Sowing the Seed: implications for spiritual leadership in a Catholic secondary school

Hannah Fogell

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the impact of faith development provision for students in a case study Catholic school. The literature explored in relation to this subject highlighted three main areas to be researched further: attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith; Catholic servant leadership; and the role of witness and vocation of teachers. Research undertaken involved gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from the case study school in the form of a questionnaire survey of students and staff interviews.

Analysis of the data identified aspects of faith development provision which were valued by students and indicated they were having a positive impact on students' response to the Catholic faith. However, the research also conveyed areas for development for the case study school with respect to its faith development provision for students. The dissertation therefore concludes with a number of recommendations for the spiritual leadership of the school, with the hope that these actions will further improve the school's impact on the faith development of students.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this research project is to evaluate how effectively a case study Catholic school is contributing to the faith development of students. For the purpose of this dissertation, 'faith development' is to be understood in terms of students engaging in God's call for them to be in relationship with Him. It is accepted that student responses will vary, but what is important is that students have been given the time and space to explore a relationship with Christ. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977: n.34), states:

> Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school.

If Christ is at the heart of the school, one of school's aims must be to bring Christ into the heart of every student.

As there are a number of factors which can have an impact on the faith development of young people, I shall limit my study to exploring three specific issues:

- the attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith

- the importance of Catholic servant leadership in nurturing the faith development of students

- the role that the vocation and witness of teachers plays in achieving this aim.

Firstly, I aim to investigate issues relating to the attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith by exploring how they feel about the faith and key aspects of its practice in school, such as Masses and prayer. I will then analyse how well young people are open to opportunities for faith development in school, or whether the case

study school needs to amend its approach to ensure faith development provision is more accessible.

Secondly I aim to explore how the model of leadership exemplified by Jesus, identified by Punnachet (2009) as Catholic servant leadership, applies in meeting the needs of students in their faith development. I will examine the issue of how well the case study school is serving the needs of the students, whether the message it is delivering and the means by which it delivers the message is being well received. Wilkin (2014:175) identifies the importance of Catholic schools staying up-to-date and quotes from Matthew 9:17:

> Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

If schools are to be effective in providing for the faith development of their students, they need to ensure that their approach is one that the young people of today can engage with, otherwise the message will be lost.

Thirdly, I will explore the role teachers' vocation and witness can play in the provision of students' faith development. Pope Paul VI noted in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1976:41) that:

> Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.

I will therefore analyse how the actions of teachers in this regard are received by the students and how this impacts on their faith development. I shall explore the connection between the importance vocation plays in the life of teachers and the importance they place on being a witness to Christ.

1.2 Rationale

The spiritual development of pupils is a legal requirement of schools:

> The Government, in the Education Reform Act (1988), set education within
> the broad context of the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical
> development of pupils and of society."
>
> (CES; 1995:9)

However, Catholic schools take a wider approach to education, as their holistic

approach focuses on the formation of the whole person and therefore includes faith

development, rather than merely spiritual development. The Congregation for

Catholic Education (1997:n.5) notes that the aim of a Catholic school is

> The integral education of the human person through a clear educational
> project of which Christ is the foundation.

Catholic schools therefore desire for each student to experience Christ and to develop

their own faith journey in response.

As a Religious Education (RE) teacher, I feel a strong sense of responsibility towards

assisting students to explore questions relating to the Catholic faith. I am committed

to the mission of Catholic education to evangelize; however, I believe this must be

done in an environment in which students feel comfortable to come to the Catholic

faith freely, rather than feel under pressure to do so. It is therefore important that

students can see the faith 'lived' in a Catholic school as much as possible to fully

appreciate the value of Catholic faith in one's life.

At his address to pupils at the Big Assembly at St Mary's College, Twickenham, in

2010 Pope Benedict XVI said:

> . . . true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to
> place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly

success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.

If young people are to gain an understanding of what it means to be happy with God in their life, they need to see this being modelled in the lives of people they spend time with and to be led by those who place Christ at the centre of their lives. To this end, all teachers in a Catholic school have a role in being witnesses to Christ. I am keen to explore the extent to which teachers in the school recognise this role and responsibility and how they respond to it, bearing in mind that not all teachers are Catholic and those that are will be at different points in their faith journey. It is therefore important to pose the question of how far teachers in the school are truly leading students in the way of Christ and modelling servant leadership.

I am keen for this research project to be of practical use for my school. I have observed, what I regard to be, innovative and engaging provision for students' faith development at my school. However, I intend to explore the extent to which the students have the same attitude towards this provision. I appreciate that it is difficult to evaluate progress in faith development, especially seeing as the seed that is sown in this regard may not grow until an individual is into their adulthood. However, it is important to seek feedback from students to ascertain if what we think we are doing is in fact being well received. The school's 2013 Section 48 Report noted that, "Collective worship is vibrant." There are certainly many opportunities for collective worship in the school. However I am keen to explore the extent to which students themselves regard collective worship as being 'vibrant' and therefore how positive an impact it is having on their faith development.

Having worked as an RE teacher in three different Catholic comprehensives I have had the opportunity to experience a variety of leadership approaches in relation to how the faith development of students is catered for. Headteachers, Chaplains and Heads of RE can have conflicting ideas on how collective worship should be as they are influenced by the experiences and preferences of their own faith practice, without always paying full regard to the interests of the students. According to Nuzzi (1999:262):

> Jesus' advice . . . suggests that true leadership involves serving the rest, not insisting on one's own way. . . Jesus connected the power of his ministry to service for others, a type of power to be used to serve others, not rule over others.

In relation to this research project, Nuzzi can be interpreted as meaning that we should not impose our ideas on how spiritual and faith development should take place, but do that which truly serves young people in this aspect. If we wish to see young people grow in the faith, we need to understand how we can enable them to access it and be open to it, which may not happen if we are too focused on our own personal approach.

1.3 Context

Notre Dame Catholic School [1] in the south of England is to be used as a case study for the purpose of this research project. It is an 11-18 mixed, voluntary-aided, Catholic comprehensive school and Sixth Form College. It has links with a number of parishes in the local area. The school has approximately 1100 students on roll, of which about 200 are in the sixth form. 65% of students are Catholic, although a smaller percentage will be practising. A small minority students practise other world

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[1] For ethical reasons, a fictitious name has been used.

faiths, primarily Islam and Hinduism. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprises

the Headteacher, two Deputy Headteachers, a School Business Manager, three

Assistant Headteachers and two Senior Teachers. 75% of the SLT are Catholic.

Amongst the whole staff, only 41% are Catholic, although an additional 41% of staff

belong to other Christian denominations. The 2013 *Ofsted Inspection Report* rated

the school as 'Outstanding' and praised the school with the following points:

> Students' conduct towards one another and towards staff and other adults, is polite, respectful and considerate. The school's strong ethos of mutual care and respect underpins this. (2013:5)

> The drive for excellence is shared by leaders at all levels. (2013:6)

Notre Dame is a high-achieving school with 89% of students achieving 5+ A*-C

GCSE grades including English and Maths in 2014. The school also achieved an A

Level A*-C pass rate of 88% in the same year. Whilst the majority of pupils are

White British, about 20% of students are from other ethnic backgrounds and 9% of

students speak English as an additional language. 7.9% of students have an SEN

Statement or are on School Action Plus, which is slightly above the national average,

and 3.7% of students are eligible for free school meals; which is lower than the

national average.

Spirituality is an important element of the educational experience at Notre Dame.

The Headteacher's welcome on the school website states that:

> . . . we promote Christian values and seek not only to achieve excellence 'intellectually' but also 'spiritually.' It is our belief that there is much more to school life than the rigour of examinations and we strive to stimulate our students in order that they may become caring, compassionate human beings.
> (accessed: 29/10/14)

Notre Dame was rated 'Outstanding' in its most recent *Section 48 Report* (2013:1) which praises the school, observing that:

> The central element of the Mission Statement, "our purpose is to be Christ to all", is realised in practice rather than simply in public rhetoric. (2013:1)

The most recent *Ofsted Inspection Report* also commented on the strength of the school in its promotion of its values:

> The school's core values are reinforced everywhere in displays, but there is genuine adherence too . . . One parent commented that their child would leave Notre Dame with 'the sense of responsibility that will help him make the right choices in life.'
>
> (Ofsted Inspection Report; 2013:5)

One of the Assistant Headteachers has responsibility for the spiritual and community life of the school and they have had a significant impact on the prayer life of the school. The recent *Section 48 Report,* for example, commented that:

> The Eucharist and prayer are central to the life of the whole school community. The standard of Assemblies and prayer during tutor time observed during the inspection was outstanding. Students were both engaged and respectful. Planning constitutes a significant element in all liturgies and involves both teaching and support staff and students. Learners prepare and lead acts of worship with confidence, skill and enthusiasm.

Furthermore, the recent appointment of a young and enthusiastic Chaplain has been well received by the students and has further enhanced the school's ability to engage students in acts of worship.

1.4 Methodology

In order to fulfil the purpose of this research project, to assess the impact the case study school is having on the formation of its students, my objectives will be as follows:

- To undertake a literature review of approaches to faith development. This will involve, firstly, examining the attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith. Secondly, the literature review will examine the role of Catholic servant leadership in the faith development of students. Thirdly, I will explore the role teachers' vocation and witness plays in bringing students to a relationship with Christ through their own example.

- To undertake a questionnaire survey to explore student attitudes to religion and faith development provision in the school. I will also interview a select number of staff in leadership positions who influence the approach the school takes to faith development.

- To present and analyse the findings and results of my research in the context of the literature that I have reviewed.

- To present an overview of the findings and make recommendations for improved practice in terms of leadership and faith development approaches in the case study school.

1.5 Summary

In this chapter I have defined the purpose of my research project to investigate the attitudes of students and staff to faith development provision in my case study school, with the intention of analyse the extent to which practice meets the principles of spiritual development in a Catholic school. I have explained my rationale for conducting this project and described the context of the case study school. Finally, I have outlined the methodology by which I will conduct this research project.

In the next chapter I shall explore a range of literature relating to attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith, Catholic servant leadership and the role of witness and vocation in influencing the faith development of students. I will then use the key issues raised by the literature to direct the research I will undertake.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I shall first explore attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith.

How young people perceive the faith will affect how leaders in Catholic schools can

provide opportunities for faith development which will be best received by young

people.

Secondly, I shall propose Catholic servant leadership as the style of leadership that

would be most appropriate for facilitating the faith development of young people in

Catholic schools. I shall examine and justify the proposition that spiritual leaders,

which includes all staff in the school in this respect, must follow the example of

Jesus by listening to young people and serving them by putting them first, rather than

by imposing their own ideas about what are 'right' procedures in relation to

provision for faith development.

Finally, in this chapter, I will explore the notion that serving young people in their

faith development involves enabling them to experience faith in practice through the

witness and vocation of their teachers. As the Sacred Congregation for Catholic

Education (1982: n.32) explains:

> Conduct is always much more important than speech . . . Students should see
> in their teachers the Christian attitude and behaviour that is often so
> conspicuously absent from the secular atmosphere in which they live.
> Without this witness, living in such an atmosphere, they may begin to regard
> Christian behaviour as an impossible ideal.

2.2 Attitudes of Young People to the Catholic Faith

A 2013 YouGov survey found that celebrities have a greater impact on the lives of

young people than religious leaders and that '. . . the Church is losing touch with

young people and has little or no influence on their lives.' (Dodd, 2013:32). With the rapid development of technology and new means of communication, such as social media, young people are much more used to and expectant of instant gratification. They live in the here and now and, significantly, Savage et al (2006:37) found in their survey of young people, their general attitude is that:

> 'This world, and all life in it, is meaningful *as it is*.' In other words, there is no need to posit ultimate significance elsewhere beyond the immediate experience of everyday life.

Religion is a consequently a harder sell than it used to be, especially when it may seem to take a long time to hear God's message. There are also many influences in the lives of young people, which distract them from religion. Gallagher (2001:249) notes that:

> For today's young people the Church is only one stall in a large market place and for many of them it does not seem an attractive one.

Furthermore, young people are not always used to taking time out of their busy lives to reflect on the existence of God and may struggle or find it uncomfortable to simply be still and listen to God.

Young people in today's society are used to making choices for themselves. They have the freedom to choose religion or reject it, whereas in the past young people did not have such freedom (Wilkin, 2014:169) as it was rather more imposed on them by their family. Vermeer (2009:202) comments that nowadays 'many parents no longer take the religious upbringing of their children very seriously.' In addition, Mercadante (2012:15) observes that:

> Teens are not inheriting their faith as much as they are choosing their faith. . . Conditioned by a culture of choice, they are somewhat impervious to obligatory motivations and past forms of Catholic guilt.

There is consequently less compulsion on young people to practise the faith if they are brought up in it. Furthermore, for some young people in Catholic schools who are not brought up in the faith, they may be 'totally lacking in religious or moral formation' (The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997: n.6).

With such changes in religious upbringing, young people often feel less obliged to go to Mass and they do not regard it as an enticing activity as there are many others on offer in their lives. Heelas and Woodhead (2004:51) comment that 'few church services offer the strongly affective, intense experience that young people can find elsewhere' (cited in Hanvey, 2005:18). Casson (2013:212) found that even those students who identified themselves as Catholic did not regard going to Mass to be 'an essential element of their Catholicity.'

This poses a question for Catholic schools as to how to engage young people in the Mass and how to respond to the 'pick and mix' approach of young people to the Catholic faith, as identified by the document *On the Threshold* (Bishops' Conference; 2000:12). This approach may involve, for example, young people being happy to follow Jesus' teaching to love your neighbour, but being less happy to practise the sacrament of Holy Communion once a week. Casson (2011: 212) found in her study of young people in Catholic schools that:

> For many of the students, a Catholic identity was about 'helping others' and 'being kind'.

This ethical dimension of the faith is often regarded to be of more interest and relevance to young Catholics than the observance of practice and rituals.

Wilkin (2014:168) found, in his study of 12 Catholic school headteachers, that they accept a 'dilution' of the traditional sense of Catholicism amongst young people – they have their own sense of faith, but they do not practise it in the same way as Catholics of older generations to them. Wilkin questions why this 'dilution' is accepted and concludes that:

> Perhaps it is because they are pragmatic and experienced enough to know that the alternative to this accommodation is the loss of any connection with many of the young people in their schools.

If we wish for young people to stay in or join the faith, we may have to accept the variety of ways they may choose to bring the faith into their lives.

Nonetheless, Mass is a key element of practising the faith in Catholic schools and is therefore a key element of faith development provision for students. In understanding young people's attitudes to Mass, it helps to understand how their way of life is different to previous generations. Mercadante (2012) studied young Americans and termed those born between 1982 and 2002 as 'Millennials'. He argues that

> For many Millennials, going to church and sitting passively is not enough.
> (Mercadante; 2012:54)

Young people these days live their lives at a fast pace, they interact with technology numerous times throughout the day and they feel the need to participate and actively engage in activities. Lytch (2004:25) observes of teenagers today who do show an interest in Mass that:

> . . . they are attracted because the churches engage them in intense states of self-transcendence uniting emotional and cognitive processes. Churches 'catch' them on three hooks: a sense of belonging, a sense of meaning, and opportunities to develop competence.
> (cited in Mercadante; 2012:15)

With regard to attitudes to the Catholic faith, Holman (2002:77) highlights the influence of the consumerist society on young people as a barrier to their receptivity to God's message. They hear so often that happiness can be found in material possessions, which is something that is real to them, that they struggle with the concept that happiness can be found in God, who they cannot see or hear or touch. Holman (2002:77) adds that, for young people:

> There appears to be no compelling reason to believe and no compelling reason to practise what you believe.

Christians however know that happiness and peace in life will only be found in God. Gallagher (2001:173) explains that:

> We can discern the search for meaning, for happiness, love and fulfilment, as the search for God who is the origin and goal of all human life.

One challenge, therefore, for leaders in Catholic schools is to convince young people that there are indeed compelling reasons to believe, and the way they go about this, which I will explore in the next two sections of this chapter, will make all the difference as to whether young people allow the seed to be sown in them or they reject it.

In the next section I will explore ways in which leaders in Catholic schools can best approach this through the model of Catholic servant leadership.

