be the cause of the antipathy or, at the extreme, the violent reactions to ignorance of or hostility towards their faith that alienate some in community schools.

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41   Burgess, S. et al. (2015).

42   Patrikios, S. & Curtice, J. (2014).

43   Burgess, S. et al. (2015); Turner, C. (2018).

44   Long, R. (2016) p.15.

45   YouGov/University of Lancaster (2013); Patrikios, S. & Curtice, J. (2014).

46   Gulson, K.N. & Taylor Webb, P. (2012); Panjwani (2014); Miah, S. (2013).

47   Jesson, D. (2009).

The arguments against making faith schools available include concerns that they have contributed to ethnic segregation as, in some geographic areas, faith and ethnicity tend to be related. The Casey Review[48] expressed great concern at the implications of such segregation. There are also objections that the beliefs underpinning some faith schools conflict with equality laws. For example, teachers in faith schools that do not support same-sex marriage are legally able to describe marriage as between a man and a woman, while acknowledging that same-sex marriage is an option.[49] This stance is of concern to the LGBTQ community, as is the evidence, for example in Stonewall's five-yearly review,[50] that faith schools are less likely than community schools to challenge homophobic bullying and other forms of discrimination against LGBTQ learners. There are also broader concerns that faith schools may persuade children and young people into inappropriate values and cultural attitudes, for example in relation to gender issues, or may fail to help them to create an identity that is essentially 'British'. Though the latter is very ill defined, such fears exist and are fanned by some of the media.

There may be little hope for agreement between the devoutly religious and the firmly secularist. Reasoned arguments can be brought forward on both sides of the debate. For the foreseeable future, a sufficiently large minority of the general population supports the option of faith schools for it to be assumed that the State will continue to fund a choice between faith schools and community schools. Both kinds of schools face the same issues in helping learners to navigate their own path forward in a diverse society in which faith appears to catalyse tensions and disagreement as well as being a profound and important support in the life of many.

Religious education

Religious education is compulsory for all five- to 18-year-olds in State-maintained schools in England, unless withdrawn by their parents or by the learner's own choice on reaching the age of 18. In Wales, religious education is compulsory until 19 years. The curriculum is locally agreed, and is expected to 'reflect that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.[51] Faith schools are permitted to teach only their own religion. A study of children's attitudes to faiths found that religious education was particularly significant, influencing views more than the family, television or the Internet.[52] Historically, many commentators have been dissatisfied with religious education in schools for being too Euro- and Christian-centric.[53] Where other faiths are taught, various inadequacies are highlighted,[54] both from the perspective of believing that religious education is too uncritical in teaching faiths and believing it to be too critical, assuming that faiths are studied merely as cultural phenomena. There are particular points of tension around issues such as LGBTQ relationships and creationism.[55] Religious education also carries a heavy burden of expectation in that it is hoped to be a primary mechanism to enact the 2015 *Paris Declaration* of the European Union, in response to the growing number of terrorist attacks in Europe, 'to promote citizenship and to embed the values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination in all citizens'.[56]

Faith and schools

The Casey Review presented the role of schools as to grow 'tolerant, resilient pupils, capable of reflective critical thinking'.[57] Such skills are vital in a diverse society. The education system in England and Wales

48   Casey, L. (2016).
49   Long, R. & Bolton, P. (2017).
50   Bradlow, J. et al. (2017).
51   Francis, L.J., Pyke, A. & Penny, G. (2015) p.5.
52   Francis, L.J., Pyke, A. & Penny, G. (2015).
53   Andraos, M.E. (2012).
54   Panjwani, F. (2014).
55   Long, R. (2016).
56   European Union (2015).
57   Casey, L. (2016) p.51.

currently reflects unresolved tensions around how far faith should be embedded in schools, how far Christianity should be the norm, and how far protection of minority groups' identity and culture should continue alongside promoting an identity that is also part of the larger national community. School leaders are at the forefront of such dilemmas. Their daily practice offers, in effect, their answer to such questions, and it is this practice that the report goes on to explore after presenting the context of the Republic of Ireland.

Schools and faith: The Republic of Ireland

The system structure

The school system in Ireland is a State-funded public system. It is highly centralised. The Ministry of Education, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), is responsible for 'providing for' the education of children. The DES determines the staffing quota in each school, according to the number of learners, and operational funding is provided by way of annual capitation grants. Additional teachers and capitation are provided to schools located in low-socioeconomic status communities. There is a small number of notably elite 'private schools' in the larger urban areas, but these are funded by the State to the same level as other schools. Teachers' salaries are set centrally, as part of national public service wages agreements, and salaries are paid from the budget of the DES.

A key issue is the way in which Church and State co-exist in the sphere of education. The majority of schools at primary level (95%) and a significant percentage of second-level schools are under the control of the Church (mainly the Catholic Church). There have been efforts made by the Churches to control the governance of education in Ireland since the establishment of the national school system in 1831. A distinctive feature of the Irish Constitution (1937) is that this seminal document incorporated many Catholic principles. Under the model of Catholic social theory that prevailed at the time, parents were explicitly given the right and responsibility to educate their children:

> The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.[58]

The role of the State is thus framed as being subordinate to that of the parents, and is confined 'to provide for free primary education' and 'to intervene where parents neglect their rights and obligations'.

The marginalisation of the State's role in education resulted in the State providing financial support while the Church, acting on behalf of the people, attended to all other aspects of running State schools.[59] To a significant degree, this structure still prevails: the DES pays for teachers' salaries, most of the buildings and maintenance, while the patron (usually the local bishop) has responsibility for the running of the school. The board of management (the governors) oversees the school on behalf of the patron and is accountable to the patron and the Minister for Education and Skills. The board must uphold the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school, and is accountable to the patron for so doing. The principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, including providing guidance and direction to the teachers and other staff of the school, and is accountable to the board. In practice, the running of the school is left in the hands of the principal. Therefore, at one level, schools have a significant level of autonomy. Increasingly, however, schools argue that this autonomy has been eroded by a number of agencies whose role is directly or indirectly to monitor, frame or redefine aspects of the education system.

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58   Government of Ireland (1937) Article 42.1.
59   Walsh, J. (2009).

The diversity dilemma

The lack of religious diversity in the school system is currently the subject of considerable controversy.[60] The long-time link between Church and State in the area of education is coming under pressure. Although, historically, the population of Ireland was mainly White and Catholic, a significant demographic change occurred during the years of rapid economic growth that became known as the Celtic Tiger (1990–2006). During this period, the demographic profile changed dramatically in respect of ethnicity, nationality and, most notably in the case of schools, religious diversity. The percentage of the population who identified as Catholic on the 2016 census has fallen sharply, from 84.2 per cent in 2011 to 78.3 per cent in 2016. There has been a corresponding rise in the number with no religion, which grew by 73.6 per cent, from 269,800 to 468,400, an increase of 198,600. This changed demographic creates a demand for a more religiously diverse school system. The decreasing level of religiosity among teachers compounds the issue. This is all happening at a time when the Church is seeking to establish a more traditional view of a Catholic school that is very explicitly modelled on Catholic values.[61]

The primary sector

Table 5 provides an overview of the patterns of patronage at primary level. Broadly speaking, there are now six main groupings:

1. Catholic schools

2. Minority faith schools: these include Church of Ireland schools, Muslim schools and Presbyterian schools.

3. Educate Together schools: A significant 'bottom-up' movement by parents for the establishment of multidenominational schools began in the early seventies. The first such school opened in 1978 in Dalkey, Co. Dublin, followed by the Bray School project in 1981 and the North Dublin School project in 1984. This was not a straightforward or easy process, and the parent groups establishing schools encountered various forms of opposition. Over time, this momentum was coordinated by a group called Educate Together, formed in 1984. The movement gathered momentum, and there are now 58 multidenominational schools under the co-ordination of Educate Together.

4. Community National Schools (CNS): This model of primary-school patronage is a recent policy initiative by the State. The first two pilot schools began operating in 2008. The model offers an alternative to the State's traditional reliance on private-sector patron initiatives for the establishment of primary schools. The model is currently under the patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills and the Education and Training Board (ETB). There are now five pilot CNS schools. A distinctive feature of the schools is their multidenominational character, whereby they aim to cater for children with a variety of belief systems, including those whose parents do not wish their children to receive faith-specific teaching.

5. Gaelscoileanna (Irish-medium schools): Another 'bottom-up' movement took place in the seventies, driven by parents who wished their children to be educated through the medium of Irish. They established naonraí for the young children and gaelscoileanna for children of national school age. An Forás Patrúnachta has established the patronage rights for all Irish-medium schools. Schools under its aegis operate as denominational, interdenominational or multidenominational, depending on the wishes of the parents.

6. Other school types: A very small number of schools with various patronage.

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60   Heinz et al. (2018).
61   Grace, G. (2009).

Table 5: Overall profile of patronage of primary schools 2016/2017[62]

Ethos/Patronage of school	No. of schools
Roman Catholic	2,820
Church of Ireland	168
Presbyterian	17
Methodist	1
Quaker	2
Islamic	2
Jewish	1
TOTAL faith-based schools	**2,993 (95.8%)**
Interdenominational	19 (0.6%)
Multidenominational	111 (3.5%)
(Educate Together	67)
(Others, under Educate Together	11)
(Irish-medium schools – *An Foras Patrúnachta*	17)
(Lifeways Ireland	3)
(Friends of Killashee Ltd	1)
(John Scotus Trust	1)
TOTAL Non-faith-based schools	**130 (4.2%)**
TOTAL number of schools (primary)	**3,123**

Despite the changes in school patronage, the Catholic Church retains responsibility for the vast majority of schools.

The second-level sector

The issue of ethos/patronage takes a different form in the second-level system, as summarised in Table 6. In the past, there were two main sectors contributing to second-level education: the voluntary-school sector (religious owned and managed); and the State-run vocational sector. Over the years, through amalgamations and other forms of reorganisation, different types of school have emerged. Many remain under the patronage of trusts set up by the Churches and/or the religious orders. Some of the other, more secular types of schools have religious representation on the boards and may also have a chaplain aligned to the main faith group in the school.

There are four broad types of second-level schools:

1. *Voluntary secondary schools:* Historically, these schools were religious owned, almost like private schools, but they received State funding. In the early stages of second-level education, voluntary secondary schools were the only provider of second-level education. With the decline in the number of religious vocations, the number of religious working in these schools has dropped dramatically. In recent times, the governance of this group of schools has been handed over to a number of different trust bodies whose function it is to ensure that the ethos of the school and its core educational and religious mission prevail.

2. *Vocational schools:* A system of vocational schools set up by the State in the 1950s, vehemently opposed by the Church authorities.

3. *Community schools:* often resulting from an amalgamation between a voluntary secondary school and a vocational school, often aligned with one religious group.

4. *Comprehensive schools.*

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62   Department of Education and Science (2017).

Table 6 provides a summary of the number of schools in each group.