2.3 Catholic Servant Leadership

The model of servant leadership was originally a secular model proposed by Robert Greenleaf (1970), who took his inspiration from a story by Herman Hesse. Greenleaf proposed the idea that leaders lead as a way of serving others. Punnachet (2009), however, maintains that the model of servant leadership is essentially a theological

one and places the model in the context of Christ. Jesus exemplifies servant

leadership for Catholic leaders in schools. In Luke 22:26-27 Jesus teaches:

> . . . the greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who rules
> like the one who serves. . . I am among you as one who serves.

Punnachet argues that all Catholic leaders should aspire to servant leadership.

Christ preached a challenging message of love and putting others first. Pope Francis

is a good role model of servant leadership for Catholics today, teaching us, through

his own practice, to live simply and not assume an air of superiority. Servant leaders

should not be seeking power for themselves. In relation to this dissertation, this could

be interpreted to mean that Catholic school leaders should not impose their own ideas

about what faith development *should* involve or look like, but rather take the lead

from the young people themselves as to what this would be. Nuzzi (1999:262) points

out that

> Jesus' advice . . . suggests that true leadership involves serving the rest, not
> insisting on one's own way.

Other aspects of servant leadership that Punnachet (2009:122-3) highlights are

kindness, self-denial and concern for others.

A key element of serving students in their faith development is to give them a lived

experience of the faith, both on an individual level and as a member of the school

community. Faith is present in people's lives in many ways, one of which is worship

and celebration. Stock (2013:23) notes that:

> The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of
> learning and teaching should enable the school community to become
> reflective, experience the presence of God and develop a mature spiritual life.

Young people can come to experience God in these liturgies and in prayer, but they may also experience God through the love and care expressed to them by their teachers, for example, and through moments of revelation following discussion and reflection.

The celebration of the Eucharist is a central opportunity for students to have a lived experience of the faith and spiritual leaders in Catholic schools are serving the Catholic community of the school in providing this sacrament. Humfrey (2002:79) emphasises that:

> Wherever faith is studied and learned, it will only find its true meaning in its celebration and in the living out of the celebration in the mission of the Church. The liturgy, especially the Eucharist, defines and nourishes the Church.

For those students unfamiliar with the Mass though, it may be hard to understand the significance of the Eucharist. Religious Education (RE) lessons should therefore help students to understand and appreciate the importance of the sacraments and especially the Eucharist. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988:n.78) explains that teachers will:

> . . . help students to discover the real value of the Sacraments: they accompany the believer on his or her journey through life . . . The moment of closest encounter with the Lord Jesus occurs in the Eucharist, which is both Sacrifice and Sacrament.

The Eucharist is regarded as the ultimate source of Christian life and is referred to in the *General Directory for Catechesis* as the "sacrament of sacraments" (1997:115). Furthermore, in *Lumen Gentium,* Pope Paul VI (1964: n.11) tells us that the Holy Eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life'. Catholic schools should therefore be providing regular opportunities for students to celebrate the Mass together during the school year.

Serving young people in their faith development also means engaging students in the process rather than imposing our own ideas on them. One way we might put this principle in to practice is to involve student in planning Masses, rather than preparing it all on their behalf. Gallagher (2001:10) acknowledges the improved recognition these days of:

> . . . the need for suitable methods that involve people actively in their own faith development and engender greater confidence in the willingness to live and share their faith.

The more ownership students have of spiritual activities, the more likely they are to receive them well and to be more deeply affected by them. Humfrey (2002:82) highlights the importance of adapting liturgies so that they are more engaging and better understood. He explains that:

> The involvement of staff and pupils actively in the celebration is of critical importance; careful delegation of particular tasks may well lead to the enjoyment of greater imagination and creativity. (2002:85)

This could include, for example, giving students freedom to bring the expressive arts into the Mass.

Another way spiritual leaders in Catholic schools can serve the students in their faith development is to be respectful of their attitudes and beliefs and not attempt to impose their own beliefs. Teachers are warned against indoctrination as students will easily be turned away from the faith if they feel their freedom of choice is not respected. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988:n.71) advises teachers that:

> With kindness and understanding, they will accept the students as they are, helping them to see that doubt and indifference are common phenomena . . . they will invite students in a friendly manner to seek and discover together the message of the Gospel, the source of joy and peace.

> The teachers' attitudes and behaviour should be those of one preparing the soil.

O'Malley (2007:72) also highlights how teachers need to provide the right environment for faith development to be expressed and to flourish, being aware that students may regard their faith as a private matter and may feel uncomfortable about the community aspect of faith development in the Catholic school.

To enable students to benefit the most from God's call Catholic schools should be mindful of the language they use and the means by which they communicate God's message, so that students are able to fully engage with it and not reject it because they do not understand it or because it is not appealing to them. The Bishops' Conference (2000:19) explains how 'Jesus meets people *where they are* – on their 'home ground'', which means that efforts related to faith development of students in Catholic schools must be considerate of the position young people with regards to their attitude to the Church and Christianity.

Wilkin (2014:168) also emphasises the importance of enabling students to hear the message in their own language. O'Malley (2007:7) warns that:

> The way we use the language of religion will help or hinder young people's progression to a more integrated and influential faith life.

This implies that if we do not use language appropriately in our efforts to engage young people in faith development, we may unwittingly be creating barriers for them. In addition, Gallagher (2008:60) emphasises, in relation to young people that:

> If we wish to share our faith and attract them to our Christian faith, we must present it in such a way that they can recognise that it addresses their questions and problems, hopes and aspirations.

We will be failing our students in their faith development if they do not engage with it because they are unable to see how it is relevant to them and an important part of their education in a Catholic school and in their life.

Catholic servant leadership can also incorporate the Emmaus model of following Jesus. Gallagher (2001: 219) explains that on the road to Emmaus, Jesus:

> . . . walks with the downhearted disciple, listens to their concerns and dashed hopes. Having won their confidence and respect he is able to challenge them − 'you foolish men . . .' He then patiently instructs them about the true meaning and significance of his life and death in the light of their expressed fears and anxieties. . . His walking the road with them and listening to them was the first and necessary step on their journey to and in faith.

In following Jesus' approach here, teachers should invest time in developing a rapport with their students and building an environment of openness and trust, which will enable students to explore issues of faith confidently.

2.4 Role of Witness and Vocation

The indifference of the young to religion and the Church is a major concern for the Church. Groome (2011:1) highlights how Jesus himself seemed to question whether faith on earth would last as long as his second coming:

> Toward the end of Jesus's public ministry, we hear him wonder, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8)

As identified in section 2.3 above, the Church no longer has as much influence in the lives of young people as it did in the past. Likewise, fewer Catholic families are taking their children to Mass and bringing them up as strictly in the faith. Therefore, Catholic schools have an even greater responsibility in growing the faith than they did in the past. Teachers in Catholic schools therefore need to provide strong witness

of the faith in terms of how they act and live their lives. Grace (2008:10) argues that young people are more influenced by what we do than what we say:

> If we want to 'hand on the faith' to the young, we have to be Visible Witnesses of that Faith.

This reinforces the message of Pope Paul VI (1976: n.464) who said:

> Today young people do not listen seriously to teachers, but to witnesses; and if they do listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses.

The sacramental perspective of the work of teachers in Catholic schools is therefore crucial, emphasising that teachers should always look to Christ to be their guide in how they act in life. Lydon (2011) argues that the commitment of Catholic teachers to the school mission should be rooted within the sacramental perspective. This is significant as it means that teachers are signs of Christ in the lives of the students. According to Parker J. Palmer (1998:1):

> Teachers are, in effect, signs of the presence of Christ within their educational community. They 'teach who they are'.

In this sense, students should experience teachers as role models of how to live the way of Christ.

Leaders in Catholic schools, whether members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), middle leaders, class teachers or students themselves, all contribute to the faith development of young people through their witness of Jesus Christ in their lives. Part Two of the current Department for Education Teachers' Standards, to '. . . maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school' (2011:14) takes on greater significance in a Catholic school as the high standards are

set by Jesus. It is partly in bearing witness to Jesus that they demonstrate how far

they are achieving these standards.

A sense of vocation amongst teachers, it can be argued, should have a positive

impact on the commitment teachers have to putting in to practise the model of

servant leadership. Holman (2002:77-78) highlights how:

> Teachers…do not just do jobs, they fulfil a ministry…It is a ministry founded
> upon a vocation from God and one that is vital to the future welfare of the
> community of believers in this country.

Likewise, Jamison (2011:1) emphasises that, 'Vocation in a Catholic school refers to

the call of Christ not to a career option.' Indeed, in Catechesi Tradendai (1979: n.10),

it says:

> The image of Christ the Teacher was stamped on the spirit of the Twelve and
> of the first disciples, and the command 'Go…and make disciples of all
> nations.

The importance of teachers bearing witness to Christ is highlighted by Stock

(2013:22) when he quotes from Pope John Paul II's *Address to Catholic School*

Educators (September 12, 1984):

> Through you, as through a clear window on a sunny day, students must come
> to see and know the richness and joy of a life lived in accordance with
> Christ's teachings . . . To teach means not only to impart what we know, but
> also to reveal who we are by living what we believe. It is this latter lesson
> which tends to last the longest.

If we reflect back on what we remember of our own education, it is often not the

content of the lessons that we remember, but the nature of the teachers. The more

teachers can demonstrate what it is like to live as a true disciple of Christ, the more

impact it will have on our students and the more positive role it will play in their

faith development.

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1982:n.19) explains that:

> The more completely an educator can give concrete witness to the model of the ideal person that is being presented to students, the more this ideal will be believed and imitated.

However, the issue for Catholic schools, given that a certain number of staff members are often not Catholic, is to what extent all members regard their job as a vocation and live their lives in witness to Christ. O'Malley (2007:16) notes that:

> As a leader in a Christian community, it is important to recognise one's own sense of vocation as that inner and urgent drive to make a difference in the lives of others.

The more teachers in Catholic schools are aware that their job is more than just a job but the fulfilment of a vocation, the greater desire they should experience to see others develop in their own faith.

This has an implication for Catholic school leadership in terms of how far the SLT supports teachers' sense of vocation and inspires them in their steps to spread the faith. Sullivan (2002:104-105) emphasises that SLTs in Catholic schools must include 'the spiritual development and ongoing formation of the staff' amongst their priorities. Mercadante (2012:151) also comments on the importance of caring for the spiritual nourishing of leaders:

> . . . our leaders need to be spiritually fed and cared for pastorally. Discipleship is the foundation for Christian leadership.

If we want to have effective spiritual leaders in Catholic schools we therefore need to take steps to care for their own spiritual lives.

To be good witnesses and effective spiritual leaders, staff in Catholic schools need to have opportunities to develop their own spirituality. Cardinal Basil Hume (1997) said that:

> I do not believe that an adult can awaken in a young person a sense of the spiritual if that adult is not at least well on the way to discovering the spiritual dimension of his or her own life.

Teachers, as spiritual leaders, must be spiritual themselves and be interested in asking questions of a spiritual nature.

Treston (1995:45) writes about 'generative leaders' who '. . . generate enthusiasm, concern and dedication'. He explains that, 'Religious generativity is nourished by prayer, relaxation, and the joy and pain of loving and being loved.' Furthermore, Seymour (2001:33) emphasises that:

> We need to focus on our human relationships. As a staff of a Catholic school it is essentially important that we constantly discuss our beliefs, share our ethical questions and discuss our path. We need to be very sure of our direction, because as leaders, we have followers.

Confidence in religious literacy, defined by Grace (2008:10) as 'a knowledge and capacity to talk about the Faith in informed, articulate and personally committed ways', is an essential element of teachers bearing witness. A challenge for Catholic school headteachers is to ensure that time is spent building teachers' confidence in theological literacy to enable them to support students in their theological literacy and therefore their ability to access the Christian message through all subjects on the curriculum.

One of the ways teachers can bear witness to Christ is to follow his teachings on love. O'Malley writes of the importance of 'loving kindness' (2007:37) as this

models to young people what it means to be Christ-like and will encourage such behaviour from them. In terms of overcoming the barrier identified in section 2.3 above of young people not having a compelling reason to believe, one of the best ways is for young people to see what is means to believe, to see this modelled by their teachers. Whilst writing about leadership and management, the following quote from Sullivan (2002:96) is of significance here in relation to the ministry of teachers in Catholic schools:

> . . . unless teachers can model the way, their chances of being transformative are extremely limited. That is, without the example, through their words and their behaviour, of how their own lives have been deeply affected by what they are teaching, teachers cannot hope to influence their pupils in any significant way.

The success of a Catholic school in its ministry is also dependent on classroom pedagogy. Holman (2002:75) makes the point that classroom pedagogy must be such that it 'enables young people to be more open to the call of the Lord'. Groome (2011:5) proposes an approach which he summarises as 'bringing life to Faith and Faith to life'. Groome (2011:13) explains that this approach follows Jesus' style of teaching and involves firstly engaging students by connecting a theme to their lives, then exploring the aspect of Christian faith that is relevant to the theme and finally connecting this learning back to the lives of the students.

Although the responsibility for the faith development of students lies with all teachers in a Catholic school, the RE department has a particular role in the formation of young people. Amongst all teachers in a Catholic school, students look especially to RE teachers to be good witnesses of Christ. It is therefore through RE

lessons that students have the greatest opportunity to learn about the faith and to see it in action from their RE teachers.

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2000a:n.4) stress very clearly in its *Statement on Religious Education in Catholic Schools*:

> In the life of faith of the Catholic school, religious education plays a central and vital part. At the heart of Catholic education lies the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education. Therefore religious education is never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process.

Given this special role of RE, in order for it to be able to achieve its aim, it must be recognised by both staff and students to be the core subject on the curriculum. The Bishops' Conference adds in relation to RE that:

> . . . it requires the unequivocal support of the management of every Catholic school. It also requires 10% of the length of the taught week for each Key Stage of education. This is what we reaffirm and expect. (2000a:n.10)

The Bishops' Conference *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and Colleges* (2012:3) explains that:

> The primary purpose of Catholic Religious Education is to come to know and understand God's revelation which is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Religious education is important in teaching students 'what' the faith is, including the beliefs of Christianity and who the person of Jesus Christ is, as well as how we put the faith in to practice (Richardson, 2013).

2.5 Summary

In this literature review I have examined my interest in the faith development of students in Catholic schools from a number of angles. I identified that the aim of Catholic schools is to bring the person of Jesus Christ and the message of God's love

to all students. It is recognised that for some students this will be in the form of evangelisation and for others catechesis, but for the purpose of this dissertation I am essentially concerned with the formation of students. In this, all teachers are expected to play a role in the faith development of students, however the RE department clearly has a central role. Catholic schools can serve young people in their faith development through opportunities to experience the faith, for example, through prayer, Mass, times of reflection and discussion in, as well as through the valuable witness of teachers.

In exploring how young people today regard the Catholic faith I discovered that the faith is not as pervasive in the lives of young people as it was for their parents' and grandparents' generations. It is more challenging these days for the Church and Catholic schools, to attract young people to the faith in a society characterised by freedom of choice and fast-paced technology. However, the literature indicated that there are nonetheless young Catholics today who are on the edge of the Church and are open to engaging with it, if the Church and schools go about engaging them in the appropriate way.

To find this 'appropriate way' I explored the concept of Catholic servant leadership and examined how this can be put in to practise by leaders in Catholic schools. I identified the importance of listening to young people and communicating with them in a language they understand in order to engage them with the faith. It is important not to impose our ideas on how faith development 'should' be, but to adapt to how young people are today and tailor the message so that they will receive it well and engage with it.

In the last section of the literature review, I explored in more detail how spiritual leaders in Catholic schools can encourage the faith development of students through enabling the students to see what it means to live with Christ in your life. I examined the importance of bearing witness to Christ in schools and how that makes the faith more credible for young people. To bear witness effectively it was clear that teachers should regard their job as a vocation as this will develop their motivation to spread the faith.

This Literature Review has identified a number of key areas for my research. Of particular importance are examining the attitudes of young people to the practice of Catholicism, especially regarding prayer and Mass, whether they feel engaged in the faith at school and assessing whether they consider their teachers to be good witnesses of Christ. This chapter has also raised questions to be explored in the research regarding the degree to which teachers regard their job as a vocation and the part the school can play in supporting teachers in their vocation and witness.

In the next chapter, I shall explore the different options for conducting the research for this project and explain the methods I selected.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore a range of research methods that are available in order to identify a relevant approach to gathering information. This will be for the purposes of reflecting upon how effectively the case study school is contributing to the faith development of students. In this regard, I shall evaluate the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative research and adopting a case study approach versus an action research approach.

I will then explain the reasoning behind my chosen research methods and outline my research design. This will include assessing advantages and disadvantages of the two selected research methods, i.e., questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

In addition, I will discuss how I selected the sample for my questionnaire, examine ethical issues that must be considered in advance of conducting this research project, explain how I piloted my research and the procedures I followed for the questionnaire and interviews that I conducted.

3.2 Research Methods

In this section, I shall explore the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as explain the rationale behind why I decided to adopt a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative research. I will then examine the value of the case study approach and why I selected this method. Finally I will explore the action research approach and explain why this method was not appropriate for my research project.

(a) Quantitative / Qualitative research

For this project I considered the value of both quantitative and qualitative research. The former involves 'numerical data and typically . . . structured and predetermined research questions' (Punch, 2005: 28, quoted in Bell, 2010:5), whereas the latter relates to 'the gathering . . . of *narrative* information' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009:6).

The advantage of quantitative research is that it can generate a large amount of data in a manageable way, providing a broad picture and identifying patterns between respondents. However, a key disadvantage is that the data is limited by the specifics of what is asked. It does not provide reasons for why the respondents gave specific answers to questions. Qualitative research on the other hand helps to enhance the picture by providing a better understanding of respondents' attitudes, yet by itself cannot provide the breadth of information that can be gained from quantitative research. It can be time consuming to conduct interviews and sift out pertinent information.

I decided that a mixed method approach, with quantitative research of a questionnaire, with some open questions, alongside qualitative research of staff interviews, would be most appropriate for my research project. Such a mixed method approach would provide valuable triangulation to generate a deeper and more accurate picture.

(b) Case study

Yin (1994:13) defines a case study as:

> . . . an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Furthermore, Drever (1995:7) explains that:

> In a case study the researcher does not aim to cover a whole population and extract common factors, but to provide an in-depth picture of a particular area of the educational world, chosen because it is relatively self-contained.

A case study approach was of value to my research project as it enabled me to carry out a close examination of the attitudes of students and staff to faith development provision for our students in the context of our Catholic school. It provided the opportunity to take a snapshot of the here and now experience of young people and staff, which could be used to inform and affect future practice. One of the advantages of this approach was that it enabled the researcher to explore a specific area in-depth. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods could be used to gain as full a picture as possible.

However, Yin (2009:14-16) notes that disadvantages of this approach are that it is time-consuming and it can lack rigour. Moreover, because it involves examination of a specific situation, it is not necessarily applicable to other contexts and is therefore of less wider value in being able to present generalisations from its findings. Nonetheless, in investigating the issue of faith development of students for the benefit of making improvements in my own school, this approach was of value to my personal research project.

(c) Action research

Elliott (1994:133) explains that with educational action research, the researcher:

> . . . gathers evidence about the extent to which practice is consistent or inconsistent with the aim . . .[and] focuses on changing practice to make it more consistent with the pedagogical aim.

Action research is therefore undertaken with the aim of improving a situation being researched. In terms of the process, Lomax (2007:157) notes that:

> Action research is usually seen as a cyclical activity where you make a plan, carry it through, monitor what goes on, reflect on events critically (using the monitoring data) and move forward.

It is a time-consuming approach due to the numerous stages involved. However, it has the potential to be highly effective in education if we are seeking to continually improve educational provision for young people as it involves reflecting and acting upon results specific to a given context.

I considered this approach, but given the timescale of my research project, I was unable to complete all the stages involved in an action research project. However, I intend to draw upon the action research approach once my research project has been completed. I will advocate for the proposed recommendations to be actioned.

3.3 Research Design

The overall aim of my research project was to examine how well the practice of faith development provision in my case study school matched the principle of Catholic schools to bring young people to Christ and facilitate their relationship with him. In order to achieve this aim I needed to find out how faith development provision was being received by the students, therefore how potentially effective it was being, and how far key spiritual leaders in the school involved in faith development provision were in agreement with how faith development provision should be offered. Given

the timescale of the research project, I selected a case study approach over action research.

Within this approach and with regard to the instruments of measurement, I chose to conduct my research using a combination of questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. I wanted to capture student responses to faith development provision in the school and to achieve a good number of responses within the timescale I therefore decided to use a questionnaire.

Thus, I decided that a mixed method approach, comprising quantitative research, in the form of a questionnaire, alongside qualitative research, with some open questions in the questionnaire and some staff interviews, would be most appropriate for my particular research project. Such a mixed method approach would provide valuable triangulation to generate a deeper and more accurate picture.

(a) Questionnaires

The purpose of a questionnaire survey is to gather data. Fogelman and Comber (2007:127) explain that:

> The questionnaire, the most common method of data collection in a survey, is used to obtain factual information, attitudinal information or a mixture of both.

An advantage of using questionnaires is that they can provide a large amount of information in a relatively easy and straight-forward way. To maximise this, the questionnaire should be designed to make it easy for the respondent to complete. It should therefore be clear to understand and quick to complete.

There are different options for the design of the questionnaire. Questions may be open or closed, but the researcher should keep in mind how the type of questions may impact on the respondent's desire to complete the questionnaire. Closed questions are easier for the respondent to answer and quicker for the researcher to analyse, however they do not allow for respondents to explain the reasons for their response. With open questions, Cohen et al. (2007:321) state that their advantage is that they:

> . . .enable respondents to answer as much as they wish, and are particularly suitable for investigating complex issues, to which simple answers cannot be provided.

However, too many open questions may put respondents off as they take more time to complete. For the researcher, they also take more time to analyse.

A popular option is to use a Likert scale. This enables the researcher to propose a series of statements and the respondent indicates their view on the statement in terms of their place on the agree/disagree scale. Bell (2010: 146) suggests that:

> Likert scales can be useful, as long as the wording is clear, there are no double questions, and no unjustified claims are made about the findings.

Likert scale questions are easy for respondents to answer and they produce data that that is clear and simple to analyse.

However, there are problems with the Likert scale. It is not possible to anticipate how each respondent will interpret the questions or whether they will all have the same understanding of the distinction between strongly agree and agree, for example. Cohen et al (2007: 327) warn that we cannot tell if the respondents are answering truthfully and also that respondents may be wary of ticking either end of the scale:

> Most of us would not wish to be called extremists. . . For rating scales this means that we might wish to avoid the two extreme poles at each end of the continuum of the rating scales, reducing the number of positions in the scales to a choice of three (in a five-point scale).

When analysing the results of Likert scale questions, it might therefore be wise to combine the strongly agree and agree answers.

My questionnaire was designed to extract information concerning students' beliefs and practices in relation to Catholicism, as well as their attitudes to religion and the school's approach to helping them develop their faith. Questions relating to factual data were tick box answers, however the majority of questions used the Likert scale to assess students' attitudes. To gain a deeper understanding of why students had given a particular response to some of the statements, they were then asked a follow up open question to give their reasons for their response to the previous question. A copy of the questions can be found in Appendix II. These questions were inputted in to the format provided by the internet survey provider *kwiksurvey* (https://kwiksurveys.com/).

(b) Semi-structured interviews

I also wanted to gain a staff perspective as part of my research. With more time, I would have liked to survey a wider number of staff, but, given time constraints, I decided to focus my research on three members of staff who play a key role in the faith development provision for students: the Headteacher, the Head of RE and the Chaplain.

I decided the semi-structured interview would be the best research strategy to employ as I wanted to find out if they held similar views on what the school was doing to help develop students' faith or if there was any disparity between them. I asked them each the following five questions in the semi-structured interview:

1. How do you think we can best serve our students in their faith development?

2. To what extent are you concerned about the 'pick and mix' approach of young people to Catholicism (e.g., some being less interested in going to Mass, but happy to show concern for the welfare of others), which could be argued as leading to a dilution of the faith in its traditional sense?

3. How do you think the spiritual development and formation of staff should be supported at Notre Dame?

4. How can you contribute to staff being effective role models in following the way of Christ and demonstrating confidence in communicating the Catholic faith to students?

5. The Bishops' Conference states that RE is 'not simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process.' How far do you feel Notre Dame achieves this requirement?

3.4 The Sample

Questionnaires are designed to survey a sample of a population. Burgess (2001:4) explains that:

> The population is simply all the members of the group that you are interested in. A sample is a sub-set of the population that is usually chosen because to access all members of the population is prohibitive in time, money and other resources.

Burgess (2001:4) goes on to note that:

> A key issue in choosing the sample relates to whether the members you have chosen are representative of the population.

If the sample is representative of the population, the researcher can then make generalisations from the findings with greater authority. Fogelman and Comber (2007: 130) explain that:

> In many cases, the researcher will wish to argue that his or her findings have wider application and that they have relevance and implications beyond those particular individuals (schools, organisations etc.), that is they will want to generalise their research.

In terms of a research project such as this one, although the sample is of a specific school population, it could be argued that the sample is also representative in some way of the wider population of young people and the wider the age range of participants, the greater the opportunity to generalise about the findings for the benefit of readers.

For the questionnaire I wanted to sample a cross-section of students to ensure they were representative of the whole school. I therefore sought questionnaire responses from students in all year groups across Key Stages 3 and 4. I was concerned that if completing the questionnaire was optional, I might not receive as many responses as I would need to ensure that the research was a valid representation of student opinions. I therefore selected random RE classes from Years 7-10 and arranged lesson time in which the students could complete the questionnaire on computers in school. Given that it was close to exam time for Key Stage 4, I did not wish to use valuable lesson time. I therefore arranged for one Year 11 tutor group to complete the questionnaire during morning registration time.

Overall 334 students completed the questionnaire, which was 100% of the sample. However, as students in Years 7-11 did not complete the questionnaire voluntarily, some may have chosen to not take the questions seriously. This will become evident during the analysis of the results.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Oppenheim (1992:83) notes that:

> The basic ethical principle governing data collection is that no harm should come to the respondents as a result of their participation in the research.

Research methods used should therefore endeavour to provide confidentiality and anonymity. A more accurate collection of data will be obtained if participants are reassured that their responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and it prevents any negative consequences for the respondent as a result of anything they have said that is quoted in the research. For these reasons, I did not require respondents of the student questionnaires to give their names.

However, it can at times be hard to actually achieve confidentiality, as identified by Bell (2010:50):

> There can be difficulties over confidentiality. If in your report you speak about the Director of Resources or the Head of English, you are immediately identifying the individuals concerned. If you invent a pseudonym or a code, it might still be easy for readers in the know to identify the individual or institution concerned.

With regard to this particular research project, the name of the school has been changed to help prevent its identification. However, I was concerned that for anyone reading the dissertation in my school, they would know the school concerned and therefore could identify who the interviewees were, given that we only have one Headteacher, one Head of RE and one Chaplain. I therefore chose to allocate a code to the interviewees in an attempt to achieve confidentiality and anonymise their responses as far as possible.

Another ethical issue, identified by Cohen et al (2007:317-318), is that:

> Respondents cannot be coerced into completing a questionnaire . . . the decision whether to become involved and when to withdraw from the research is entirely theirs.

As identified in section 3.4, this is a pertinent issue in relation to my research as I chose to have students complete my questionnaire in lessons. Although this meant they had not freely chosen to complete the question, it did nonetheless mean they could chose not to complete it seriously and therefore not engage fully in the research.

3.6 Pilot Study

(a) Questionnaire

It is important to pilot a questionnaire by testing it on a few people. The purpose of this is to check its clarity, identify any problems with the questionnaire and correct them before the survey is undertaken (Burgess, 2001:15; Bell, 2010:151). Fogelman and Comber (2007:130) explain that:

> . . . the importance of piloting cannot be overstated. . . Careful and appropriate piloting of research instruments will weed out inappropriate, poorly worded or irrelevant items, highlight design problems and provide feedback on how easy or difficult the questionnaire was to complete.

With this feedback the researcher can then amend or adjust the questionnaire to be more effective in its gathering of data.

I piloted my questionnaire with two Year 11 students who completed the questionnaire online. They did not identify any issues with it. However, despite all these checks, it became evident whilst students were completing the questionnaire in lesson time that there was a typing mistake in the last question, which was an open

question. This unfortunately distracted some students, causing them to comment on the typing error rather than answering the question.

(b) Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to explore the thoughts and attitudes of interviewees in more depth than a questionnaire. The interviewer can be spontaneous in exploring the interviewees' ideas further and ask follow up questions to draw more out of them. Bell (2010:161) explains that:

> One major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do.

However, a disadvantage of interviews is that they require a certain time commitment to complete each one and transcribing each semi-structured interview can be a lengthy process as well. Bell (2010:161) also warns of semi-structured interviews that:

> It is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always the danger of *bias*.

The interviewer needs to be careful not to ask leading questions or in the analysis of findings to only select comments made by an interviewee which support the researcher's hypothesis. Furthermore, Ribbins (2007:208) notes that a disadvantage of semi-structured interviews is the danger of misrepresenting the interviewee by:

> . . . selectively reporting their words to suggest that they have said something they did not intend. This can be done by deleting text from a quotation in a way that changes its meaning (*misrepresenting*).

It is therefore important that the researcher familiarises themselves thoroughly with the interview transcript and is faithful to the meaning and intentions of the interviewee in their reporting and analysis of findings.

3.7 Procedures

(a) Questionnaire

I wanted the results of the questionnaire to be of benefit to my department, so I involved my departmental colleagues in the drafting of the questions. To check the clarity of the questionnaire and gain any relevant feedback before piloting it, I asked some Year 12 students to read through the questions. They did not identify any concerns.

(b) Semi-structured interviews

The literature highlighted a number of issues which I could have asked questions about in the interviews. However to ensure the data collection would be manageable, I identified a few specific key areas from which I formulated five questions to ask each of my interviewees. Out of respect for my colleagues' time I chose not to conduct a pilot interview, however I did consult with a colleague to check the clarity of the questions.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has explored a number of different research methods relevant to this kind of research project and explained my decision to conduct my research using a questionnaire of students, with open and closed questions and semi-structured interviews of a select number of staff.

I have also identified a number of ethical issues and reflected on how they have affected my research.

In the next chapter I will present my research findings and analyse the data.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the results of the research conducted in the case study school, focusing on the students' attitudes to faith and how positively or negatively they regarded faith development provision in the school.

Research was also conducted to explore the attitudes of selected spiritual leaders on the staff to how best to serve students in their faith development and how to support staff in contributing to students' faith development.

The first section of this chapter will present the results of the student questionnaire and the findings of the staff interviews. This will be followed by a second section which will interpret the data. This second section will be structured in line with the three key themes identified in the Literature Review chapter of:

- Attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith
- Catholic servant leadership
- Role of witness and vocation

4.2 Presentation of Results

(a) Questionnaire data

In the following presentation of data, percentages are given to one percentage point for greater accuracy. To reach totals of 100% I sometimes needed to round up or down within the percentage points. Percentages were worked out based on the total number of responses for each individual question rather than the total number of respondents. This is because a small number of students selected more than one

option in some of the Likert scale questions from question 3 onwards, despite being instructed to only select one option. However, this should not affect the results significantly as the number of options selected does not exceed the total number of respondents in any one question by more than 3.8%.

A. Personal questions

Question 1: What is your gender?

Figure 4.1 below shows that 164 (49.1%) of respondents were male and 170 (50.9%) were female. This is a close gender balance which indicates that the results will not be affected by any significant gender differences.

Fig.4.1 Gender
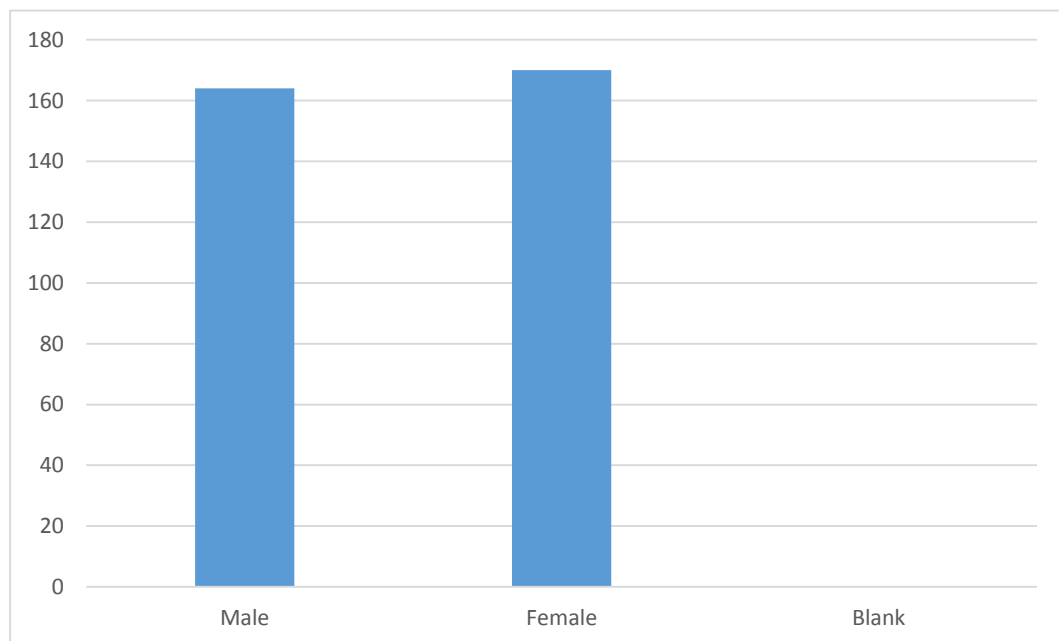
Question 2: Which year are you in?