Table 6: Overall profile of patronage of second-level schools 2016/2017[63]

Ethos/patronage of school	No. of schools
Voluntary secondary (mainly Roman Catholic)	374 (53%)
Vocational (State sector)	241 (34%)
Community schools (often resulting from an amalgamation between a voluntary secondary school and a vocational school (often aligned with one religious group)	82 (11%)
Comprehensive	14 (2%)
TOTAL number of schools (second-level)	**711**

Schools and changing demographics

The pattern of ownership and governance of schools no longer reflects the diversity of Irish society. In some urban centres where it has been practical, consequently possible, to provide a level of school choice to children of different religious backgrounds, a number of models of school have developed, yet these changes go nowhere near meeting the demand across the country. Table 7 below provides an overview of the changing demographics with respect to religious beliefs in Irish society, comparing census data from 2006 to 2011.

Table 7: Population by religion – Demographic changes 2006–2011[64]

Religion	2006	2011	% change
	000s	000s	
Roman Catholic	3,861.3	3,729.1	-3.4
Church of Ireland	129.0	126.4	-2.0
Muslim (Islamic)	49.2	63.4	28.9
Orthodox	35.2	62.2	37.5
Christian	41.2	37.4	-9.1
Presbyterian	24.6	24.2	-1.6
Hindu	10.7	14.3	34.1
Apostolic/Pentecostal	14.0	13.4	-4.9
Other	70.2	97.7	39.1
No religion	268.8	468.4	73.6
Not stated	72.9	125.3	71.8

Most non-urban areas have a student population that is only sufficient to warrant a single primary school. For example, almost 1,500 of the 3,100 primary schools have fewer than six teachers. In almost all of these cases the student population is served by a local Catholic primary school. A nationwide effort for five years to bring about change has had little impact. In many cases, children who do not subscribe to the dominant religion of the school have no choice but to attend the local school and 'exempt themselves' from religion time, which often results in sitting in the class doing another activity. Like schools in many countries, pre-existing anomalies have been overlaid by new concerns that, in the Irish context, relate mainly to Islamophobia and patterns of intersectionality between class, race and religion.

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63   Department of Education and Science (2017).
64   Central Statistics Office (2017).

The current situation, with respect to the mismatch between the profile of schools and population trends, has been the subject of frequent criticism, both nationally and internationally, as risking the rights of citizens in a more culturally and religiously diverse society.[65]

Religious instruction

Under Article 44 of the Constitution, all parents have the right to withdraw their child from religious instruction or, in the case of a student who is 18 or more, the student may withdraw him/herself. Under legislation currently in development, schools will be required to publish an enrolment policy that will clarify the school's arrangements for upholding the constitutional right of parents for their children not to attend religious instruction. Different schools have different ways of facilitating withdrawal. In larger schools, it may be possible to stagger religion classes so that pupils who wish to opt out can move to another class at the same grade to follow the curriculum in that class. The logistics of such an arrangement depend on the numbers wishing to move class and the number of classes available. Where the school does not have the facilities or the staff to facilitate such withdrawal, the pupil may remain in the classroom yet not participate in the lesson. The withdrawal of learners or alternative curricular provision is usually viewed as a better option. However, in most cases there are insufficient staff to supervise children who have been withdrawn from the class and so these options are not possible. Consequently, in most cases pupils remain in the class while religious instruction is taking place, doing schoolwork or other work. Some read or have online lessons, in some cases about their own beliefs and traditions.

Forum on patronage and pluralism in the primary sector

In a government-led initiative to address the lack of faith diversity in the system, the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was established in 2011. It consulted widely on the issues arising, and in 2012 a report recommended steps to ensure that the education system at primary level could provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none.

The recommendations covered four broad areas:

1. Planning towards future patronage arrangements and having a more diverse range of patronage types for new schools in areas of rising population.

2. The practicalities of achieving divesting of patronage where there is a stable population and a demand for diversity of school types.

3. Irish language provision.

4. The creation of a more inclusive culture in schools.

A follow-up paper published in 2014 gave an update on progress in implementing the recommendations, with a particular focus on the issue of inclusion and diversity in schools. The paper also provided an update on progress in implementing recommendations on new schools, divesting of patronage, enrolment legislation and developing a programme, Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. The updated report gives details of a number of practices and exemplars of good practice.

The paper does not set out to be prescriptive, recognising that each school has its own ethos and operates in a particular context. Therefore, it encourages schools to consider their own practices critically and to consult meaningfully with their own communities and stakeholders in formulating

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65   Faas, D., Darmody, M. & Sokolowska, B. (2016); Tuohy, D. (2013).

policies and developing practice. Consequently, there is little by way of direction in terms of ensuring that the outcomes for the diverse body of learners will take place. Perhaps it is the lack of legislative support or firm direction that leads to a reluctance to place demands on the system. Instead, the primacy of the right of each school to determine its ethos is reemphasised. Considering the acute lack of diversity in the system and the role of the Forum in helping to challenge and improve practice, it is regrettable that the outcome is so laissez faire, particularly when the key areas identified are so central to the operation of schools and the experiences of learners.

The Minister for Education and Skills published three Report Stage amendments to the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016, which will have a historic impact on how children access their local primary school. This development fulfils a key action in the Minister's Action Plan for Education, to remove the role of religion as the key determinant of school admissions, including ensuring that oversubscribed schools can no longer discriminate or select on the grounds of religion. This became law on 29 May 2018. The amendment will remove religion as a criterion that can be used in school admissions in over 95 per cent of primary schools. Under the new law, there will be protection to ensure that a child of a minority faith can still access a school of their faith, fundamentally changing the balance between the rights of three groups: minority religion families; Catholic families; and nondenominational families. How these changes will play out is yet to be seen.

Leadership for Inclusion in Schools in England and Wales

The schools

The issues that this report addresses are sensitive. In order to preserve anonymity, limited information is provided about each school so that facts cannot be pieced together to identify the individual schools or contributors. Table 8 below provides each school's pseudonym, faith status and an indication of the intake in terms of faith. All of the schools were located in contexts of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Table 8: Profile of learners by faith, England and Wales

Pseudonym	Faith status	Intake by faith
Oak School	All-age community	Majority Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, small numbers of other faiths
Ash School	Secondary community	70% Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Hindu
Maple School	Catholic secondary	40% Catholic, 35% Muslim, other faiths including Hindu, Sikh
Willow School	Church of England primary	90% Muslim, 10% Christian, particularly Catholic
Birch School	Secondary community	80% Muslim, Christian, Hindu
Chestnut School	Church of England primary	Wide mix of Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish, Hindu

As one principal pointed out, this information does not adequately communicate the considerable diversity among each of the faith groups named:

> People refer to 'Oh well, that's a majority-Muslim school' or they'll describe it as a 'monocultural school'... actually, what you've got is lots of different subcultures.... There are very many students from different nationalities or parental heritage and they have got very different cultural experiences, cultural traditions... that change the way that they may practise their religion. (Principal, Oak School)

Additionally, after principals had described faith in their school they went on to link this to other characteristics. Knowledge about the faith of learners was insufficient if it did not take account of its intersections with other characteristics, such as socioeconomic deprivation and/or the wide range of nationality and ethnicity. These leaders emphasised that the faith of a learner's family was sometimes used wrongly by others as a kind of shortcut stereotype to circumvent engaging with the complexity of the children's lives.

Discounting mandated priorities such as cared for children, admissions were generally based on proximity to the school. The principal of Willow School recounted instances of the reason given for application and for appeal as 'because it is near my house'. She recalled one parent who had chosen the school because of its faith nature yet also because it was small, and he wanted his children to be known well. There was little perception that parents chose a school primarily because it was either affiliated or not affiliated to a particular faith. Rather, it was distance from home, the general ethos and the academic standards that were perceived as important to most.

Leadership philosophy

Drivers of inclusion

None of the schools wished to recruit learners from only a single faith. Leaders were more concerned to meet the needs of the local community. Some may appear to have had little opportunity to influence their intake, in that they were undersubscribed. Maple Catholic School, for example, located in the centre of a very socioeconomically deprived community, did not fill its places. Oak School, also in the centre of a socioeconomically deprived community, was oversubscribed. However, in all schools the degree of subscription did not seem to be of overriding importance. The driver of the leaders' approach in all cases was a broad understanding of the challenges faced by learners and their families rather than a priority focus on faith. Knowledge of the deprivation experienced by children was a key motivation:

> HOD: There was a girl I used to have in my form, if she didn't get up first she didn't get the school uniform, so she didn't come to school. It's that sort of poverty and deprivation that we're talking about...

> Principal: That is the primary driver when we talk about inclusivity in this school. (Birch School)

The moral imperative to respond to such need was rooted in the faith of some principals – 'We are looking out for everybody in terms of them being a child of God' (Principal, Maple School) – and/or in their professional values:

> The big inclusive issue here is equality of opportunity. We are one of the deprived areas in (local town)... and that is the driver that I see absolutely every single day. The determination to give all of our youngsters, it doesn't matter where in the heck they come from and it doesn't matter what home they come from, the very best. (Head of Religious Education, Birch School)

In this group of schools, there was no sense that competition or ambition related to league tables had resulted in attempts to recruit or select specific groups of learners. Research evidence suggests that this is not the case in many schools that focus on recruiting those of high academic attainment or a single faith.[66] Our sample provides insights into schools that have taken a different route.

Core purpose

The principals interviewed shared certain values and approaches to leadership. They know that many learners face not only the hardship brought about by poverty but also prejudice in relation to faith and ethnicity. In all cases but one, accredited outcomes through examination were seen as an important, but not the priority, goal for leadership:

> It's about the philosophy of education, that I am not educating children to pass examinations. (Principal, Oak School)

> I have stuck to my guns through thick and thin, good, bad or indifferent, that we don't drill those children for SATs. (Principal, Willow School)

Leaders were committed to getting the best academic results possible, recognising their importance in providing access and choice, yet they were viewed as a partial mission:

> What qualifications do is give you access, they open the door. What they don't necessarily do is give you the actual life skills in terms of being able to communicate, in terms of being able to be independent and being somewhat self-sufficient. (Principal, Oak School)

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66   Power, S.A. & Whitty, G. (2015); Courtney, S.J. (2015).

The principals stressed giving children a sense of control of their lives, having choices beyond the limited world that they had experienced to date, finding calm and support in school when often their lives outside were chaotic, of having skills that would fit them for a global world and the ability to navigate prejudice. Many leaders in education might state that these were their values. These leaders gave many instances of the priority given to these aims and how they had translated intention into action. The principal of Oak School had reduced the time allocated to subject lessons to enable the development of a range of life skills:

> I have actually taken a lesson off the timetable, reduced time in other subject areas so actually within that the focus is about diversity, about learning about extremism, learning other life skills. (Principal, Oak School)

The attention to detail to implement mission was a feature of leadership. In Chestnut Church of England primary school, one of a group of schools, a teacher was given responsibility for developing policy and training in relation to same-sex families across all the schools so that every teacher would be confident of support in acting inclusively.

The leadership approaches that emerged include very clear statements of values and mission, which were pursued even when resisted by some. Principals also embraced a long-term approach. When the principal of Oak School took up his position and explained to staff the mission, 'Learning through diversity', they 'all turned around and said, "Over our dead bodies"'. He persisted, nevertheless, being determined yet not aggressive:

> having the approach of not being afraid to challenge any subjects, but I don't put anything into anybody's... it's like pushing into your face.... Having that dialogue with parents, with families, with students... not expecting everyone to be at a certain level in terms of where you want to get to. (Principal, Oak School)

No excuses are accepted for why the school cannot achieve the mission that is set out; yet, equally, there was acceptance of different levels of understanding and commitment that must be transformed over time. As a result, the school was oversubscribed, despite being in an area of deep socioeconomic deprivation, and the parents sign up not to the tenets of a particular faith but to the principles of inclusion of children of all faiths, ethnicities and sexualities.