There are approximately 180 students in each year group. The chart below indicates that the number of respondents from Years 7, 9 and 10 make up over a third of their year group. Although the numbers of respondents vary across the year groups, a good numbers of students are represented in both Key Stages 3 and 4. This will give a better snapshot of the attitudes of young people across the school rather than any one particular year group which may be more influenced by a specific experience than others.

Fig. 4.2 Year group
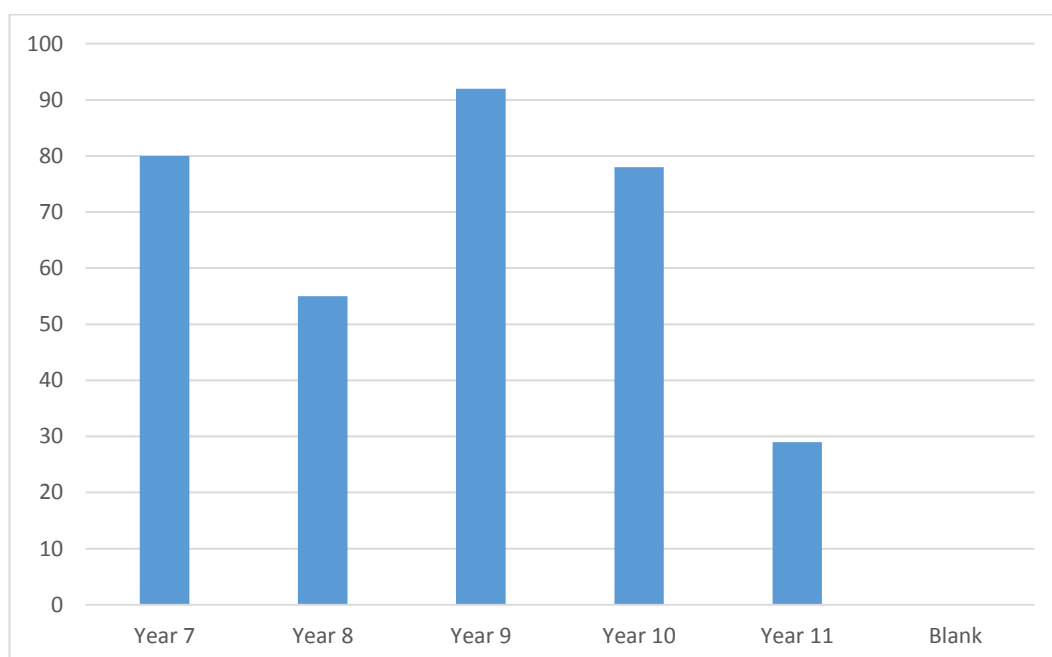
**A. Students were asked to respond to each of the following statements by ticking one of the following:**

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Unsure

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Your own beliefs

Question 3: I believe in God.

As conveyed by the chart below, 48.7% of responses indicated that respondents positively believe in God. However, the majority of responses indicate that respondents are agnostic or atheist. Further examination of the data for this question revealed that the highest proportion of strongly agree and agree responses across the year groups were Years 8 and 11 with 62.7% and 62.2% respectively. Year 7 was 51.8%, Year 10 was 41.8% and the lowest proportion of responses in agreement with the statement was from Year 9 with only 38.7%.

Fig. 4.3 I believe in God
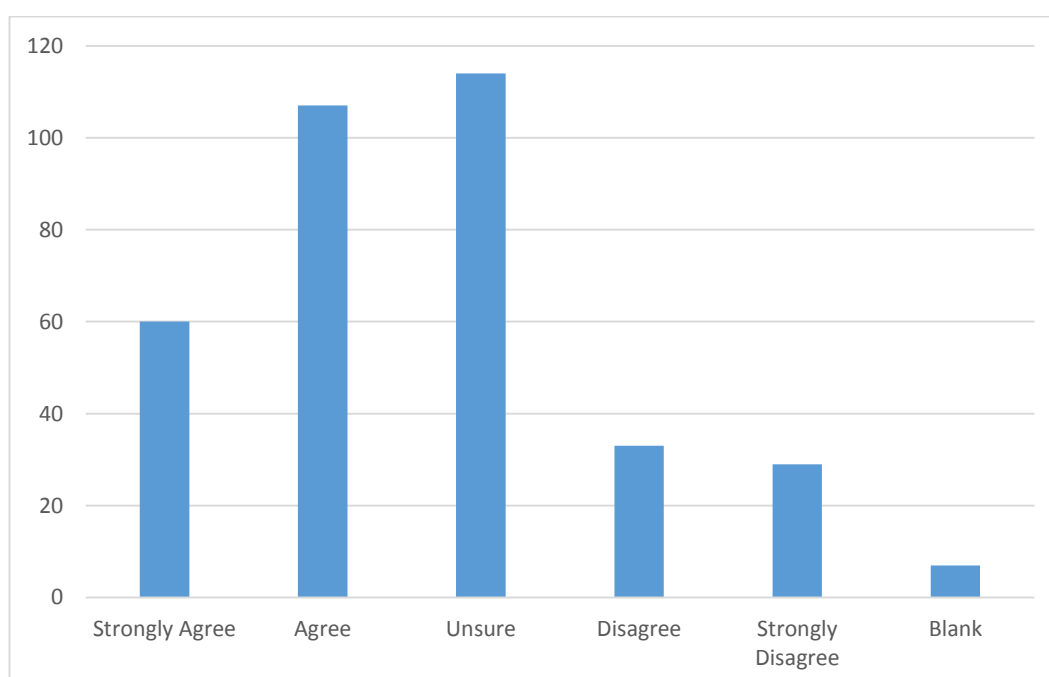
Question 4: I am Catholic

Figure 4.4 presented below shows that a higher number of respondents ticked the strongly agree and agree boxes for this statement than the previous one. The results here show that 59.7% of responses indicate the respondent to be Catholic, as opposed to 40.3% indicating that respondents were unsure or claimed not to be Catholic. The official school data is that 65.2% of students in Years 7-11 are Catholic.

Fig. 4.4 I am Catholic
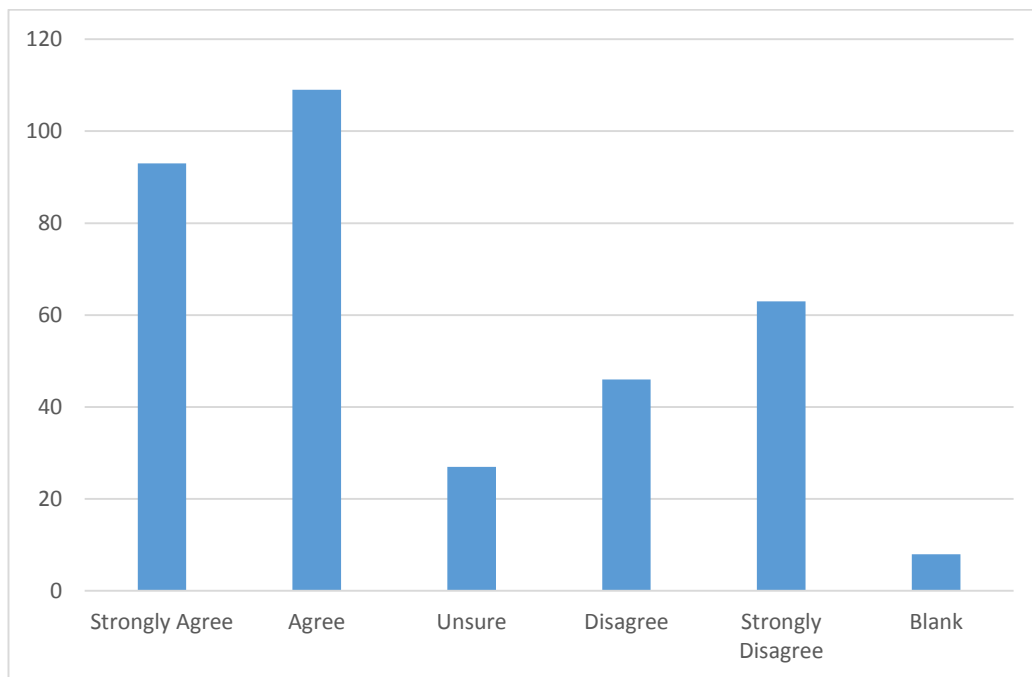
Question 5: I am comfortable with being quiet to explore a relationship with God e.g., through prayer.

The chart below shows that the majority of responses (47.9%) strongly agreed or agreed that with the statement. 31.5% of responses selected unsure and 20.4% of responses were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.
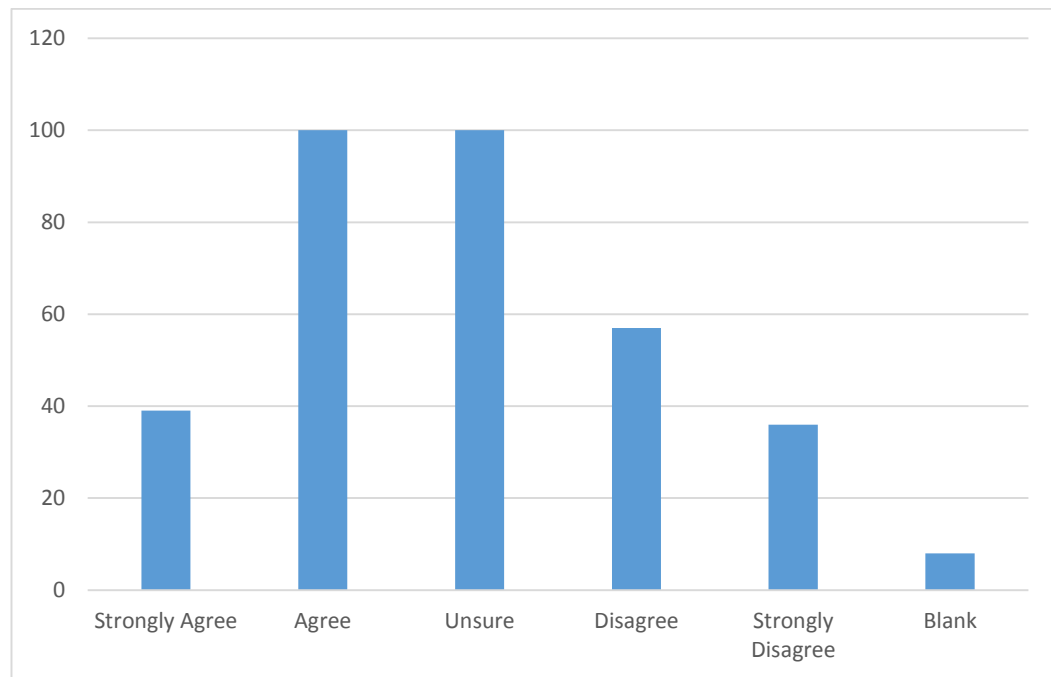
Fig. 4.5 I am comfortable with being quiet to explore a relationship with God e.g., through prayer
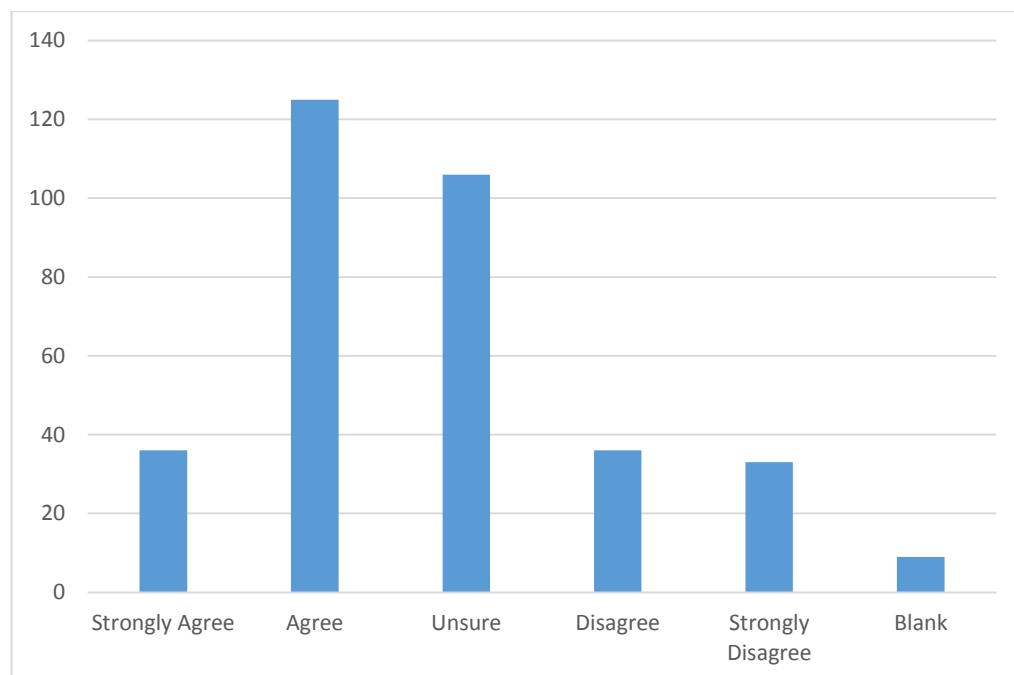
Question 6: I believe true happiness can be found in God.

Whilst 41.9% of responses were in strong agreement or agreement with this statement, 30.1% were unsure and 28.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Fig. 4.6 I believe true happiness can be found in God

Question 7: I am interested in developing my spiritual nature.

As indicated in the chart below, the category with the most number of responses for this statement was 'Unsure' (36.9% of the total number of responses). 33.7% of responses were for 'Strongly Agree' or 'Agree'. A minority of responses (29.4%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Fig. 4.7 I am interested in developing my spiritual nature
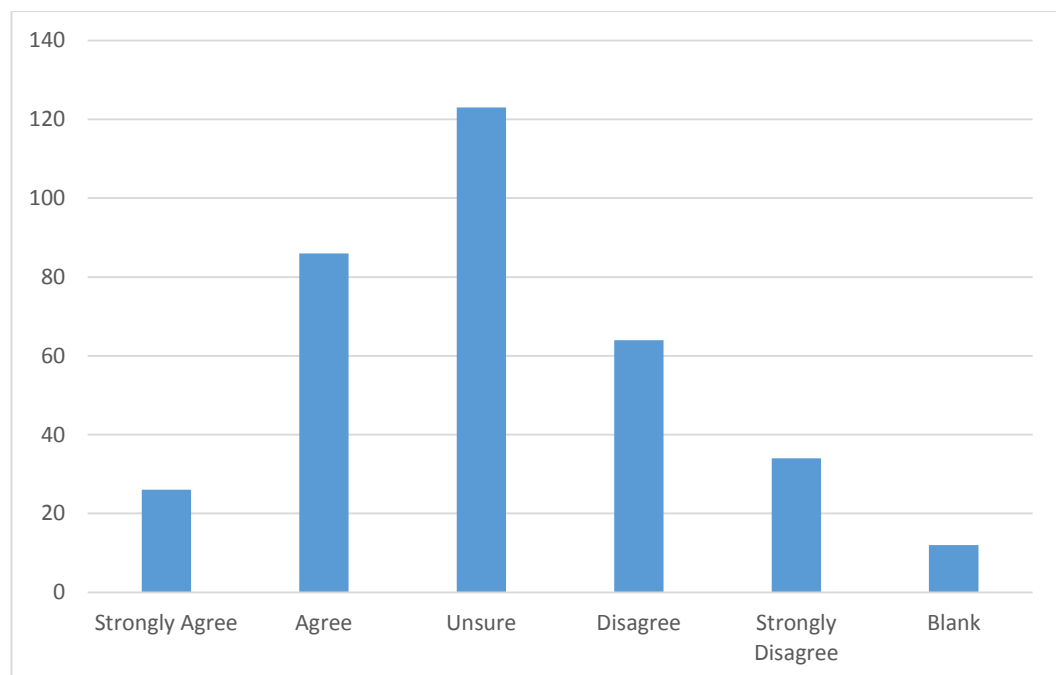
Question 8: Religion is an important part of my life.