Though some of those interviewed stated that they were primarily driven by children's needs, they also brought a value set of their own that reflected their understanding of what children needed rather than what they or their families necessarily expressed as a want. Some located the source of their values in their own faith. Others drew on a sense of professionalism and also, in some cases, a sense of anger at the social injustice evident in so many children's lives and the myriad ways that this impacted by reducing children's choices and opportunities. For example, in Willow School the inadequate clothing of many children meant that it was often not possible to walk to their local church, as the children would arrive too cold or wet. There was a sense that, although the priority focus was the education of individual learners, the mission was much wider. It was aimed at transforming the injustices of society and, in particular, all those habits of reasoning and attitudes that lead to exclusion from the community. In a development of the old saw, it takes a village to raise a child, the principal of Oak School believed that children would reciprocate:

> If you educate the children, you educate a community, and that enables a community to flourish.

Leadership in action

Leadership discourse

The search for an understanding of inclusion and its translation into practice was evident in struggles with language to position the ethos of their school. The principal of Oak School, for example, explained:

> I don't want to go anywhere where somebody tolerates me because I am Muslim, or I'm Sikh or Hindu or because I am Asian or Black or White or because I am gay or lesbian. I just want to be accepted for who I am as an individual, and that's always been our belief here. Actually, we don't believe in tolerance here... what we believe in is acceptance.

In contrast, the principal of Willow School found tolerance to be a useful and challenging concept:

> We've got the word tolerance. That's easy for people to say, 'Oh that's a bit odd, you just tolerate', but it's not. It's about learning that tolerance of each other and each other's religion.

What matters most here, perhaps, is not the difference of opinion about particular words or concepts but the use of language to reach shared understandings and to embed a particular ethos of inclusion. 'It's that slow, slow dialogue' (Principal, Oak School). The principal of Chestnut School explained that they use the term 'reflect' rather than 'pray'. This was explained to the local vicar when he came to take an assembly at this Church of England primary school:

> What I didn't want him to start thinking about is that we would just talk about Christianity. We wanted to make sure that we amalgamated all the other religions and then, when he does do a short prayer at the end, rather than calling it a prayer could he say that we reflect... rather than calling it a prayer.

The development of the use of language appeared to be a key leadership role, facilitating the ability of all to come together in ways that are positive. The careful consideration of language was in part a means to ensure that no offence was given to any yet, more than this, at a fundamental level it signalled a determination that the daily discourse of school – the daily interaction between staff and children and between children themselves – is one that seeks always to include.

Leadership practice: philosophy in action

Faith in children's lives in school

While the UK schools that participated were divided equally between those affiliated to a faith and those who were not, both categories engaged with the issue of faith as a fundamental and important aspect of leading a school. There was recognition of the importance of faith in all children's lives, from the point of view of learners' own beliefs and from the perspective of helping children to understand the significance to many of faith or secular beliefs and respecting differing beliefs.

Some children, including the very youngest arriving at reception class, had joined their family's faith: 'That's already there before they step into our schools. They'll have a faith' (Principal, Chestnut School). Though they encountered multiple difficulties in an impoverished estate and an often discriminatory society, 'they also have their faiths that they cherish' (Principal, Chestnut School). This was a stable and

positive element in the lives of many children of various faiths. Other learners might be nominally of a particular faith yet detached from it in terms of practice: 'Most of our Catholic children don't go to Mass on a Sunday, they don't pray at home, they probably don't talk too much about their faith' (Principal, Maple School). A final group might be secular: neither they nor their family are associated with a religion. The leaders generally made no distinction between these groups in terms of the educational goal. The principal of Maple School expressed his intention as 'It's about meeting your soul's need'. This aim was evident in all schools, not in terms of a religious belief in the soul but as a commitment to the rights of children and young people to engage with something more than the development of intellectual capacity or character. It stemmed from an understanding of the importance of faith to many within a community, and the obligation of schools to offer a path to explore and engage with that reality:

> Young people today, although going to church doesn't... that's not what floats their boat, being spiritual does. That's my experience. So they're very much interested in talking about faith and sharing their thoughts and their values about faith, and they want to be spiritual in many ways. (Principal, Maple School)

The principal of Birch School explained that:

> Our first head was absolutely adamant, we are a secular school, we are a community school, we are not a faith school... and yet she ended up with all those values and the ethos that she wanted, could just as easily be a faith school. That's the irony behind it. She was adamant it wasn't, but it was.

The point being made is that the assumption that only faith schools engage seriously with faith, or need to do so, is mistaken. The values that underpin the leadership of the principals in this sample share much in their approach to what education is for and how it relates to diverse societies, where both faith and secular beliefs are held sometimes nominally and sometimes with great conviction. As such, children and young people have a right to be educated so that they can take up their own position with confidence and respect that of others.

Religious education

Religious education was a formal subject and a high-achieving one, for example in Maple, Birch and Chestnut Schools. The aim was not just to inform children about the various belief systems in the world but to use it as a highly effective vehicle to develop essential skills:

> It's very different from when I was in school. We didn't have to be critically thinking at all, really. We'd just learn it and if we could learn it, re-hash it and then you could pass an exam, and that isn't the case any longer, is it? The curriculum and the syllabi don't allow for that to happen, and certainly not in a subject like RE [religious education], that's the bread and butter of it really, isn't it, being able to think critically. (Curriculum Access Team Leader, Ash School)

There were many examples of how inclusiveness was designed into religious education so that critical thinking and personal beliefs were developed in the context of recognising many faiths. Chestnut School offered several instances of how it achieved this in practice, including a lesson designed for the very youngest children:

> The children had to come in so they were already in awe and wonder, following this glitter trail, and the glitter trail led them to a letter from an angel and then they had to reflect upon and talk about, what did angels mean to them... within their own belief system. And they were only tiny but, through that, the teacher was then able to lead and guide them into a deeper understanding of what angels mean for Christians, and are there any other religions that also use angels? And, actually, she used that opportunity to talk about people who didn't believe in God, as well.

Some surprising similarities and dissimilarities were used as a point of discussion, for example the Festival of Lights, Diwali, and Bonfire Night, 5 November.

Though faith schools are legally allowed to teach solely their own religion, Maple School chose a different path and did not promote Catholicism exclusively:

> So, this is the teaching of the Catholic Church, what would be the teaching of other faiths, what would actually you as an individual believe? So, we try to build that in and that's not to water down the fact that, as a Catholic school, this is what we are saying the Catholic Church believes in, but it's important that people can express views from other faiths and also from no faith at all, as well.

However, religious education as a subject was very much a subset of a much broader approach embedding education related to faiths throughout the curriculum. In some schools there was a vehement rejection of superficial mechanical approaches. For example, 'We don't get a tick list and go "Oh we need to do Judaism, we need to do that and we haven't done this for a bit"' (Principal, Willow School) or, in Chestnut, 'We don't just go for the festivals, which is what happens in a lot of schools. "Well, tick the box, 'cos we've done Diwali." It's not about that' (Executive Principal, Chestnut School). At both primary and secondary levels, the challenge to engage critically with belief systems was embedded throughout the curriculum:

> Now for small children, spirituality is quite a complex thing to understand, but it is something we do really work with them on, looking at that whole SMSC curriculum with the Social, the Spiritual, Moral and Cultural, and I think it's through all of that and weaving it throughout the curriculum so it's not just, 'Well now today we're doing physics and tomorrow we're doing SMSC'. It's that, how do we weave SMSC through the curriculum? (Executive Principal, Chestnut School)

A practice example of how this was achieved is when Year 6, as part of the English curriculum, was reading the novel *The Giant's Necklace*, where a girl dies:

> Life after death: some people believe in it, some people don't; whether we're buried or we're cremated…. They're writing this lovely letter as if they are the ghost. Do they believe there is a ghost, does that happen in reality? Do you believe in that, don't you believe in that? And it becomes a bigger conversation for the children… it is what is happening throughout the school and through the curriculum. It doesn't have to be related to a subject. (Principal, Chestnut School)

Such embedding throughout the curriculum was not serendipitous but carefully planned to include faiths and secular beliefs. Oak School children were taken to visit a place of worship for each of the major faiths. This was part of a broader curriculum approach that aimed at inclusiveness in relation to not only faith but also culture, sexuality and ethnicity:

> What I have got is a policy on having a culturally inclusive curriculum. In that there are specific statements: teaching children to challenge racism, prejudice, Islamophobia, homophobia, xenophobia, and so on, and giving them the skills to do that. (Principal, Oak School)

There was an expectation that examples from different perspectives, of faiths, sexualities, and so on, would be used to enrich the whole curriculum. Though the principal acknowledged that it was not possible to do this on every occasion in every subject, the expectation was that it would be the common approach. Maple and Ash Schools also rejected mechanistic approaches, emphasising the need to make sure that an inclusive approach across the curriculum was driven by the individual needs of learners:

> The fact that it was probably an appropriate and a good learning experience for the students would be the driving force, rather than ticking a box to say that we'd accommodated what was perceived to be someone's good idea about what curriculum should look like. (Principal, Maple School)

Families and the community

The communities in which the schools were located faced huge challenges, though these differed in both nature and degree. Maple School, for example, worked with communities where problems of drink, drugs and sexual exploitation of young girls were all around. Parents who had not necessarily experienced school or wider society positively might hold deeply negative assumptions about the school and be reluctant to have contact. Many, particularly the older members of the community, might find it hard to accept those different from themselves. However, some schools detected change:

> If I was to look at my parents' and grandparents' generation, they will still have fixed views and ideas and opinions and prejudices, and stereotypes from that generation and, like I say, it's very hard to remove those. But then also... that generation has become more accepting. (Principal, Oak School)

Similarly, Chestnut School initially saw a reluctance from parents to allow their children to participate in some activities, but 'there are a lot of parents that are changing their perspective and their mind sets' (Principal, Chestnut School).

The schools shared a commitment to seeing their role as indivisible, educating not just learners but also their families. The schools offered language support, advice on dealing with financial and other problems and, sometimes, with issues of discrimination and religious prejudice. For example, Chestnut School was approached by five mothers after the Manchester bombing in 2018. 'We talked about Manchester. We didn't shy away from it.... They were very anxious. They were anxious about going about their daily business.'

Within this context of a supportive orientation, families and carers were left in no doubt about the expectations of the school. The school worked with local primaries on the transition to secondary, making its ethos and values very explicit so that the parents knew exactly what was expected of the children who came to the school. Maple School, though a Catholic school, does not ask parents to sign up to Catholic beliefs and practice. Rather, it asks parents to commit to its inclusive ethos, which respects and celebrates all faiths. In Oak School, should any parent complain, for example about a visit to a place of worship, the principal is able to point to the curriculum on the website, which makes explicit the content, approaches and visits that every child will experience as part of the inclusive mission of the school.