Responses to this statement were fairly evenly split between the three options in the middle of the scale, as expressed in Figure 4.8 below. However, when the two agree options are combined and the two disagree options are combined, only 36.0% of responses indicated agreement with the statement whereas 40.4% of responses actively disagreed with the statement. On examining this data further to compare responses across the year groups, as with Question 3, Year 9 had the lowest proportion of positive responses with only 25.5% of responses from Year 9 students strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Year 9 also had the highest proportion of disagree or strongly disagree responses at 51.1%. Year 7 had the highest gap between the proportions of strongly agree and agree responses (42.2%) and disagree and strongly disagree responses (30.0%).

Fig. 4.8 Religion is an important part of my life
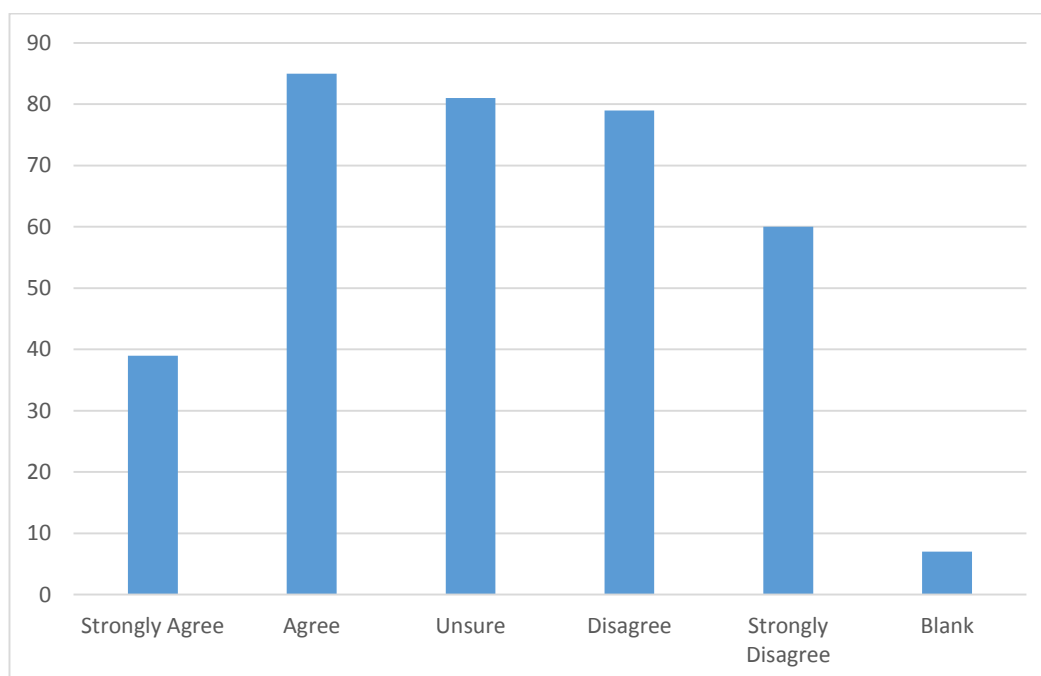
Question 9: I am encouraged by my parents / carers to go to Mass.

The figure below expresses that the majority of respondents are not encouraged by their parents or carers to go to Mass. 160 responses (47.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. 44 responses (12.9%) responses were unsure and 136 responses (40.0%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Fig. 4.9 I am encouraged by my parents / carers to go to Mass
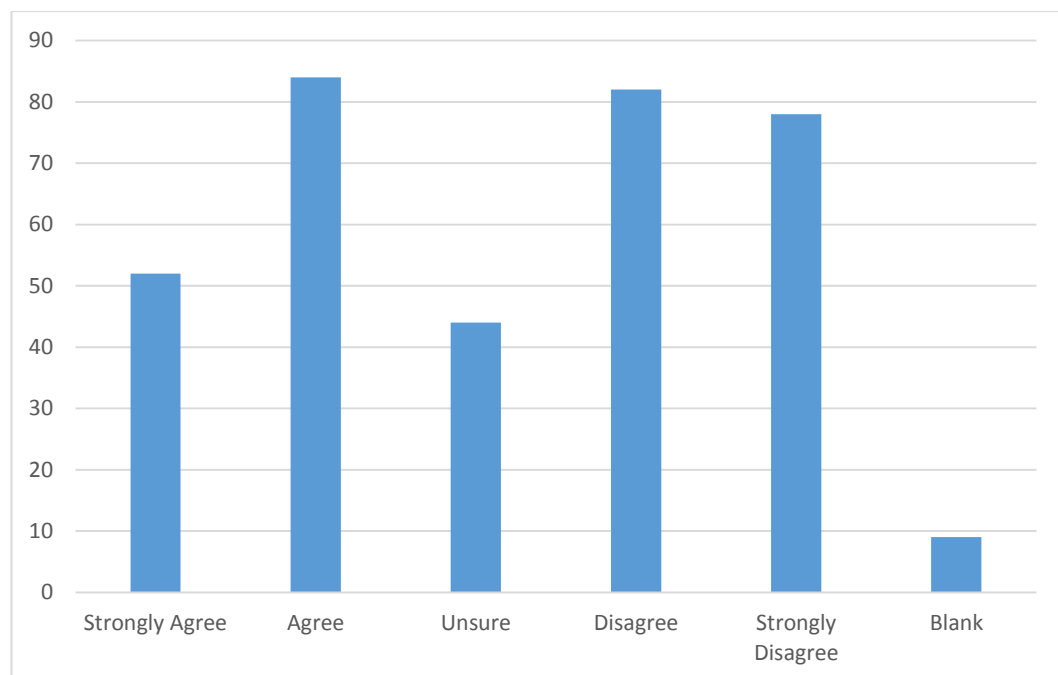
Question 10: I believe going to Mass is an essential aspect of being Catholic.

This statement produced more positive responses than the previous on. 44.6% of responses were in agreement or strong agreement with the statement, 21.8% were unsure and 33.6% were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.

Fig. 4.10 I believe going to Mass is an essential aspect of being Catholic
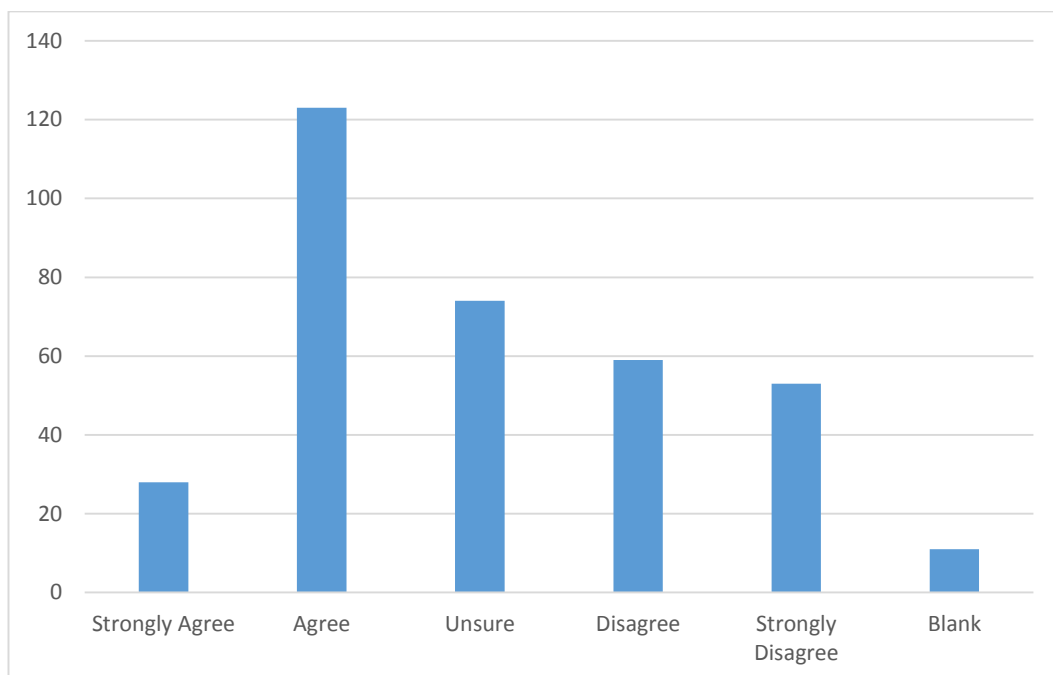
RE lessons

Question 11: RE teachers respect my freedom to choose whether to follow Catholic beliefs or not.

As expressed by the chart below, a clear majority of students (71.4% of responses) agreed or strongly agreed that RE teachers respect their freedom to choose whether to follow Catholic beliefs or not. However, it is still of note that 28.6% of responses were unsure or did not support this statement.

Fig. 4.11 RE teachers respect my freedom to choose whether to follow Catholic beliefs or not
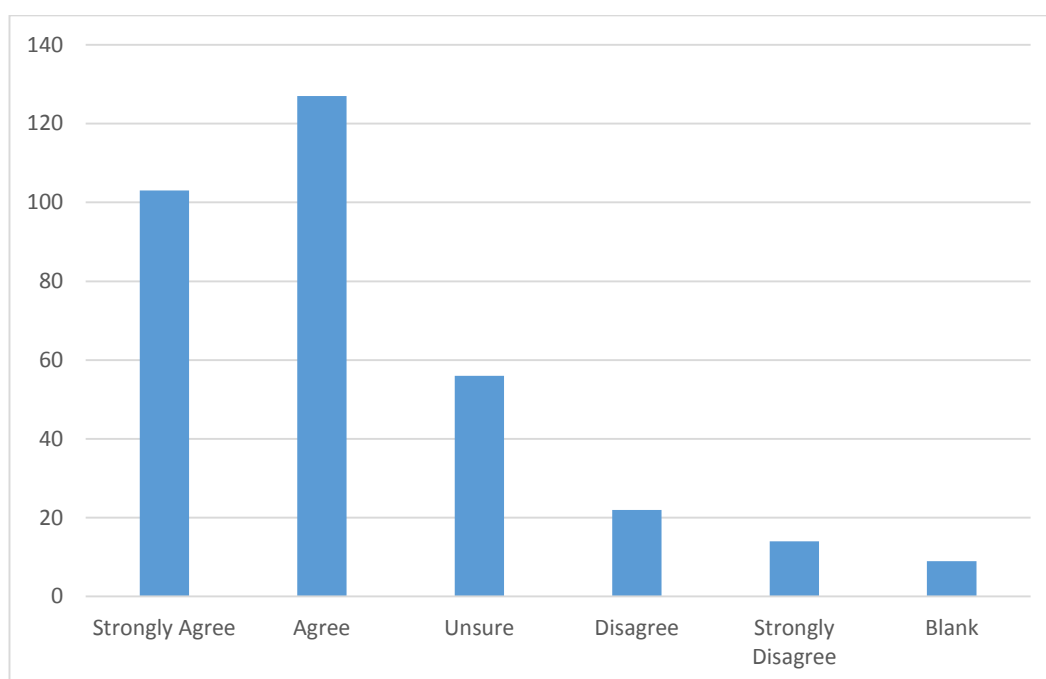
Question 12: RE lessons are relevant to my life.

Figure 4.12 shows that this question received a more balanced range of responses. 33.0% of responses were in agreement or strong agreement with the statement, 33.3% were unsure and 33.7% were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement. When comparing the results for this question across the year groups, Years 7 and 11 were most positive about the relevance of RE lessons to their lives, and Years 8, 9 and 10 were least positive, with more than two thirds in each of these three year groups being unsure or disagreeing that RE lessons are relevant to their lives.

Fig. 4.12 RE lessons are relevant to my life
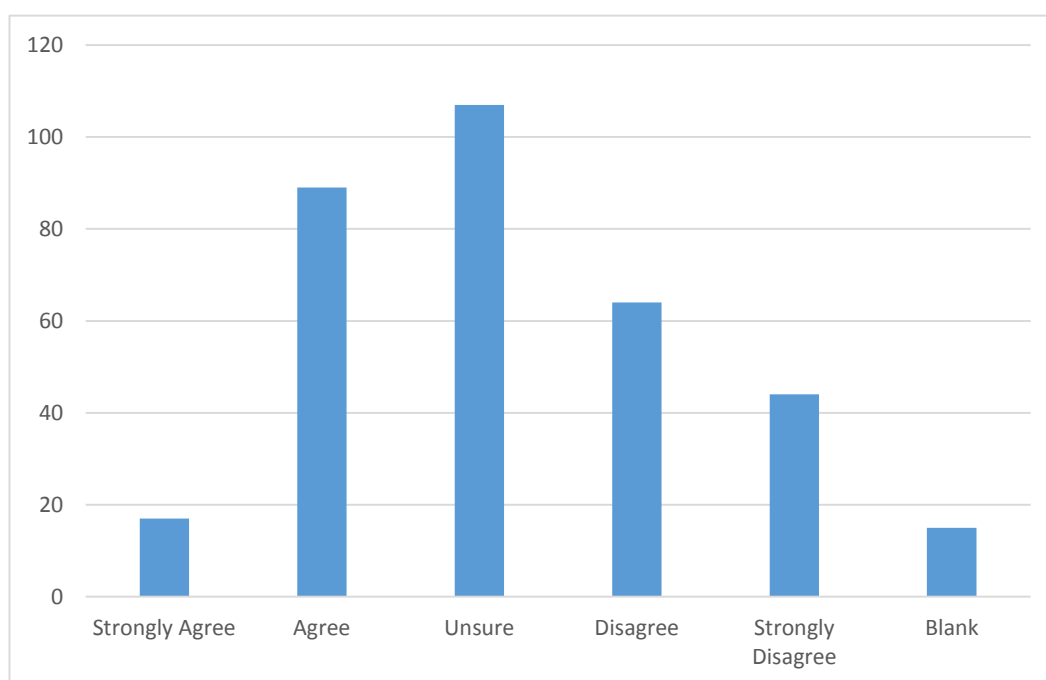
Question 13: I would like more time for prayer and reflection in RE lessons.

Students were fairly mixed in their response to this statement. The chart below

expressed that 30.0% of the responses were in agreement or strong agreement with

the statement, whereas 25.1% were unsure. The majority however, with 44.9% of

responses, disagreed or strongly disagreed that more time for prayer and reflection in

RE lessons was desired. When comparing results across year group for this question,

Key Stage 4 students were less positive, than Key Stage 3.

Fig. 4.13 *I would like more time for prayer and reflection in RE lessons*
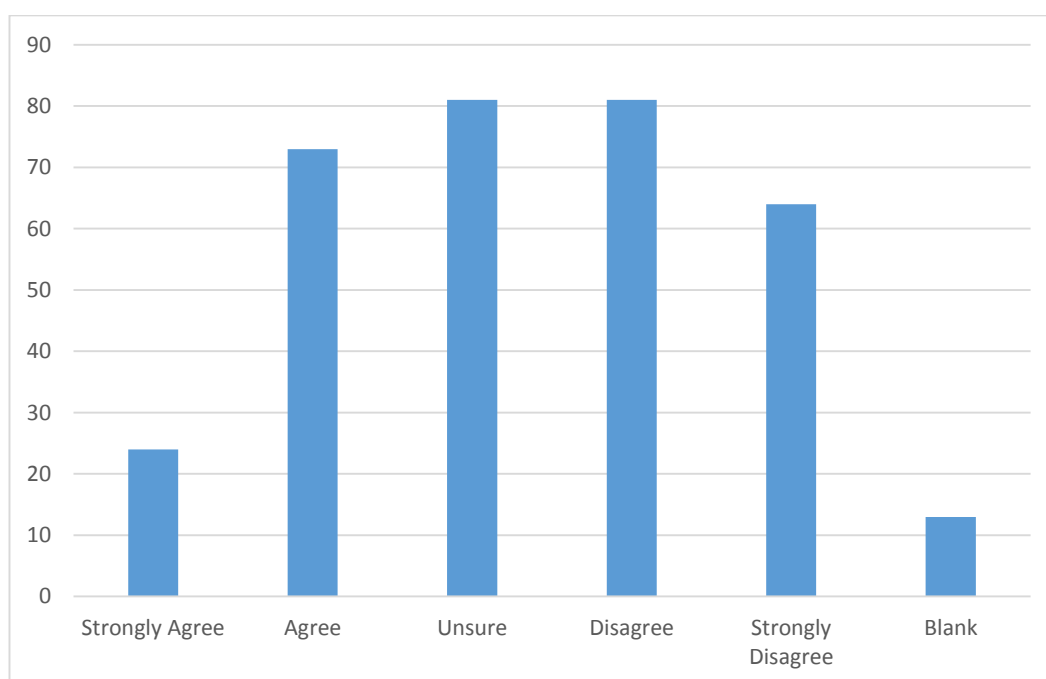
Question 14: Please give reasons for your answer to question 13.

Through a form of discourse analysis and from reading the responses given to this open question, I identified a number of recurrent themes which I have judged to be most prominent.

Respondents who supported the statement in desiring more time for prayer and reflection in RE lessons gave the following key reasons which are summarised in my own words:

- It is important to reflect

- It is a good opportunity to develop a relationship with God

- It is a chance to practise our faith

- I would like to pray in RE lessons as there are too many distractions at home

- It helps relieve stress

Respondents who were unsure or who disagreed with the statement gave the following key reasons which are summarised in my own words:

- I prefer to pray alone

- We should be learning, not praying – people can pray in their own time

- We shouldn't be forced to pray

- We do enough prayer in school at other times e.g., tutor time

- I don't believe in God

- It is irrelevant to me

- It is boring

Question 15: RE teachers use words I understand when discussing issues of faith.

Figure 4.14 indicates that a clear majority of students (72.4% of responses) agree or strongly agree that they understand the words used by RE teacher when discussing issues of faith.

Fig. 4.14 *RE teachers use words I understand when discussing issues of faith*
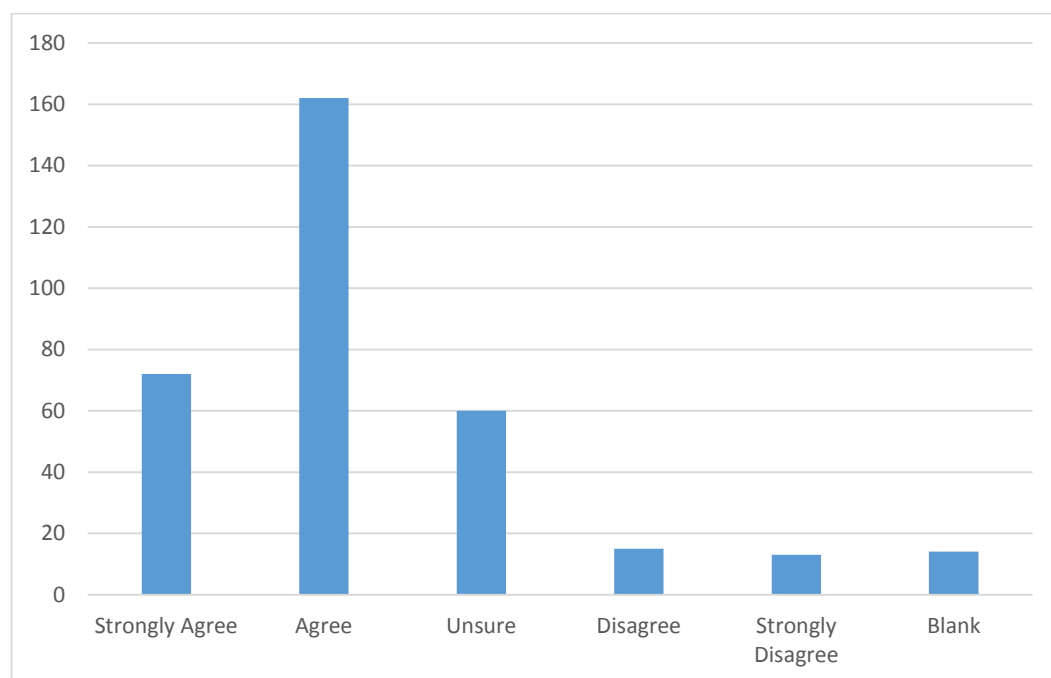
Question 16: RE teachers are caring

Students were affirmative, on the whole, of RE teachers being caring. The chart below shows that 74.6% of responses to this statement were in agreement or strong disagreement. Nonetheless 25.4% of responses were unsure or in disagreement or strong disagreement.

Fig. 4.15 RE teachers are caring
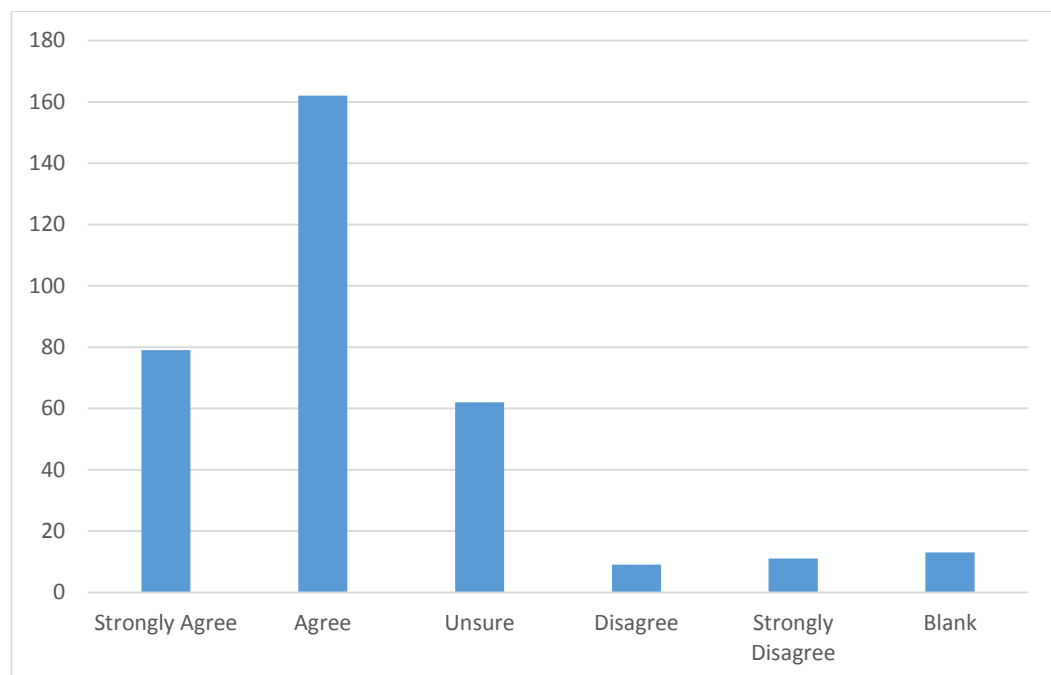
Question 17: Please give reasons for your answer to question 16.

The main reasons respondents gave to support why they felt RE teachers were caring were that they were:

- Understanding and encouraging

- Kind and helpful

- Accepting and respectful of different views held by students

- Calm and considerate, they don't shout

- Caring about students' feelings

For those students who were unsure or who did not think RE teachers were caring, they expressed the following main reasons:

- Some are strict

- They are not all nice

- Some impose their own views

Masses

Question 18: I appreciate the opportunity to attend Mass at school.

Figure 4.16 shows that just over half of respondents did appreciate the opportunity to attend Mass at school. 54.4% of responses were in agreement or strong agreement with the statement. However, 23.1% of the responses were unsure and 22.5% were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.

Fig. 4.16 I appreciate the opportunity to attend Mass at school
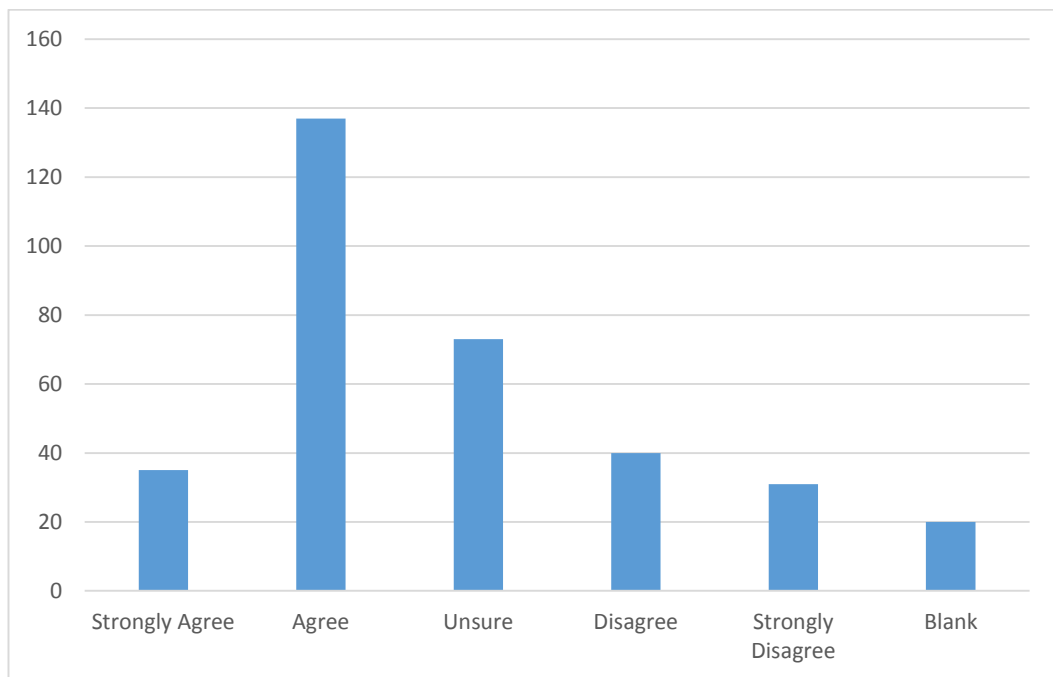
Question 19: List up to three things you enjoy about Mass at school

The aspects of Mass that respondents frequently noted in their responses that they enjoyed, in no particular order, were:

- Singing

- Taking part, sharing the jobs e.g., the offertory

- Time to reflect and pray and be with God

- Sense of community

- Time to relax

- Opportunity to go to Mass if no chance outside of school

- They are easy to understand

- Chance to see the talents of others

- Time with friends

- Drama

- Funny priests / chaplain

Question 20: List up to three things you think could be done to make Mass at school more engaging.

In response to this question a number of respondents expressed an interest in having more of the things they saw as positive about Mass in school, such as more drama, dance, music etc. Other common ideas expressed were:

- Make the Masses more interactive e.g., more discussion in the Mass

- Involve more students e.g., not just those involved in relevant clubs

- Teachers should be involved more

- Students shouldn't be forced to sing and do actions

- Have more time to pray and reflect

- Have more activities as part of the Mass

- Modernise it, make Mass more relevant to today

The impact of the wider school on my faith development

Question 21: Reflection days have made me think about my relationship with God.

The chart below indicates that the majority of respondents recognised a positive impact of reflection days in helping them to think about their relationship with God. 55.5% of responses were in agreement or strong agreement with the statement. 23.3% of responses were unsure and 21.2% were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.

Fig. 4.17 Reflection days have made me think about my relationship with God
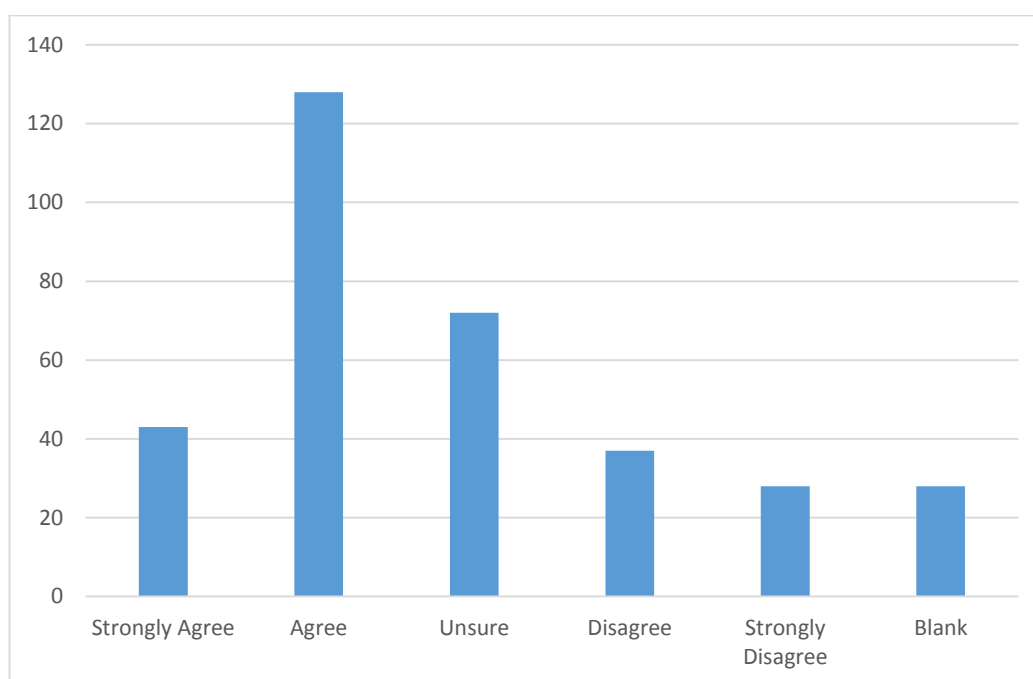
Question 22: Please give reasons for your answer to question 21.

Respondents who felt that reflection days have made them think about their relationship with God offered the following main reasons for this:

- It helps to be somewhere peaceful to reflect on God

- They give you time out to think about God

- They help you strengthen your relationship with God

- They are done in a fun and relevant way

- They make you think God might exist

However, respondents who were unsure or who disagreed with the statement in question 21 identified reasons to commonly be:

- They are not engaging enough

- There is not much actual reflection

- I don't believe in God

- The days are more about being with friends then God

- It is not a spiritual experience

- It is too difficult to think about God as having friends there is too distracting

Question 23: Tutors are genuine in their leading of prayer carousel.

The chart below indicates that 49.3% of responses were in agreement or strong agreement with this statement. 29.4% of responses were unsure and 21.3% were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.

Fig. 4.18 Tutors are genuine in their leading of prayer carousel
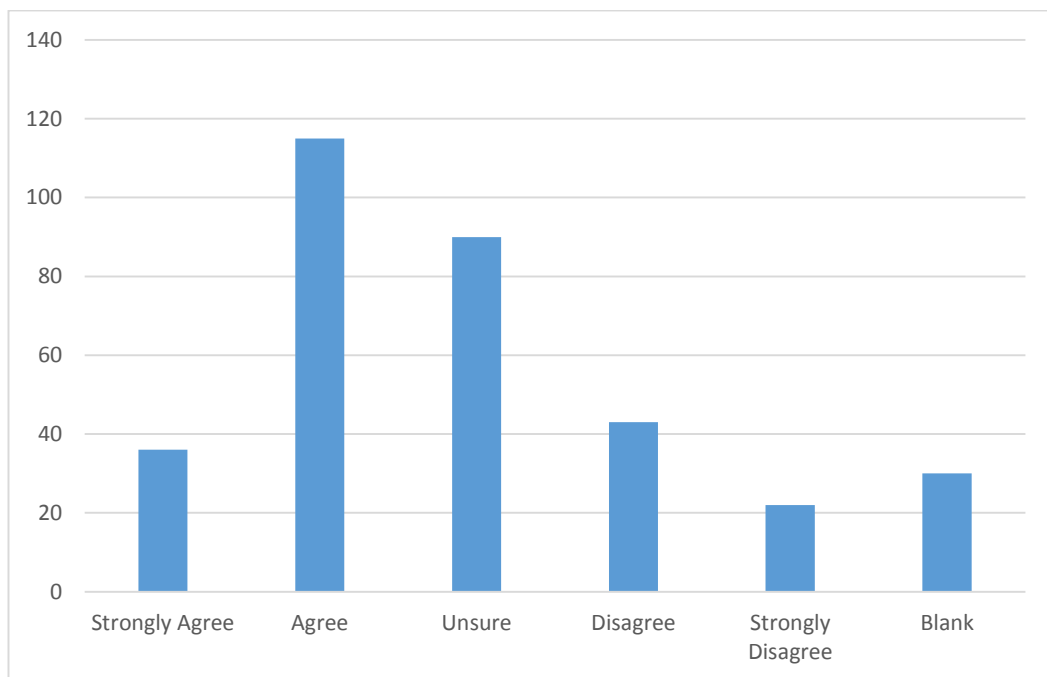
Question 24: I would like to be more involved in leading prayer at school.