While the schools were committed to educating families with a clearly stated ethos, the direction of travel was two-way. Leaders insisted that the school should go out into the community as much as making the school a safe and welcoming environment for parents to come into. Not long after being appointed, the principal found that a suggestion that staff should attend a community event highlighted a division between community and school:

> A number of staff turned around and said, 'I've never walked through here before', and it was literally just down the road, and I thought, 'You've never actually walked out into the community'. I think that's a big issue in many of the city schools. Staff drive in, drive out, but they've got no connection with the communities that they work in. (Principal, Oak School)

A long process ensued, creating opportunities for staff and learners to go out into the community and for the community to come in. Ash School, too, emphasised the degree to which it was active in feeder schools and working with families. Celebration days involved a wide range of cultures, contributing both food and activities. Both Ash School and Oak School were oversubscribed and, as the head of department pointed out, this makes it easier to insist on the ethos. However, all of the schools encountered both support from families and occasional objections. The common leadership factors were absolute certainty and commitment by the leader to an ethos of inclusion that was made explicit, making schools safe and respectful places for all, and mutual learning by staff and the community. All were playing a long game in which shifting the community's attitudes to becoming inclusive in relation to

characteristics that often meet with discrimination, including faith, was to be steadily achieved:

> We'd have been afraid to challenge it in our communities, whereas now, because of the culture the school has created, the parents are actually getting that knowledge from the students to actually remove prejudice and, to me, that's really, really powerful. (Principal, Oak School)

Learners acquire the skills of critical thinking and reference to fact, rather than prejudice, to enable them to go out into the community and confidently challenge prejudice, wherever they experience it, including in their own families. There is never, of course, total success, but if children and young people have the skills, in the words of a learner at Birch School 'to maybe challenge but not directly oppose', there is hope of continued progress towards inclusion. This learner was quite clear that one cannot agree with all beliefs but, 'instead of focusing on what divides us, because we believe in something different, we put that aside'. Her words are evidence of a tough stance, not an anodyne acceptance of all but the ability to live with people who think differently and to engage with them in a challenging yet ultimately inclusive way. Her position, 'to challenge but not oppose', sums up her adoption of a view of appropriate and inclusive attitudes in the twenty-first century.

Challenges and tensions

Two kinds of tension were apparent. First, there were specific tensions between equality laws that insist on equal rights, irrespective of faith, sexuality, gender, disability and the position of some of particular faiths, for example in relation to sexuality or the role of women. Second, there were broader tensions that, although they might appear to be about differences in faith, at a more fundamental level were about culture. The impetus to protect what one knows and values in one's own culture can lead to a wish to isolate family and community from others who are different. It can also lead to a wish to remove from wider society all those elements that appear to be alien. School leaders grapple with both of these kinds of tension. In theory, there is no issue with equality law, in that it is the law and so must be respected by all in schools. In practice, there are challenges in translating the theory into everyday interaction. The tensions in relation to wishes to retain a culture are perhaps more difficult, in that culture is notoriously difficult to shift by any deliberate means. School leaders are not helped by elements of the media that regularly fan the flames of controversy, transforming genuine concerns about schools' contribution to building an inclusive and fair society into a way to stoke hostility. Leaders in our sample of schools provided examples of how they approached engaging with both of these kinds of tension.

Recently, in 2018, the intervention of the head of Ofsted to support a principal who, against the wishes of the community, had banned under-eight-year-old girls from wearing the *hijab* sparked a flurry of media interchanges both for and against her argument.[67] What may have been an issue that was primarily about the school's communication and consultation with parents became a weapon in a battle for cultural dominance, where one part of the community views wearing the *hijab* negatively and the other positively. The principal of Willow School had experienced this issue, yet saw its resolution as one of trustful relations with parents:

> We've had discussions on headscarves, so we have a couple of girls lower down the school who come to school in headscarves but they take them off, and they don't have them on in school. The parents understand, you know, the governors' policy on it and part of it is we are just really small. The boys get really boisterous and they are not bothered that you have got your headscarf on, they'll pull you in the same way. Some have pins that tie it, so the parents understand that... it was discussed widely with parents and that is an agreed.

LGBTQ issues are also contentious for some parents and for some faith schools whose religion does

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67   Adams, R. (2018).

not support same-sex relationships. Negative attitudes towards LGBTQ learners and their families were certainly present in the schools' communities. Pupils in some schools held strong views and staff, too, could hold beliefs that were not inclusive. The leaders in this sample approached the issue in various ways. Some believed that negative views were so entrenched that it was a long-term process of lessening homophobic attitudes and behaviour:

> It was something (homophobic language) that they did use a lot, and I'm not going to try to pretend that they don't use it anymore, but I think they are now more aware of what it is that they're saying and therefore it will start to lessen over time. (Head of Religious Education, Birch School)

Evidence that a more accepting and respectful attitude was becoming prevalent came from a learner at Birch School:

> Pupils and staff have zero tolerance of disrespect towards another pupil, whether it is disrespectful pupil–teacher, teacher–pupil. It doesn't matter. If it happens, it doesn't matter who is saying what, I feel that many people would stand up for the person whose rights are not being met. Everyone has a set of morals, and we all feel a sense of duty towards the pupil if there is a pupil that is being targeted or something that has been said that they may feel uncomfortable with. I feel we all have a sense of responsibility to make sure that ends and does not continue. (Learner, Birch School)

Other leaders insisted on a zero-tolerance approach. Oak School, in the centre of a Muslim community with conservative beliefs, has become a Stonewall champion (Stonewall campaigns for the equality of LGBTQ people across Britain). The principal met puzzlement about how he achieved this when other schools experienced media storms in attempting to lessen homophobia: 'Other schools in this city have faced many challenges and have been in the press for trying to do anything around LGBT issues. What I have said, it's always about having the approach of not being afraid to challenge any subjects.'

The executive principal of Chestnut School accepted that there may be staff with negative views yet insisted that they 'go into a neutral space', reflecting their leadership as a teacher rather than their individual beliefs. In her experience, single parents met with more disapproval than same-sex families. The leadership approach was to embed exploration and understanding for both same-sex and single-parent families throughout the curriculum.

Tensions between faiths were also apparent at times. In Ash School, because there were no Jewish learners, 'we spend quite a lot of time talking about the relationships between Muslims and Jews and Christians and Jews… and we will take things straight on if it seems that there is something that is bubbling under with the pupils' (Curriculum Access Team Leader, Ash School).

Common principles of leadership or inclusion emerged from the way that the school leaders dealt with potentially controversial and divisive issues. There was no avoidance of discussion. On the contrary, difficult issues were tackled head-on. Reaching a position on contentious issues was part of a larger project to ensure that learners considered both similarities and differences within the school community through developing critical skills that were embedded throughout the curriculum. Finally, ongoing discussions with the community were vital, but were always conducted within the context of insisting that the school must remain equally welcoming and appropriate for all children.

Leadership for Inclusion in Schools in the Republic of Ireland

The schools

In Ireland, the school system is very small and 'culturally connected'. As a result, the possibility that the sample, four primary and two second-level schools, was identifiable was a significant factor in conducting the research. In a similar way to the English and Welsh context, the issues are sensitive. To protect anonymity, very limited information is provided about each school so that information cannot be pieced together to identify individual schools or contributors. Table 9 below provides each school's pseudonym, level of subscription, faith status and a broad indication of its intake in terms of faith.

Table 9: Profile of learners by faith, Republic of Ireland

Pseudonym	Faith status	Intake by faith
Laurel Grove	Catholic primary/oversubscribed	Catholic
Virginia Heights	Catholic primary/oversubscribed	Mainly Catholic
Canal View	Catholic primary/ undersubscribed	Mixed
Crescent Educate Together	Educate Together primary/new school – developing	Mixed
Beechwood High	Catholic second-level/ oversubscribed	Mainly Catholic
Elmwood Community	Multidenominational second-level/new school – developing	Mixed

The selection reflects Ireland's predominantly Catholic schools, as well as the minority of different types.

Leadership philosophy

The mission

Even within this small sample, there were very clear differences between leaders in how they responded to the core mission of the school and how the response determined action. The principal of each of the four Catholic schools interpreted their mission, as a leader of a Catholic school, in distinctive ways. In part, the level of school subscription explained this, but the differences also reflected the historical trajectory of the school and the current school community's preferences. Five different responses to how the religious mission/ ethos impact leadership are evident in the data:

1. Laissez faire – a light touch approach to the issue of faith, supported by the local patron and responsive to the diversity in the school community:

> I think the whole issue of inclusion is very, very simple and people like to over- complicate things. It's very simple. No matter who comes to the door, who comes in that gate… if you treat them as a human being and speak to them at a human level, they respect that and you'll get it back. (Principal, Canal View)

> It's songs and the stories and it's child friendly… and you're teaching morals and you're teaching Christian values, simple as. (Principal, Canal View)

2. Traditional – a long tradition as a Catholic school, with very strong signifiers of this ethos evident in its public profile. This approach was supported by the visible presence of the local priest and the rituals and celebrations of the school. It also strongly reflects the number of people living in the community who expressly identify as Catholics:

> Our profile here would be absolutely predominantly Catholic. We probably in the school have xxx students. There is one child in the school that I have a letter for, one child out of [>400], not to participate in religion. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

> There is certainly an appetite in this area for a Catholic school, definitely with very strong young parents... there is a very strong parish community of young families and they have a family Mass and they have this thing of a social after the Mass. So, we have quite strong links between the parish and the school. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

3. Responsive – while the Catholic ethos is strong, the values of the patron saint are the expressed driver of the mission of the school. The mission focuses on the centrality of the child and therefore the leader's position is to respond to the needs of every child, irrespective of faith:

> Yes, your child does not have to do any of it, if they like the little bits, the singing bits, they are welcome to join in but there is no pressure on them, we'll have something else for them to do. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

> We just don't want to leave anybody out and we love all the children and we see all their needs and if you're meeting the needs of individual children you're going to recognise all. I suppose it's all about children. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

4. Circumscribed – having experienced challenges to the Catholic ethos from a minority of the community, the leader's response is bounded by a clear sense of the limits of flexibility that would be offered to accommodate issues derived from other religious beliefs:

> It makes it easier in our situation where there isn't anything (places to pray) because then everyone sees that they're all exactly the same. But we have had to be fairly specific in terms of telling Muslim parents, for example, that there wouldn't be any praying at prayer times. (Principal, Beechwood High)

> If it is against the way we think, well then we'll stick to our guns and we say well, this is how we operate, we're not going to change. The way I look at it they know in advance how we operate, if they don't like it or if they feel that they wouldn't feel comfortable with it. And I say it to them, if you don't feel comfortable with this, this is not the school for you. (Principal, Beechwood High)

5. Deliberative and responsive – two schools in the sample, not under Catholic patronage, shared a different approach to shaping the school mission. The purpose of the Educate Together school is to cater for all faiths and none, and this open and deliberative approach to exploring the diversity of the world from a religious/belief point of view is a key imperative for this category of schools. This is very much in evidence:

> for example we made the conscious decision we wouldn't get a Christmas tree... so we have this winter-themed song, it might even reference Christmas, maybe... so, it's not just 40 minutes about it's Christmas time. (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

As a sector, ETB schools are mixed. Some were established when a religious secondary school amalgamated with a vocational school. Historically, most larger towns would have had a religious-run secondary school (usually Catholic) and a vocational school. Most have now amalgamated. If a religious school was a constituent of the newer ETB school, then it has a religious ethos. If not, many of these schools are now termed 'non-designated', and debate continues on the appropriate ethos. In the ETB

school in this sample, the leader was responding to the profile of the catchment area – accepting and including all:

> so, basically, we want all of the kids in this area to come here, so it doesn't matter what colour your skin is or religion you are or what religion you're not, it doesn't matter. Once you're from this area, that would give you first call here. (Principal, Elmwood Community)

Degrees of alignment between leader and mission

One of the most notable features of this data set is the various degrees of alignment between what the leaders themselves believed – that is, their personal philosophy in relation to inclusion and diversity in education – and the ethos of the school that they lead. While the alignment varied in both degree and the overall strength of commitment, there is a notable convergence between the leader's commitment to a particular ethos and the culture of the school.