Figure 4.19 indicates that a clear majority of respondents were not interested in being more involved in leading prayer at school. 64.8% of responses were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement. Only 8.5% of the responses agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Fig. 4.19 I would like to be more involved in leading prayer at school
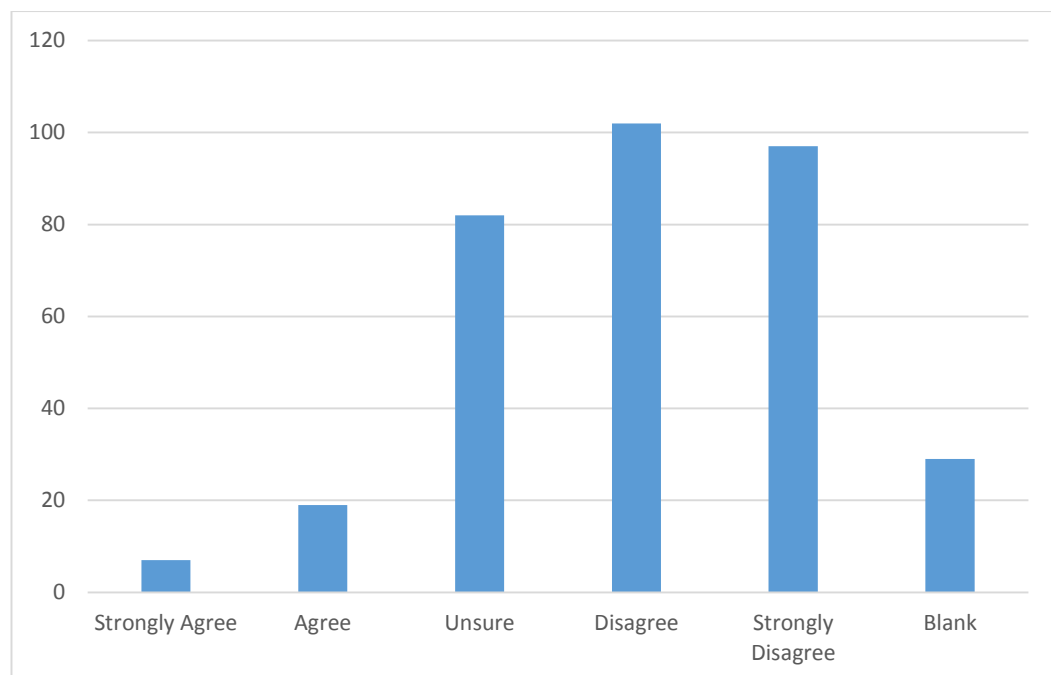
Question 25: My teachers are good role models in following the way of Christ.

The chart below indicates that most respondents, with 53.9% of responses, were in agreement or strong agreement with the statement that their teachers are good role models in following the way of Christ. However, 30.8% of responses were unsure and 15.3% were in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.

Fig. 4.20 My teachers are good role models in following the way of Christ
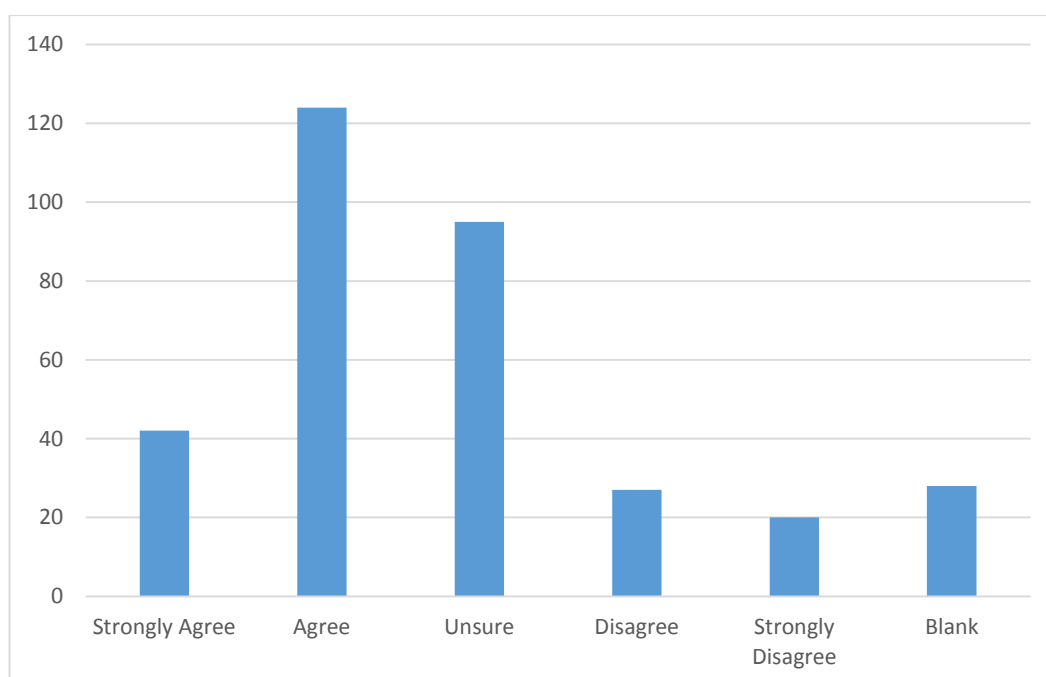
Question 26: Please give reasons for your answer to question 25.

The responses expressed a variety of reasons to support why some students felt teacher are good role models in following the way of Christ. Common themes I identified from the responses were that teachers were seen as:

- Caring

- Giving Christian advice

- Showing students that Christ is in everyone

- Being non-judgmental

- Being helpful and genuine in their concern for students

However, for those respondents who were unsure or who disagreed that teachers were good role models in following the way of Christ, common reasons given were:

- Many skip over prayers

- They don't always display Christian characteristics

- They don't always care if students follow the way of Christ

- Some act as though it's just part of their job and don't genuinely care about it

- Some make backhanded comments about Catholicism

A number of respondents to this question simply noted that teachers varied, some were good role models in this respect, but some were not. Other respondents were not comfortable in giving reasons and stated that they did not want to answer this question.

(b) Interviews

For ethical reasons, the three members of staff that I interviewed will be referred to as Interviewee A, Interviewee B and Interviewee C. The transcript of Interviewee A's interview can been found in Appendix III. I will now present a summary of the key points the interviewees made in answer to the five questions I asked them.

Question 1: How do you think we can best serve our students in their faith development?

Each of the interviewees referred to providing experiences of the faith, such as daily prayer, Masses, celebrating the liturgical calendar and retreats. Interviewee A developed this point, by explaining that the experiences provided should include a balance between the traditional and more modern approach to the faith. They also emphasised the importance of ensuring these experiences are interactive for students.

Interviewee B highlighted the need to have the right staff in place to lead students in their faith development, to best ensure that students will be engaged in the various activities provided. Interviewee B also stressed the importance of catechesis in relation to the sacraments, given that many students will not practise them outside of school. Therefore when students are given opportunities to celebrate the sacraments in school, they will then have a better understanding of what they are.

Interviewee C highlighted that a key way to serve our students in their faith development is by being good role models for them, thereby giving them an experience of what it means to be a Christian. Another way of serving our students, emphasised by Interviewee C, was the provision of high quality RE.

Question 2: To what extent are you concerned about the 'pick and mix' approach of young people to Catholicism (e.g., some being less interested in going to Mass, but happy to show concern for the welfare of others), which could be argued as leading to a dilution of the faith in its traditional sense?

Interviewees A and C expressed concern over some young people not being interested in going to Mass on Sunday. Interviewee A said they were concerned that without feeling a sense of community, young people will not be interested in going to Mass. They were also concerned that young people may be put off Sunday Mass if they have wonderful, spiritual experiences at other places and events, such as Christian music festivals, or on pilgrimage, but then don't feel a closeness to God back in their own church.

Interviewee C recognised that young people do 'pick and mix', but highlighted that this is perhaps nothing new. Interviewee C emphasised the need to provide students with a range of experiences of Catholic Christianity to help engage both the students who are interested in the more traditional aspects of the faith, as well as those who prefer a more modern approach.

Interviewee B, however, recognised that young people are often less engaged in the more traditional aspects of faith and regarded that as only natural. The point was made that the school has many priorities and cannot hope to fully engage students in all aspects of the Catholic faith in the time it has with them. Interviewees A and B both emphasising that faith should not be forced on young people as that will just turn them away from it. For Interviewee B it was more important that students are

given a comfortable experience of the faith so that, as an adult, they will have a more positive view of the faith.

Question 3: How do you think the spiritual development and formation of staff should be supported at Notre Dame Catholic School?

In answer to this question, both Interviewee A and C referred to the value of a staff retreat, as time out for staff to engage with their faith. Interviewee C expressed it in terms of 'refilling the well'. Interviewee C noted that for key members of staff responsible for spiritual leadership in the school, their own spiritual formation is not being developed sufficiently by the school. They also commented that if the role is seen as a vocation, then the school should provide opportunities for the spiritual development of staff. In addition to staff retreats, Interviewee C also noted that giving teachers sabbatical also plays a role in spiritual formation for staff.

Interviewee B, however, expressed concern that in reality the school does not have 'the capacity to have that responsibility'. They recognised that it is difficult to support staff in this regard when there are so many pressures on the time of staff in a school. Even when opportunities are available for them, such as a weekly Mass in school, many do not take advantage of this due to other demands on their time. Interviewee B preferred to regard support for the spiritual development of staff in terms of looking out for staff well-being, as part of that includes their faith development.

Question 4: How can you contribute to staff being effective role models in following the way of Christ and demonstrating confidence in communicating the Catholic faith to students?

All interviewees agreed that what was key was leadership and being an effective role model themselves, to 'model best practice' (Interviewee A). This could be in terms of, for example, how they interact with staff and students or how they lead an assembly or prayer time. Interviewee C highlighted that they support staff in this way by being an effective servant leader. Interviewee B emphasised the importance of practising gospel values, leading by example in doing this and having the expectation that all staff would do this too.

Question 5: The Bishops' Conference states that RE is 'not simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process.' How far do you feel Notre Dame Catholic School achieves this requirement?

This proved to be a contentious question. Interviewee B didn't know if they could say that RE as a subject is 'foundation of the entire educational process' at the school, but rather 'The Catholic faith and spiritual element of the school does underpin everything that we do.' Interviewee B recognised that the school does not achieve the 10% of curriculum time for RE required by the Bishops' Conference, but did not feel this had a negative impact on students achieving a great Catholic education at the school.

The interviewees disagreed over the status that RE has as a core subject in the school. Interviewee B felt that it is recognised as a core subject, but is perhaps not perceived as such by students. They felt that was probably due to parental attitudes to

the subject and the school has a role to play in attempting to adjust those attitudes. Interviewee C, however, felt that RE was 'simply one subject among many' in the school. They pointed out that over the years the subject has experienced a decrease in curriculum time and although an action point from the last Section 48 Report was to increase curriculum time for RE at Key Stages 3 and 4, this has not been achieved. Interviewee C highlighted that the impact of having less curriculum time than other core and option GCSE subjects is that they do not perceive it as an important subject.

Interviewee A believed that RE does have a high status in the school as it is a compulsory subject at GCSE and all students in the Sixth-Form are required to attend RE lessons. Interviewee A also highlighted that RE is line managed by the Headteacher, which emphasises its importance.

4.3 Interpretation of Results

In this section I shall explore the findings elicited from the questionnaire and the interviews within the context of the issues raised in the Literature Review. I will structure the interpretation of results in relation to the three themes explored in Chapter 2, i.e. attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith; Catholic servant leadership; and the role of witness and vocation.

(a) Attitudes of Young People to the Catholic Faith

The literature identified that religion struggles to engage young people today alongside other interests in their life. My questionnaire survey corroborates this, as only just over a third of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that religion was important to them. However, on looking further at how far religion is important to

students across the year groups, it was evident (from results presented in Figure 4.8) that religion was more likely to be important to Year 7 students than not, less likely to be important than not for Year 9 students, but then by Year 11 it had become more likely to be important to them than not. This supports the view of Interviewee B who commented that 'these things go in cycles', with young people can move away from the faith or interest in it, yet may later return. Additionally, Interviewee C stated that:

> . . . my fear [is] that they're leaving and departing, but my hope it they come back to it. I see rejecting faith or having time out as normal.

We therefore cannot expect to see immediate results to efforts to provide for young people's faith development, but rather remember that we are sowing seeds which may not come to fruition for many years. However, what is important is that we are supporting young people in their faith journey, wherever they are on it.

With regard to attitudes to the practice of faith, over half the students surveyed (52.2% of responses) were unsure or disagreed that they felt comfortable being quiet to explore a relationship with God, for example through prayer. This is not surprising when young people today live fast past lives, connected to technology throughout the day, through mobile phones or computers. As we often observe in the classroom, they can struggle to sit still. Catholicism involves quiet time for prayer and reflection; this is something that young people may need to practise before they can fully engage with it. Interviewee A recognised this, saying that in school we should:

> . . . not be afraid to target things like silence and getting them used to things like that, although it might seem like counter-cultural to be silent, to be still.

Despite this, it is evident that Catholicism and faith in God was still relevant to many students surveyed, given that almost half the respondents stated they did believe in

God and 59.2% of the responses agreed with the statement 'I am Catholic'. However, the higher figure for the last statement could be due more to students identifying with a Catholic upbringing rather than a personal faith.

One of the factors suggested for why young people are less engaged in Catholicism these days is because there is a weaker parental influence. Vermeer (2009:202) observed that nowadays 'many parents no longer take the religious upbringing of their children very seriously.' It is notable from the questionnaire survey that although 65.2% of students in Years 7-11 are Catholic, only 39.9% of responses indicated that respondents were encouraged by their parents or carers to go to Mass. Such a trend was also noted by Interviewee A, who said that rather than bringing their children up in the faith:

> I know lots of people who are changing to the opinion that they will let their children decide when they're older.

With less support for religion in the home, it is inevitably harder for Catholic schools to encourage young people to explore the faith and develop a relationship with God. However, it was encouraging to see that the majority of students surveyed were nonetheless still open to the idea that true happiness can be found in God. Only 28.2% of responses disagreed or strongly disagreed with this idea. This implies that that the Christian message promoted in the school is at least being listened to, explored by students and accepted by some. Furthermore, a number of students commented in the questionnaire that they appreciated the opportunity to go to Mass at school as they might not have the chance to go outside:

I . . . appreciate the fact that we can go to church, when we may not be given the opportunity to go outside school.

(Student 42)

I almost never go to church on Sundays so it is nice to go occasionally.

(Student 91)

[It is an] opportunity to go when otherwise you may be busy.

(Student 157)

With regard to attitudes to Mass, the literature highlighted a 'pick-and-mix' approach (Bishops' Conference, 2000:12) with young people often rejecting the more traditional aspects of Catholicism, such as Mass. Casson (2013:212) observed in her research that even those students who identified themselves as Catholic did not regard going to Mass to be 'an essential element of their Catholicity.' Of the students I surveyed, over half (55.4% of responses) were unsure or disagreed that going to Mass is an essential aspect of being Catholic. With so many holding this viewpoint, it is therefore important for the school to help the students understand why Mass is such a significant aspect of the Catholic faith and to also consider how they can better engage young people in the Mass. Respondents to the student questionnaire highlighted, for example, that what they enjoy about Mass in school is the singing, taking part and homilies that are age appropriate.

Lytch (2004:25) noted that one key way churches engage young people is by giving them a sense of belonging. Interviewee A also raised this point, arguing that a key reason why young people do engage in the Mass is because of the 'community element'. He said that:

If the young people don't feel a sense of belonging, they won't go to Mass.

This point was echoed in the questionnaire responses. When students were asked to comment on what they enjoyed about Mass in school, many gave reasons such as:

> We are all together as a community / Part of a community, enjoy time as a year or school / I get to spend time with my friends / Togetherness

Young people will therefore feel more positive about Mass if they feel included.