Leaders' responses indicate three degrees of alignment. This is not a continuum but rather a range of outcomes in which each leader has resolved the demands of the beliefs/preferences of the community and their own beliefs.

1. *Strong alignment*

> I don't have any conflict within myself as to where a Catholic ethos benefits children, and I have no problem teaching in a Catholic-ethos school. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

> I was taking on a school with a strong Catholic ethos built over the years, and was I ready for that and was I committed to that? Me myself, I am very spiritual and I am Catholic and it served me well. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

> It's within a context and it's within the Catholic context. So there are certain things that we wouldn't be allowing because it would water down the ethos, in my view. (Principal, Beechwood High)

2. *Open alignment*

This degree of alignment between the context of the school and the leader's own personal philosophy was expressed in a way that indicated a lack of emphasis on the religious denomination of the school. The leader adopted a more relaxed and open response that focused on being inclusive of the whole-school community, irrespective of who they were or where they came from. The learner profile in both the schools with this kind of leader alignment was diverse and disadvantaged. In many ways, the response was pragmatic. If the leaders had taken a hard line on religious ethos, they would have needed to have frequent, difficult conversations: a life under siege. In one case, the answer to the question 'Does the religious ethos impact?' was:

> Very little, very little. I suppose I'm fortunate in the sense that the parish priest, Father XX, is on the board, but he doesn't take a hard stance on it, ever, and he always says that he understands the diversity that's here and the ethos that's here. And he always says, 'Listen, there is nothing more Christian than welcoming in all comers, no matter where they come from'. (Principal, Canal View)

In these two schools, the leaders have responded to the challenge of religious diversity from an educational point of view. They have explicitly embraced the idea of diversity and built it into the educational experiences of their learners:

> There's two countries in particular that I would say have problems with religion, France and America. Both of them have a very, in my opinion, a very naïve understanding of what the separation of Church and State is and, because they won't allow religion to be taught in their schools, bar their independent religious schools, they have created an environment that nobody knows anything, so that breeds ignorance. (Principal, Elmwood Community)

This leader explicitly articulates the importance of engaging with a range of faiths to prepare citizens.

3. *Negotiated alignment*

Working with diversity has been a strong driver in the Educate Together sector. Unsurprisingly, the alignment here between the leader's perspective on ethos and the workings of the school is more negotiated. The leader quoted below has a very strong democratic perspective, where differences are explicated and discussed as a key element of the ongoing processes in the school, and between the school and its community:

> I suppose it's about not being afraid when there is a little wobble where someone is unhappy. And to not be responding in that quick, 'Well this is the way in our school and if you don't like it, that's that'. So it has to be an openness, whether that's coming from a staff member or that's coming from a parent or even a child… you have to be able to reconsider why you've made a decision. (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

Of particular interest is the response to the varying values, ethos and perspectives on diversity within the school community. While the rationale for choosing the school is often because it is diverse, the issue arises as to what type of diversity it is that the school stands for. This was highlighted a number of times by the principal. In some cases, the response to diversity was judged by community members to be too mainstream, and in other cases it was viewed as not radical enough:

> When we were first trialling the anti-bullying policy and anti-homophobic bullying and one of the parents was Muslim, they said, 'Why is that mentioned so many times and why is that the main one?' – shocking. I tried to explain, well, it's kind of a new discussion in Ireland and it needs to be promoted for that reason. She was quite uncomfortable with that, I found out afterwards. But that didn't change things. We still did it in the school, and then you hear some things, some parents complain to me that I'm not doing enough about that in school. (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

Though these examples have shown that context has an impact, it is the leader's determination of what is an appropriate ethos that is the deciding factor in how the school responds to diversity and diversity of faith.

Leadership in action

The data indicate very strong links between the leader's philosophy and the school ethos, discourse and practice. Three key themes allow exploration of how this translates into action: Inclusion and exclusion: managing intake and enrolment; Faith in children's lives in school; and religious education.

Inclusion and exclusion: managing intake and enrolment

Enrolment policies

One of the most contested tasks for many school leaders, particularly in primary schools, relates to the enrolment of learners. This issue has been the focus of controversy for the past decade. In many cases, particularly where schools are undersubscribed, the process is straightforward. Where there

is oversubscription, a leader can spend a significant amount of time dealing with the process and the outcome of allocating school places. Many oversubscribed schools are Catholic, therefore this section will focus on enrolment into Catholic primary schools before exploring the more general issue of managing the intake in the other schools in the sample.

The Education Act of 1998 created a legal framework to regularise the enrolment of learners. All schools were expected to have an enrolment policy that sets out clearly the admission criteria. After the Act, a large number of appeals were taken, accusing schools of discrimination in the intention and use of the enrolment policy. Over the years, a considerable amount of case law and a largesse of expertise have developed around these policies, with the result that they have become less open to challenge. The current advice to the managers of Catholic primary schools is outlined below. All such schools would have an enrolment policy that gives preference to Catholics in filling school places.

Suggested criteria (adapt to suit circumstances):

1. Children from linked/partner school: This covers schools whose intake comes primarily from an infant, junior or other school.

2. Sisters and/or brothers of pupils currently in the school. This will depend on the type of school e.g. single-sex schools.

3. Catholic children living within the parish boundary.

4. Catholic children living outside the parish boundary who do not have a Catholic school within their own parish boundary.

5. Other children living within the parish boundary.

6. Other children living outside the parish boundary.

7. Children of current staff, including ancillary staff.

    In the event that there are more applicants within any category than there are available places, priority will be given to children within the particular category in order of age, starting with the oldest.[68]

The denominational nature of the school becomes most problematic in the case of oversubscription, where places are typically filled at Category 3. Schools with this profile are few, but significant insofar as they highlight, albeit at an extreme level, the ultimately exclusionary outcome of the school system. The three Catholic school policies in this study are broadly in line with these criteria. Two of the schools are oversubscribed; both have moved Category 7 up the list, and enrolments include only siblings, children of teachers and Catholic children in the parish.

A review of the statement of ethos in each of the enrolment policies reveals significant differences between the schools in terms of their alignment to creating an inclusive school. The following selections from the policies are edited tightly, and the pseudonyms of the schools are not used here because they would render the schools potentially identifiable. The main point is that each school has a Catholic ethos yet does not translate that ethos into action in the same way. Some are more inclusive of difference than others. One school chooses to focus strongly on the Catholic mission, including a strong statement aligned with some of the more recent and more orthodox views framing Catholic education:[69]

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68   Source: CPSMA advice to schools on enrolment policy.
69   Congregation for Catholic Education. (1998); Congregation for Catholic Education (2007).

- To promote the full and harmonious cognitive, intellectual, physical, social, creative, cultural, moral and spiritual development of all pupils.
- The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Another Catholic school takes an approach that is different in respect of its mission:

- The Board of Management reserves its right to promote and uphold a Catholic ethos under Section 7(3) of the Equal Status Act, while also recognising, respecting and welcoming the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions and ways of life in our society.

Finally, one of the schools states the diversity and inclusion message very overtly and explicitly:

- It presents a unique clear vision of God's people and life centred on Gospel values and reflective teaching of the Catholic Church.
- It will continue in its tradition of enrolment, in that no child is refused admission for reasons of ethnicity, special education needs, disability, language/accent, gender, traveller status, refugee status, religious/political beliefs and values or family or social status.

Generally, the exercise of school choice at second level follows a different pattern. Many families 'shop around' in terms of the school's reputation, focus, academic outcomes or more holistic view. Enrolment policies here, too, can be controversial, but this was not the case for the schools represented in this sample. One of the schools is a developing school and the other is oversubscribed. The commitment to Catholic education is evident in one of the schools, as would be expected:

Parents of those applying to the school must be willing to support the Catholic ethos of the school.
- All activities and policies of the school are assessed against the stated ethos of the school, which aims to promote Gospel values in the life of the student.

The other multidenominational school makes very few claims to a faith ethos, other than to state that it is a 'a co-educational, multidenominational school that fosters an environment of respect, integrity and positive learning in a safe and enjoyable setting'.

Under- and oversubscription: drivers of inclusion

Despite the fact that four of the six schools in this sample are under Catholic patronage, it is clear that this does not lead to a uniform profile of learners in the school. The four Catholic schools share, as a baseline, a commitment to Catholic education and to the values of Catholic education, albeit to varying degrees. The data suggest that the profile of the learners in a school to a large degree influences the ethos that is fostered, and this is linked to the level of subscription to the school by Catholics.

Enrolment policies are written in order to ensure that, if there are enough Catholics in a community, then all schools would be filled in line with exclusively Catholic criteria. Where there is undersubscription, schools take all comers and then may respond to the diversity. This pattern of school enrolment places some families in an advantageous situation if their local school is undersubscribed, as they can get their child into the school of their choice. In the case of oversubscription relating to the 'Catholics first' rule, a number of practices have been identified in order to ensure that a child is eligible for the 'Catholic list', such as baptising children in order to get them into the local Catholic school.[70]

The data allow exploration of the impact of a more homogenous Catholic school community on how diversity is understood in the two oversubscribed schools:

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70   For references to the practice of baptising children so they can be eligible for a place in a local school, see for example http://www.thejournal.ie/children-baptism-school-education-atheist-2751933-May2016/

> We don't have diversity. Our profile here would be absolutely predominantly Catholic. We probably in the school have xxx (non-Catholic) students. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

In this school, the dominant force and driving message are founded on its Catholic identity. In many ways, it is blind to any diversity within the school because, to include almost all of the children, it is not necessary to extend beyond Catholic mores and norms.

In the second oversubscribed school, there are a small number of other religions represented among the learner population. Typically, this results from older children securing a place and then the sibling rule allowing other children in the family to enrol. Practice in this school is led by what the child wants, and the school responds positively to this. This approach is perceived to work most of the time. However, it is clear from the comment below that there are times when, for some parents, the school does not go far enough towards including a minority of the children. There is a sense that the demands are viewed as too difficult for the school to accommodate and that leaders believe that learners would be better facilitated in another type of school. In some sense, this may be correct and, where there are alternatives, then perhaps this is a pragmatic answer. The problem arises where there are no alternatives and a negative orientation to diversity prevails:

> At times there are some children that we really feel would be better off in a multiD school. They're here because it's their nearest school, but in actual fact, the better match for them would be a multiD school. So they might, of all of them, have the hardest time with those events [religious-type celebrations]. But they're not a majority now, but there'll be a few in every class. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

The leader recognises, but does not try to change, 'the hardest time' experienced by this minority.

Leadership practice: Philosophy in action

The data reveal clear links between the expressed vision of the school leader, the philosophy and ethos of the school, and the practice described by the leaders. For the purposes of this report, the most salient points from the very rich and detailed data set will be discussed. There are many more examples of practice that will be used to develop arguments in future publications.

Child centred

Many of the schools state that child centredness is a key driver of inclusive practice. This child centredness presents in different ways. The philosophy of the school, in the case of Canal View, has led to a focus on the enrichment of the curriculum. The open-door policy towards learners extends to a policy that facilitates activities to enrich learners' experiences of school. The curriculum is very diverse: the school invites in the community to explore and support the teaching of the visual arts, music, philosophy and many more learning areas. The diversity of experience and the diversity of learners are supportive of each other:

> Fantastic for the kids and the diversity. Kids don't... don't care, that's the funny thing about it, four- or five-year-olds... couldn't care less where you come from, what colour you are, what way you speak. 'Will you play with me or will you not?' Very rarely will you come across kind of explicit racism, but they're literally repeating what they're hearing at home. (Principal, Canal View)

The principal details how the school builds on this inherent inclusiveness among children by offering extensive opportunities in which children of different ethnicities, language and faith come together to create and to work as a team.

In Virginia Heights, inclusive practice follows the expressed needs of the child in a different way. The school will accommodate all children, and provision is made for children who do not want to

participate in activities related to religion. The leader describes a responsive culture to meet the current demand. The prevailing normative thrust of the Catholic school still functions and, as the school is well regarded in terms of outcomes, this system is perceived to be working:

> Now we do have one boy in sixth class who's saying his prayers. He wants to kneel down, he wants to do his prayer and he just is happy to do it wherever he is. So, he might move to the back of the classroom, he might move out onto the corridor... you walk up the corridor and see this wee boy praying on the thing and we just pass and just let him at it, and it's part of what he wants to do and there's no problem. If we had four or five doing it, we would probably say, at that stage, gosh, I wonder could we find a better way for this to happen. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

In the Educate Together school, exploring diversity itself is a key driver of school experience, creating a type of child-centred deliberative democracy. Many issues are discussed in an effort to enhance the development of empathy and to foster a more inclusive model of mutual understanding:

> We have the Quran and we have the Bible, etc., in the classrooms for support for teaching. So there would never be any discussions left outside of it. Here it's a part of these children's lives. Why shouldn't they have a chance to talk about it? (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

In one of the secondary schools, the leader's sense of mission in relation to diversity creates a context in which all children can feel valued and where expectations and aspirations are directly related to what the school wants to help the learners to achieve:

> In September, I honestly don't see people of different nationalities. People often say to me, 'Is the [school community] a disadvantaged area' and I say, 'Well, look, I prefer to use the term "the yet to be advantaged"'. So when they come in... the only reason why they're disadvantaged is because they're 12, and what I notice is that when I see all those kids coming in their different colours, different whatever, I still see a 12-year-old vulnerable child who wants to be told that they're great, that someone loves them and that they have potential. So, our job is to fill their head with knowledge and confidence, and help them make decisions and then let them leave. After that, then the world is their oyster, and that's what we have to believe. (Principal, Elmwood Community)

The impact on practice is the pursuit of an equilibrium of a kind: a balance between the religious ethos of the school and the school population.

Working towards some type of agreeable outcome is a reality for all faith schools, and mediates the type of approach taken to diversity and inclusion. In some of the examples, leaders perceive that most of the school and the wider community seems to be satisfied most of the time. It is arguable that, while it can produce a working solution, it is not proactive as, because schools are education institutions, the transformative ambition should be explicated much more strongly. In this sample, we have evidence of very deliberate action taken to ensure the inclusion of all learners. The data also reveal that practice is exclusionary, at times. The incident described below is not surprising, given the well-rehearsed Catholic Church views on LGBTQ issues. The manner in which this bias is dealt with in schools is a real issue for school leaders. State laws require schools not to discriminate against any group on the basis of the nine grounds laid out in equality legislation. When it comes to LGBTQ learners and/or staff, the patron of Catholic schools is not in agreement with either the spirit or the letter of this legislation. The leader of Laurel Grove chose to respond to the issue of a poster in a classroom in line with the Catholic ethos of the school:

> The only thing that came up and I suppose I was a little bit uncomfortable with in a class and it was with a new teacher last year. He had the INTO picture of the family, you know that picture... they look like Lego people, so they are not male or female... I did say to him to take it down off the wall,

and I was trying to think why I said that. Now, I blamed it on the priest, but I kind of thought that if you buy into the Catholic school, I suppose I was a little bit uncomfortable because it was new to me and I didn't know what to do, and I was a little bit uncomfortable with him. He just said, fine, and took it down. I just wasn't comfortable with it, because of the ethos of the school. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

The question here is why the poster was not left on the wall. The action by the leader in removing it exemplifies the kind of solution to different perspectives that is evident in many schools. The signifier of a different perspective on LGBTQ issues is removed. The crucial question is for how long can or should the State continue to fund schools that do not recognise all learners equally?

Faith in children's lives at school

It is important to make a distinction between the faith dimension of children's lives at school and the role that faith plays outside school. In recent times there has been a very notable decline in attendance at Mass and general religious observance, such as the sacrament of penance, in Catholic parishes. The decline is nationwide, but most notable in urban areas[71] and in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, where the decline has been evident for many years.

The data in this study indicate that this contrasts sharply with children's experience of faith in school. The dominance of Catholic control of the education system in Ireland creates a culture where the norms of school and the milestones of schooling are very much marked by and aligned with the milestones of the Catholic Church. This is more prevalent in primary schools, where most of the milestones align with the primary-school cycle. Faith in children's lives in primary schools is framed, in particular, by three broad areas of practice: (i) the celebration of the sacraments (Communion and Confirmation); (ii) the celebration of Christian/Catholic events and feasts (Christmas, Easter, St Brigid's Day, St Patrick's Day, etc.); and (iii) the use of religious iconography in schools and, in particular, the recent insistence by Church dioceses that Catholic schools have a visible sacred space. The manner in which these elements combine to build a perceived sense/feel of a Catholic school contributes in no small way to the view that the religious instruction is only a small part of what defines a Catholic school. Many of the milestones combine with family and other secular celebrations in a way that adds to their overall significance in the children's and families' lives.

A case is in point is the timing of the school year, in which the school holidays align with Church events. The Christmas and Easter holidays and the celebration of Ireland's national day, on St Patrick's Day, all continue in the discourse and the rhythm of school. The alignment of major family celebrations with Communion and Confirmation is also a very well-developed feature of family life.[72] In the four primary schools in the sample, the sacrament of Communion and Confirmation and the celebration of Easter and, especially, Christmas feature strongly in the leaders' discourse in relation to religious diversity. In the case of the Catholic primary schools, where the majority faith is dominant, celebration of the sacraments is very strong. In two of the schools, sacramental preparation is carried out in the parish, but the school remains central to the event and its cultural significance.

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71   Barna Group (2017); https://faithsurvey.co.uk/irish-census.html
72   Kitching, K. & Shanneik, Y. (2015).

Celebrations

Celebrations are a considerable element of school activity in some schools:

> Christmas here would be very busy, not like this. The Parish Carol Service, our two carol services with the school and then, on the day of the holidays, we have carols in the yard where we invite all the parents or whatever to come and sing carols and raise money for [charity], so those things are very popular. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

> ...things like the graduation, there was one dissenting voice last year. There used to be a prayer service for graduation and, to me, that's much more hard work. I have a Mass because, to me, a Mass is easy because the priest does it and we just do a few psalms. If I had to start thinking of prayers and whatever like that... and the Confirmation is the same. Really well done. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

Some of the schools had already changed practice, or were aware of the need to review practice, regarding an explicit link between religion and school celebrations:

> We tone it down. We don't realistically do the nativity play kind of thing, for obvious reasons, because otherwise you're excluding and, at the end of the day, what you want to do, you want to showcase a bit of the work that the kids have been doing. (Principal, Canal View)

> If it's a Mass, and there traditionally always has been a Mass, how do we navigate through changing times? Would it be totally inclusive to have a Mass? It's worked, here it used to be just a Mass but now it's broadening out a little bit and everybody comes to the graduation night, but there is a Mass in the hall here. Will that change, should that change? Without affecting the ethos, is there a better way to do that final night? (Principal, Virginia Heights)

In the case of the Educate Together school, religious celebrations are viewed as teaching moments, and practice reflects the religious beliefs of the different pupils in the school while at the same time balancing this with broader societal norms and practices that, at times, favour one religious tradition:

> Christmas, we are trying to balance... I feel that we should mark it as much as we are marking any other major festival.... It's enormous and it creeps in. We can't keep it away and, obviously, children should talk about it. But... for example, we made the conscious decision we wouldn't get a Christmas tree, we wouldn't decorate every classroom or everything Christmas, because we're not going to do that for Eid, we're not going to do that for Diwali, but we will do things for them. We will talk about it and because it's important for the children. (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

Within the Educate Together sector, the discourse related to school holidays and their alignment with Christian terminology has been changed, indicating a sensitivity to how language and nomenclature serve to shape and define norms and the power that is invested in language to delimit practice:

> The last day before the winter break, which is how we refer to it, we have an end-of-term assembly and, yes, there has been a kind of balance to find the right way of doing this and so we have this winter-themed song. It might even reference Christmas. (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

Sacraments

The role that the celebration of the sacraments plays in each of the primary schools was different, and was linked to the religious profile of the children in each school. How a school acts depends on the number of children participating in preparation for the sacraments. In this study, there were two schools in which either all the children received the sacraments or only a small minority did not participate. There was also one Catholic school where only a small minority of children were preparing for the sacraments,

plus the Educate Together school in which, although it was not connected in any way to the school, such preparation was part of a small number of children's lives, and was recognised as such by the school:

> Our profile here would be absolutely predominantly Catholic. There is one child in the sixth class who joined us last year and she had elected herself, and the parents are supporting it, not to study religion, but she participates in the general things in the school like the Carol Service and whatever. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

> It is mostly Catholic and we could have, let's say, we could have a whole class in a year receiving their Confirmation, receiving their Communion, but then on another year, like next year's Confirmation, there would be 19 not receiving. So that's a big one, whereas this year we have, I think there's two not receiving, OK, and they would be Muslim and other faiths. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

> A bunch of girls decided the Monday after the Holy Communion to wear their dresses to school. So, for two years, there was this long discussion about 'Well what are we going to do around this?' and then, finally, it was agreed that there was a policy and, yes, they can wear their dresses to school but we'll discuss it as a teachable moment. (Principal, Crescent Educate Together)

Prayers and sacred spaces

Each of the three Catholic primary schools and the Catholic-ethos secondary schools had several items of religious iconography on display. In the primary schools there was also a well-decorated sacred space. Not all respondents specifically referred to these items during the interview, yet they were an overt part of 'doing' religion in schools:

> the sacred space was definitely a big deal in the classrooms now, so that obviously came from the previous school leader but it has continued, and I certainly facilitated it, and I wouldn't want to change it, but it's amazing how it is ingrained in the teachers…

> There used to be lots of prayer services here. I don't do that, but we have rosary over the intercom just on Friday that the student council do, and sometimes I do it. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

Many of these issues do not occur in secondary schools. Sacramental preparation does not occur and, while the graduation celebrations sometimes involve a church, multi-denominational schools' reference to religion and religious practice takes place predominately during religious instruction, during which the school places much emphasis on teaching about religions.

Religious education

There are both sectoral and denominational differences with respect to the teaching of religion in Irish schools. In the case of primary schools, the development and implementation of the curriculum in religious education remain the responsibility of the relevant patron bodies. Each of the different denominations has its own religious education programme: 'Grow in Love' in the Catholic primary schools; 'Follow Me' in the Church of Ireland schools; and, in the case of Educate Together, ethical education replaces religious instruction and the curriculum used is 'Learning Together'. There is a thirty-minute slot per day allocated to religious instruction in all primary schools, irrespective of school patronage. The extent to which religious education includes learning about different religions varies between each type of primary school, with the Educate Together sector giving this area greater and more deliberate consideration. The tradition in primary schools has resulted in an exclusive focus on the teachings of the Catholic Church. The most recent curriculum, 'Grow in Love', is for the first time introducing other religions. The time spent on sacramental preparation in most denominational schools

is in addition to the allocated religious instruction time. Time spent on this can be considerable and, in some cases, this work has now been devolved to local parishes that take responsibility for sacramental preparation, with the school playing a lesser, yet key, supportive role.

In second-level schools, religious education is part of the curriculum. Its purpose is to promote tolerance and mutual understanding, developing the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other or of no religious tradition. Schools can opt to include religious education as one of the subjects assessed in the State examination process. In the case of second-level schools under denominational control, learners also take specific classes in the denomination of the school.

Two main issues with respect to the teaching of religion emerge from this study. The first relates to the opportunity provided by the second-level religious education curriculum to foster tolerance and to contribute to a more inclusive society:

> A lot of ETB schools were kind of just doing one period a week, sort of thing, and just to tick the box. I didn't want to do that, because I was familiar from teaching the NCCA syllabus, that's a bloody good course, and I thought to myself, well, do we want to be like Paris? Do we want to have the suburban Algerians of Paris learning the religion from the local butcher and whatever, or are we an educational institution that will teach them history, religion and so on, so that they will all get to know each other and whatever. Everyone will do the exam syllabus and by the end of it I will know that at least they know what Muslim is, what oppression is, from an intellectual prospect, as opposed to what their granny tells them. (Principal, Elmwood Community)

In the case of the primary schools, the manner in which the religious ethos permeates so much of school life, particularly those schools with a high proportion of Catholic learners, creates very specific challenges to achieving a more religiously inclusive school. In such cases, the notion that the ethos 'is in the walls' will require schools to rethink a great deal of practice in order to ensure that they meet the demands of any future, more diverse, demographic. For some, there was a strong view that removing religious instruction from the primary school timetable would not impact on the culture of the school:

> If we decided tomorrow that there was no formal religious teaching, I don't think it would make any difference here, absolutely honestly I don't. (Principal, Laurel Grove)

> I don't think it... would make that much difference because there is something deeper underlying that philosophy now. I think there's something deeper there in a school like this. The caring is there, the love of children, so if they didn't do religion teaching in the classroom we'd still be the same kind of school. (Principal, Virginia Heights)

The spectrum of opinion on appropriate religious education inevitably reflects different traditions and beliefs. The test of appropriateness facing each leader is to judge how far religious education meets Irish society's aim to nurture knowledge and attitudes that respect and value citizens of both diverse religious beliefs and none.

Challenges and tensions

The data and the overall context of religious diversity in Irish schools raise many challenges associated with current practice and the extent to which the existing denominational model of schooling is able to accommodate the changed and changing demographic. The challenges can be summarised as relating to:

i.   the overall structure of the system and the failure of the State to provide choice for children and families who seek an alternative to the dominant, sometimes only, school provision on offer.

ii. the powerful conservatising force that is derived from the intersection between well-established secular and religious norms and practices, social class and religion affiliation.

iii. the degree of variation in the response to religious diversity and the consequences for children who find themselves in a school that does not meet the faith needs of all equally and fails to equip learners with an adequate basis for citizenship in a diverse society.

The data indicate the importance of leaders' response and the potentialities for creating an inclusive school that meets the needs of learners of both differing faiths and none. While impacted by the context, it is not inescapably shaped by it.

Inclusive Leadership in a Multifaith Society

The starting point

The history and the current contexts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are very different. National policies concerning the school system, and specifically faith within schooling, reflect distinct challenges and approaches. However, there is a commonality that is shared by all organisations whose aim is to educate. First, schools are established to serve wider society yet must also serve the individual needs of children and young people. In both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, all children have the right to be included, both as an educational philosophy and as a human right enshrined in United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.[73] None should feel in any way less welcome, less supported or less valued than others in their school. Second, if schools are to serve society effectively, they also need to equip future citizens with knowledge, attitudes and skills that will enable them to thrive in a global world order and a multifaith society that is very different from that of the twentieth century, in which many principals and teachers received their education. Though the United Kingdom and Ireland present very different contexts, the global future that awaits their children is similar. These are the starting points for considering what lessons might be drawn from the data.

This concluding section considers the influence on leadership of context in terms of the mix of faiths in a school and the intersection with socioeconomic class. It raises the issue of how both relate to subscription criteria. It briefly reviews some of the strategies used by leaders in relation to faith. Finally, it goes on to explore leaders' and learners' perspectives on inclusion in a multifaith society.

The impact of context

The faith profile of a school

The data suggest a relationship between the profile of faiths in a school community and the leadership's choices. The relationship is variable rather than consistent. Milliken and Martins argue that the strength of response to minorities is in inverse proportion to the number of those present who are of a minority group, and in proportion to the degree of otherness that they appear to present.[74] The fewer there are of a minority and the more different they appear, the stronger the reaction. Despite theories using such apparent mathematical language, there is no simple formula that captures this complex human interaction. It is evident from our sample of schools that the proportion of learners who are of a minority faith nationally and/or in the school has an influence on the approach taken by the leader. In the United Kingdom, when learners are of a minority faith nationally but form the majority in a school, the context supports a positive and inclusive leadership response. The leaders interviewed embraced this profile willingly, adopting a philosophy that both cherishes faith of all kinds and prepares learners to live confidently in the multifaith societies of the twenty-first-century. In Ireland, where the proportion of learners of a minority faith is very small, both nationally and in some schools, in some but not all cases it appeared to trigger more defensive strategies to protect the national faith, in line with Milliken and Martins' theory. In these cases, 'minoritiness' was used to justify a lesser accommodation of a minority's needs either to practise a faith and or to be offered meaningful education about that faith and those of others, for example through not allowing prayer and offering opt-out of religious education rather than an inclusive curriculum.

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73   United Nations, https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_summary-1.pdf

74   Milliken, F.J. & Martins, L.L. (1996).

Not fully accommodating the faith and religious education of minority learners is justified by some leaders both on ethos grounds – that the school is predominantly Catholic and must remain so – and on pragmatic grounds – that there are too few to make it viable. However, there is no consistent relationship between leadership approach and the proportion of minority faith learners. The leaders of some case-example schools in Ireland adopt a wholly inclusive approach to faith minorities in the school. They, too, use a religious justification, that the Christian way is to welcome all, and an educational philosophy that embraces the need to educate all learners equally.

The issue of subscription, therefore, is highly relevant, as it can shape the proportion of learners in a school who are of a minority faith and of a faith different from that to which the school is affiliated. The denominational nature of the system in Ireland has led to a situation in which the subscription criteria have historically favoured Catholic families and learners, thereby perpetuating a situation in which the degree of minoritiness can be used to justify lesser support or a less-inclusive response to learners. In the United Kingdom there are many schools with a similar learner profile in which there are no or very few learners of a minority faith. The data collected do not allow conclusions to be drawn about whether such a learner profile might be used by UK leaders as the reason why deep engagement with multiple faiths is unnecessary. However, there is research elsewhere to suggest a 'monoreligious and monocultural approach'[75] to be prevalent in European curricula. In neither Ireland nor the United Kingdom can sidestepping an engagement with the implications of a multifaith society, on the grounds of the minoritiness or absence of a range of faiths in a particular school, meet the educational objectives outlined at the start of this section.

Our data provide examples of schools in both the United Kingdom and in Ireland in which leaders have chosen, in a range of contexts with various profiles of learners' faiths/belief system, to ensure a rich and inclusive experience for all, without, they believe, in any way compromising the core faith of those schools that are affiliated to a specific religion. The principal of Oak School was asked if he believed what he had achieved in his very diverse school could be achieved in a school with little visible diversity. He was certain that it could. Equally, the principal of Canal View School in Ireland does not consider minoritiness to have any kind of relevance to his philosophy: 'That's kind of with us all the time, whether it's religion, whether it's special needs, whether it's change or whatever. You meet the child and you know you need to act.'

Faith and socioeconomic class

Our analysis hints at a relationship between faith, leadership choices and the socioeconomic profile of learners. In the United Kingdom, there has been long-standing debate about the relationship of socioeconomic class to faith schools.[76] Specifically, faith schools have been suggested by some studies to favour children of middle-class families.[77] In contradiction to this view, some argue that faith schools generally, as opposed to top selective schools, cater proportionately more for the socioeconomically disadvantaged. Historically, Catholic schools in particular have a mission to cater for the poor,[78] and it is argued that Catholic schools do so internationally, though this is contradicted by some evidence.[79] All the schools in our sample in the United Kingdom were from areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. This snapshot of faith and community schools provides no evidence of manipulation of criteria to achieve a particular profile of learners. Some schools are undersubscribed and, consequently, may have little opportunity to do so, but those for which this was not the case were equally committed to meeting

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75   Keast, J. (2007) p.11.
76   Allen, R. & West, A. (2011).
77   Cullinane, C., Hillary, J., Andrade, J. & McNamara, S. (2017) p.3.
78   Bradley-Levine, J. & Carr, K.A. (2015).
79   Tsimpo, C. & Wodon, Q. (2014).

the needs of all families and children in their local socioeconomically disadvantaged community. The establishment of values and mission by leaders was the crucial factor.

In the Republic of Ireland, Byrne and Devine found a connection between types of Catholic school and the socioeconomic status of learners: 'students from minority ethnic and working-class backgrounds were significantly more likely to be in Faith–Transition study schools';[80] that is, those with a less strongly Catholic identity. Schools with the strongest Catholic identity 'are more clearly linked with majority ethnic students (traditional Irish) from middle-/upper-middle-class backgrounds. Fee-paying schools with all the attendant advantages in terms of cultural, social and economic capital are overrepresented among Faith-Visible schools'.[81] They suggest that a strongly Catholic identity is being used as a marketing brand, in some cases. Our data suggest that a strongly Catholic identity is perceived as attractive by some middle-class parents. Our data cannot offer definitive conclusions, yet are indicative of the need for further research on the degree to which faith identity relates to school choice and socioeconomic class where schools are undersubscribed and can influence their intake. The data also strongly suggest that the primary factor in reaching out to children from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities is leadership, whatever the nature of the community context or school type.

Leadership strategies

Values

In the majority of our sample there was a focus on common values that are not just a statement in the foyer or on the website but an essential element in planning throughout the curriculum. In most cases, security in one's own identity was fostered in parallel to security in a shared identity that was not based on nationalism or a single faith, but rather a shared set of human values. Sharing values is contentious to many, who fear that it may be instrumental in attempts to assimilate minorities surreptitiously or to assert a dominant culture, or both.[82] Concerns also relate to the theory of re-categorisation, the process of diverting attention from one's identity as part of a stigmatised group onto one's membership of a group of higher or less-problematic status.[83] In the United Kingdom, there has been an attempt at national level to make the group to which one re-categorises 'British'.[84] This has been contentious.[85] There is the difficulty of identifying what is uniquely British in such a diverse society, and anxiety that a hidden agenda gives dominance to a particular group.[86] Attempts to use a national identity as a means of re-categorising individuals from their own, often minority, identity to one deemed less problematic by some is evident elsewhere in the world. For example, Zine, exploring the reaction of peers and teachers to Muslim learners in Canadian schools, found that a common experience was re-categorisation with an explicit assimilationist intention: 'This is Canada! When in Rome you should do what the Romans do.'[87] In Ireland, the State has historically identified being Irish with Catholicism, embedding this position through the Catholic Church's control of the majority of schools. Though the principals may have reference to values related to a specific faith or patron saint in the case of faith schools, the values of the majority in our sample focus on those that foster inclusion rather than a national identity or a specific religion. The Head of Religious Education at Birch School expresses this position:

> We said they're not British values, they're not Christian values, they're just human values and I think if we come at it from that point of view.... We could easily have as our strapline, 'Treat other

80   Byrne, R. & Devine, D. (2017) p.14.
81   Byrne, R. & Devine, D. (2017) p.13.
82   Shain, F. (2013).
83   Gurin, P. & Nagda, B.R.A. (2006).
84   Department for Education (2014).
85   Elton-Chalcraft, S. et al. (2017); O'Donnell, A. (2016).
86   Struthers, A.E. (2017)
87   Zine, J. (2001) p.409).

people as you would like to be treated', which is a Christian value but it's there in every world faith and it's just a decent human value.

As a result, 'it's that articulation of values, that allowing it to be the lingua franca' (Principal, Birch School) that places values as centrally in curriculum planning as any focus on conventional subjects or accredited outcomes.

Segregation

A minority of schools in our sample in Ireland use this strategy, seeking to maintain the Catholic faith by not allowing Muslims the opportunity to practise their own faith in school. Those schools that offer learners a choice to opt out of religious education, because it is primarily Catholic, are also serving their learners differentially. Learners who have opted out because only one faith is the core of religious education are denied part of the curriculum that we have argued is essential in order to foster twenty-first-century skills. Leaders within our sample in both the United Kingdom and Ireland provide rich case examples of schools affiliated to one faith that nevertheless make great efforts to include all faiths, while not compromising the core values of the faith in which they are rooted.

In Ireland, moves to provide multidenominational schools with a mix of faiths and none, or schools that are secular, have been part of recent strategies to offer more inclusion to that part of the population that is not Catholic or does not want a Catholic education. However, within our sample, the leaders demonstrated that they can achieve inclusion of multiple faiths within a Catholic school. It is not the nature of the school and its faith status but, rather, the leadership of the school and its focus on inclusion that determine the freedom and security of all its learners. In some cases, the leadership response represented an extended view of school leadership by drawing on direction and support from boards of governors/management in achieving this inclusive model of schooling. In their study of Catholic schools in Ireland, Byrne and Devine[88] found that schools were changing, subject to 'a process of detraditionalisation and wider societal change'.[89] Though there were schools that they called 'faith visible', which strongly emphasised their Catholic nature, our evidence shows the evolution of other kinds of school with a different understanding of how faith should be supported among learners. The role of leadership is critical.

The leadership perspective

Practising a religion or holding secular beliefs has rarely been only a personal matter. The dominant power has often used the adherence to a religion, or the exclusion of religion from the State, as a means of enforcing conformity or oppressing particular groups. Conflict between Catholics and Protestants, Hindus and Muslims or followers of Christianity and Islam, and endemic anti-Semitism are woven through history in an ever-present thread. All the school leaders recognised the persisting, fundamental significance of faith in twenty-first-century society and, in their own way, responded.

The schools in our sample include some with a majority of learners of a particular faith, whether Catholic or Islamic, for example, and some with minorities of children or young people with a different faith from the majority or with secular beliefs. Even where a religion is held by the majority in both a school and the nation, as is Catholicism in most schools in Ireland, it is nevertheless subject to pressure to adjust[90] which, for some, constitutes a threat as much as that felt in minority religions. A sense of anxiety, notions of otherness and a fear of change increasingly typify the context in which school leaders must provide security and confidence in a world where such essentials are in short supply.[91]

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88   Byrne, R. & Devine, D. (2017) p.6.
89   Byrne, R. & Devine, D. (2017) p.1.
90   Byrne, R. & Devine, D. (2017) p.1.
91   Furedi, F. (2007).

For some principals, insisting on adherence to a single faith with minimal provision for those of others, or excluding others through criteria that favour admission of those of the faith in question, may appear a positive choice to protect not only a faith but the culture that has evolved historically around that faith. There will always be some governors and school leaders who believe this to be appropriate. The majority of schools in our sample believe the contrary: that such attitudes are neither appropriate nor practical in the twenty-first-century. They are not appropriate because, all personal beliefs aside, they cannot be sustained. If one wishes to encounter respect for one's own position, then equal respect must be given to that of others. 'Respect my position while I downgrade the importance of yours' is socially untenable. It introduces an absence of equilibrium that can translate into conflict. Protectionist attitudes are also impractical inasmuch as society is becoming increasingly diverse, so that maintaining one's own beliefs through isolation from others of differing beliefs is ever-more problematic. Rather, what the majority of school leaders in this sample demonstrated is a determination to dismantle ingroup and outgroup positions, and to offer children and young people security in what they choose to believe, practise and be, through teaching them to offer security to others. A learner in Birch School summarised this position: 'It's respect for your own religion, but also respect for all those around you.'

Some believe that rights can only be given to minorities at a cost to the majority, for example that accommodating minority faiths will, in some sense, compromise the majority faith or that the inclusion goal of treating all equally is unachievable. Consequently, a key leadership role is to secure the rights of minorities while maintaining the support and security of the majority. Modood[92] highlights four rights that minorities in multicultural society should have:

- Protection from certain kinds of hostility that may be present in the majority culture.

- There should be no insistence on assimilation, but nor should there be any hindrance against… self-chosen assimilation.

- There should be multicultural accommodation of minorities within shared public institutions.

- Minorities… should be able to make claims on national and civic identity.[93]

None of our school leaders intentionally expressed hostility to or an insistence on assimilation, yet disallowing the practice of a minority faith, for example, creates a context in which there may be an implicit sense of hostility or pressure to assimilate. There is no accommodation within the shared public space of schools, and there is a lesser claim on national and civic identity. The majority of leaders in our sample were determined and had acted differently to meet these rights fully in terms of faith. The process that they are engaged in is both long and difficult, and may never be totally completed, yet they believed that tangible benefits to learners can be evidenced in securing such rights for all.

The learner's perspective

At international, European and national levels, policy presses for the preparation of children and young people to hold fundamental freedoms themselves and to offer those confidently to others in terms of their beliefs. Article 26.2 of the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights states: 'Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups.'[94] Where feasible, there is much evidence that diversity among learners, where positive interaction is actively managed, contributes considerably to achievement of this aim. Learners seem to agree. In answer to the question, 'Do you think it is an

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92   Antonsich, M. (2016); Modood, T. (2016) p.481.
93   Adapted from Modood, T. (2016) pp.481–482.
94   United Nations (1948).

advantage, a disadvantage, or neither, that there is a mix of faiths within the school?', all the learners at Birch School believed that it was an advantage:

> L1: ...in life further on after education you are always exposed to people who believe in different things, so I don't believe it can ever be a bad thing to see what someone else has to say, which maybe is different to what you feel, because you have to learn to accept other people's opinions. If you are with people who think the same thing as you all the time you are not going to accept other people's opinions and have an open mind. So I think it's an advantage. Definitely.

> L2: I think it is an advantage. Also, because you get to experience somebody else's culture because, if you are friends with another person who is of a different faith, you start to learn things and pick up things from them that you probably wouldn't from other people of the same faith. You get an open mind set when you go into college and university.

Though a mix of faiths is seen as advantageous by most of the leaders in this sample and all the learners, such a mix is not enough unless leaders consciously use this rich resource to contribute to an inclusive experience across the curriculum for those of all faiths and secular beliefs. Larger surveys have shown support from young people for such inclusive education in relation to faith.[95] For some of our leaders, this was part of a wider mission integrated with many aspects of diversity, recognising the intersections of faith with ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality and the individual needs of each child. Leaders are attempting to achieve the kind of confidence expressed by a learner in Birch School:

> L3: I think that what I've experienced from teachers and higher-ups in the school, I think that everyone is made to feel entitled. They have the right to feel involved because it's a message that is so strongly spread, it doesn't matter what you believe in or who you are, what you are into, you are entitled.

Leadership, though, aims to achieve far more for learners than confidence. Our case schools provided many examples of embedding knowledge, understanding and critical engagement with difference, including differences of faith, equipping learners to pursue their own beliefs positively, to engage respectfully with those of others, including those with secular beliefs, and to tackle ignorance and prejudice wherever they encounter them. They are offered knowledge and skills, as well as confidence.

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95   Tenenbaum, H.R., Leman, P. & Aznar, A. (2017).

Going forward

Focusing on the teaching of religion alone or developing policies that deal explicitly with only the taught component of a particular faith will not lead to an inclusive environment in schools. The issue of ethos, whether based on faith or otherwise, extends beyond instructional time and faith-based content. A broader range of cultural changes will be needed to ensure that a school is broadly inclusive of all and that learners are equipped to live secure in the knowledge that they have developed a sensitivity to both conscious and unconscious forms of bias and practice that exclude others.

For leaders, positive lessons to achieve inclusion in multifaith societies emerge from the practice of those who contributed to this study:

- Faith or secular beliefs are a significant part of the lives of many learners. To build stable societies, schools must engage meaningfully with faith and belief systems.

- Faith intersects with other characteristics. Curriculum and pedagogy planning requires a broad strategy if it is to be inclusive of the different experiences and perspectives in a diverse society.

- Learners must be enabled to develop a deep and respectful understanding of faiths and, if they wish, to pursue their own faith or beliefs.

- Learners need to achieve critical skills that will enable them to challenge prejudice and discrimination confidently.

- Such practice is equally relevant whether a school's learner profile appears to be visibly diverse or have multiple faiths or not.

- National policy and structures are no impediment to achieving inclusion in a multifaith society, where leadership is strong enough.

The last word goes to the learners of Birch School: 'It's more about what brings us together rather than focusing on our differences.' This, however, is not a flabby acceptance of anything. The learners were clear that they could agree on some things yet disagree on others. What mattered was an environment in which such exchanges could take place in mutual security. The young people in our sample epitomise future citizens who are not just of England, Wales or Ireland but much more: citizens of a diverse and global world who, in many cases, adhere strongly to their own faith or beliefs yet also share a set of values, across faiths, and critical skills that enable them to navigate a complex and challenging society.

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