To improve the attitude of students to Mass in school further, spiritual leaders in the school should therefore consider what further efforts could be made to reinforce and celebrate the community element of the Mass. For example, some of the reasons students gave for how Mass at school could be made more engaging (Question 20) included:

> Involve everyone.
>
> (Student 65)

> I am Church of England and sometimes I feel that it is quite pointed that I am not Catholic and cannot fully participate in all aspects of mass even though I believe in the same faith of Christianity.
>
> (Student 71)

This is an important reminder that, although the school is Catholic and celebrates the Catholic sacraments, not everyone in the school community is Catholic. Spiritual leaders need to be conscious of being inclusive in religious celebrations and convey to all members of the community that their participation is welcomed and valued, yet also explain clearly when and why there are times when non-Catholics cannot participate in the sacraments to the same degree as Catholics.

How to engage young people in faith development opportunities is clearly a challenging question. In response to the open questions on what students enjoy about Mass at school (Question 19), what they feel could be done to make Mass at school

more engaging (Question 20) and reasons for their response to whether reflection days made them think about their relationship with God (Question 21), many students commented that they want to be engaged in a fun and interactive way. However, the challenge is in finding the right balance, so that students can get something positive from the experience in relation to their faith development and not lose sight of the purpose of the experience.

Many students responded positively to Question 21, with 55.5% of responses in agreement or strong agreement that reflection days made them think about their relationship with God. Reasons given for this included:

> Because I have the time to think about what my relationship with God is like and how I can improve it.
>
> (Student 19)

> You get time to evaluate your relationship with God and are given ideas to make it stronger.
>
> (Student 190)

Many students also commented on how much they enjoyed the fun activities and that made thinking about God more engaging. However, for the 44.5% of students who were unsure or disagreed that the reflection days helped their relationship with God, the message some of them gave in their reasons was to be careful not to make the days fun at the expense of real reflection. Student 234 wrote:

> I think the games and fun distract you from why they are doing what they are.
>
> (Student 234)

Although these were only the views of some students, it is important to be aware of them in an attempt to better ensure reflection days can benefit the faith development of all students.

(b) Catholic Servant Leadership

The most relevant model of leadership in exploring how best to provide for young people's faith development in Catholic schools is that of servant leadership. One of the key ways in which the interviewees agreed we can best serve young people in their faith development is by providing them with opportunities to experience the faith. Interviewee B spoke about celebrating the liturgical calendar and providing opportunities for prayer and the sacraments. Interviewee C mentioned the provision of assemblies and Year group reflection days as other opportunities for students to have faith experiences. Interviewees A and C additionally emphasised the importance of giving students a balance between traditional and modern experiences to cater for different students' preferences.

Another area in which my research has highlighted the need for seeking the right balance in relation to faith experiences is the practice of prayer. Whilst 47.9% of responses to the questionnaire indicated that students were comfortable with being quiet to explore a relationship with God, eg. through prayer, 51.9% were unsure or uncomfortable with this. For Question 24 (I would like to be more involved in leading prayer at school), a clear majority of students did not want to play a more active role in the prayer life of the school as 64.8% disagreed with the statement. This shows that whilst the experience of prayer is a key element of faith development of young people in a Catholic school, it has to be managed in the right way and not be overly imposed if students are going to be receptive to it.

It is notable that 70% of responses to Question 13 (I would like more time for prayer and reflection in RE lesson) indicated that students were unsure or did not want more

time for prayer and reflection in lessons. Key reasons given for this were that students felt they did enough prayer at other times of the school day and they wanted to focus on learning in lessons, not praying. Comments included:

> RE is for learning so we can get good grades, we can pray at home or another time.
>
> <div align="right">(Student 82)</div>

> A lesson is for learning, not for praying. That's what we have mass for, don't shoe-horn prayer into everything simply because it's related.
>
> <div align="right">(Student 174)</div>

However, other students were more positive about wanting to pray in RE lessons:

> I feel to be able to understand religion, first you need to connect with God and to find hope and happiness.
>
> <div align="right">(Student 122)</div>

> Because it would let me pray easily without having all the distractions that are at home.
>
> <div align="right">(Student 267)</div>

This indicates that whilst some students do not appreciate or desire prayer time at school, others do, especially if they don't get the chance at home.

Spiritual leaders in the school should therefore continue to offer prayer opportunities, but not in such a way that it is overbearing as that can devalue it for students. Interviewee B stated of students that:

> I don't expect them to necessarily all feel comfortable praying out loud, singing out loud, doing the sign of the cross overtly in front of their friends. If we did that I think I'd feel like we'd be forcing it upon them.

Catholic servant leadership in the context of faith development of young people means leaders not imposing their own views on young people, but rather supporting an open and tolerant environment in which young people feel free to practise the faith in the manner in which they feel comfortable.

Nuzzi (1999:262) emphasises that Jesus teaches us to serve; we should not be 'insisting on one's own way.' I was therefore keen to discover whether students in the case study school felt that RE teachers respected their freedom to choose whether to follow Catholic beliefs of not (Question 11). It is reassuring that 70.8% of the responses indicated that students felt their freedom in this regard was respected. However, it is still of concern that 29.2% of responses were unsure or disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

A later question in the questionnaire, asking students if they felt RE teachers were caring (Question 16) and then asking for their reasons (Question 17), highlighted that students did value respect for their beliefs from RE teachers. Some students noted that they felt RE teachers were caring because:

> They don't judge your choice of religion and beliefs.
>
> (Student 4)

> They respect you and your beliefs so that if there is a problem and you're not sure they will give you the point on both sides so you can choose.
>
> (Student 70)

> They accept everybody for who they are, no matter whether they are Catholic or not.
>
> (Student 201)

However, some students were critical of the RE teachers in not being as respectful of different views as they would have liked:

> I had an RE teacher who almost enforced [their] beliefs on us and if we had a query it was like we couldn't disagree with [them], which makes it less enjoyable and harder to want to have a faith.
>
> (Student 146)

> There have been incidents when the teachers don't let you properly explore your faith and give you an answer you don't want and then just move on whilst you're left confused.
>
> (Student 274)

These last two comments highlight that RE teachers should always be watchful of the way in which they speak to students to prevent any perception that they are imposing their own beliefs on others, rather than respecting the freedom of students to choose and express their own beliefs.

In providing for faith development of students, the literature emphasises the importance of engaging young people actively in their faith development (e.g., Gallagher; 2001:10, Humfrey; 2002:82). My research also highlighted the value of interactivity, showing that we can best serve students in helping them engage with faith by giving them opportunities to be active, whether this is at Mass or in the classroom or on a reflection day, for example. We therefore need to be sensitive to how students actually want to engage and what they feel comfortable with.

Comments from the student questionnaire indicate that this is an area for improvement for the case study school as in response to Question 20 (List up to three things you think could be done to make Mass at school more engaging) some students gave the following reasons:

> Involve students in a way they want.
>
> > (Student 48)

> Don't force people to sing.
>
> > (Student 138)

> Another thing I would like is for people not to be pressured by the teachers to do actions to a song, because I don't believe that it is fair to making [people] dance or do actions just because it looks good, only if they want to or are comfortable to do it.
>
> > (Student 154)

However, it can be a hard balance to strike when students ask to be involved in the Mass, but certain roles in the Mass are less popular than others. For example, not everyone likes to read, but there are a number of reading roles that need to be filled.

One option might be to involve students more in the Mass by catering for their different gifts and talents. For example, other ideas given in response to Question 20 were:

> More drama for everyone to take part in.
>
> (Student 19)

> More interactive ways of prayer, e.g., dancing
>
> (Student 94)

Another way in which spiritual leaders serve students in providing opportunities for faith development is through the RE curriculum. Holman (2002:75) and Groome (2011:5) both identify the importance of classroom pedagogy that is relevant to the lives of young people and engages them in an open and accepting way. Interviewee C highlighted that one of the key ways they felt we can best serve students in their faith development is through good quality RE.

In the questionnaire, students were asked if they felt RE lessons were relevant to their lives (Question 12). The danger is that if they don't see the lessons as relevant, they will be less engaged in the lessons and therefore less receptive to the opportunity the lessons provide for their faith development. In response to Question 12 students were evenly split with a third agreeing that they felt RE lessons were relevant to their lives, a third being unsure and a third disagreeing. These results are

concerning as they imply a significant number of students did not appreciate the positive impact the lessons they learn in RE can have on their own lives.

(c) Role of Witness and Vocation

The Literature Review and student questionnaire survey both indicated that young people are less likely to be engaged with the Church through their home than in previous years. The home-school-church triangle is no longer as prevalent in the lives of the young as it used to be. There is therefore a heavier burden of responsibility on Catholic schools to nurture the future generation of Catholics. According to Grace (2008:10) and Pope Paul VI (1976: n.464), if we are to pass on the faith then teachers need to be witnesses. Students can then see faith in action with teachers providing them with a sacramental perspective, living their lives as disciples of Christ. This helps students to see that following the Catholic faith is a credible way of life for themselves too.

I was therefore keen to evaluate how far students in the case study school perceive their teachers to be good witnesses. Rather than use the word 'witness', which I thought some students might not understand, I asked them to give their opinion on the statement 'My teachers are good role models in following the way of Christ' (Question 25). Whilst 53.9% of responses were in agreement or strong agreement with the statement, a significant percentage of 46.1% of responses were unsure or in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement.

Some students felt uncomfortable with giving their reasons to Question 25, stating they did not want to answer, whereas others were very open. Reasons given by students to agree with the statement in Question 25 included:

> My teachers are supportive throughout school . . . I like how they listen to what Jesus says and that helps them to help us.
>
> (Student 81)

> They never let anything bad go unsaid in class and they always try to make sure that everyone is happy in their work in class.
>
> (Student 215)

However, students who were unsure or disagreed with the statement in Question 25 gave reasons such as:

> A lot of them skip over prayers and do not go into detail and not all of them display Christian characteristics.
>
> (Student 36)

> Most teachers aren't Catholic or religious at all and some teachers can make backhanded comments about Catholicism or religion.
>
> (Student 184)

The comment from Student 184 is interesting as the case study school actually comprises of 82.65% Christian teachers, of which half are Catholic. Given such a high percentage of Christian staff and that all teachers who are appointed agree to support the Catholic ethos of the school, the response from Student 184 is very concerning.

The school's Catholic ethos should also be supported by teachers' contributions to the prayer life of the school. One such way is by tutors leading a prayer carousel. This is when, at various points throughout the year, tutors plan and deliver a prayer session in morning registration for each tutor group in their year group, over a 6 week period. I was keen to see whether the prayer carousels were effective ways of

students seeing faith in action from the tutors, so I asked in Question 23 for respondents to comment on the statement 'Tutors are genuine in their leading of prayer carousel.' 50.7% of responses were unsure or in disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement. Interviewee A was aware of this as an issue in the school and commented that they would be providing support to teachers to help them in leading tutor group prayers.

From the results of the student questionnaire, it is therefore evident that teachers are not always perceived as fully supportive of the Catholic ethos of the school. If, as Holman (2002:77) argues, 'Teachers . . . do not just do jobs, they fulfil a ministry . . . founded upon a vocation from God', then teachers need support in the vocational aspect of their job if they are to be good witnesses to Christ and thereby contribute effectively in this way to the faith development of students. Interviewee B commented that the school can support staff in their vocation by, for example:

> . . . induction for new staff . . providing a session in an inset . . organise maybe a staff retreat.

Interviewee C argued that the spiritual development and formation of RE staff is being 'neglected'. He explained that:

> . . . the wells need refilling and that doesn't just happen. I think our spiritual journey is private, it's not, if you like, professional, but it is, because it's a vocation. The Church teaches that being an RE teacher is a vocation, being a teacher in general, rather, is a vocation. Then, yes . . . I think the school should provide opportunities.

Interviewee C also spoke about the value of sabbatical and explained that:

> I think it is a really good model. I think there is value in people having a bit of time out to recharge, particularly in terms of spiritual formation.

However, Interviewee B was more pragmatic about time constraints in schools and made the point that:

> I think in terms of being responsible for staff's faith development, we haven't got the capacity to have that responsibility.

Clearly there are many demands on the finances and time of staff in schools, but with the results from the student questionnaire indicating that students do not always perceive teachers as being as supportive of the Catholic ethos of the school as they should be, this suggests a greater input into the spiritual development and formation of staff is required.

With regard to supporting staff to be good role models in following the way of Christ, all the interviewees referred to the importance of themselves leading by example and modelling best practice. Interviewee B stated that:

> . . . if I've got gospel values at the heart of how I deal with people, then I can have the expectation that other people will do the same.

Interviewee C also spoke about modelling:

> I model how I approach problems. I model how I approach students and other staff and how I do that should match the Church's teaching about what leadership is, which is servant leader.

This modelling from the spiritual leaders of the school is essential in demonstrating to other teachers how they should act as followers of the way of Christ and therefore plays a key role in encouraging staff to put this in to practice.

Whilst provision for students' faith development in a Catholic school is the responsibility of all teachers, a key opportunity for the faith development of students is through RE lessons. This is not just from the content of the lessons, but also from student exposure to the witness of their RE teachers. Students inevitably look to RE

teachers more than other teachers to be exemplar role models in following the way of

Christ. RE as a subject should have a special status in the school. According to the

Bishops' Conference (2000a:n.4) RE:

> . . . is never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire
> educational process.

If this is the case, students should have the opportunity to experience the witness and

vocation of their RE teachers on a regular basis throughout their school week.

However, not all those I interviewed agreed that the Bishops' Conference

requirement for RE given above was being met. Interviewee B emphasised the need

to acknowledge the demands of 'other priorities of the school on results and exam

outcomes', but was confident that:

> The Catholic faith and spiritual element of the school does underpin
> everything that we do . . . I think [our students] have experienced a Catholic
> education because of what's taught in their Religious Education classes, but
> also what they experience outside, because we have people who run those
> things that fundamentally support that ethos and know what they're doing.

However, in response to the question as to whether RE has the recognised status

across the school of being a core subject, Interviewee B acknowledged that 'there's

probably a perception among students that it's not'. Interviewee B's reason for why

that is the case was that they felt it was 'probably based on their parental influence'.

Interviewee C, however, strongly conveyed a personal view that RE did not have the

status of being a core subject in the school and that students had the perception as

such because the subject did not have sufficient curriculum time. Interviewee C

explained that:

> I would point you to our recent inspection report, Diocesan inspection report,
> which identifies a shortfall in regards to curriculum time. If it's not simply

one subject among many you would say that it would have more time, it would be core, and be seen as a core subject. In this school there is lip service to this.

Interviewee C went on to explain the impact this has on the perception of students to the importance of the subject:

Students in Years 10 and 11 only have two lessons of RE, as opposed to three for all other subjects. So when they choose their A Levels, when they are thinking about what should I study, in the back of their mind is an experience which says RE is not that important.

If the case study school is to fulfil the aim of a Catholic school to educate the whole person 'through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation' (The Congregation for Catholic Education; 1997:n.5), then RE must play a prominent role in this. Opportunity for students' faith development will be greatly enhanced by more time to learn about the faith in RE lessons and more exposure to the witness and vocation of their RE teachers.

4.4 Summary

The overall aim of this research project was to explore how well provision for students' faith development was being received and how key staff members involved in spiritual leadership of the school agreed on how best to provide for the faith development of students. Research was conducted using questions relating to:

i)   Attitudes of young people to the Catholic faith

ii)   How well staff were acting as Catholic servant leaders

iii)   How effective staff were in acting as witness and demonstrating the vocational aspect of their job

On analysing the data from the student questionnaire responses and the comments from the interviewees, a number of salient points were highlighted, as outlined below:

- Students in the middle Years of 8, 9 and 10 were less interested in religion and were less likely to find RE relevant.

- Students were generally positive with regard to Masses in school. They like the community and creative aspects of Mass, however they wanted Mass to be inclusive for all and not feel forced to participate in ways they were uncomfortable with.

- Students generally viewed RE staff as being kind and caring, but were slightly less positive with regard to all staff being good role models in following the way of Christ.

- Spiritual leaders interviewed disagreed over the status of RE as a core subject.

- Spiritual development of staff was identified as an area that is not being effectively catered for in the school.

In the next chapter I will summarise the main findings of my research project, discuss its limitations and present recommendations for the case study school.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the provision of faith development in a case study Catholic school. Not having the capacity to conduct a longitudinal study, I chose to examine this issue by researching student and staff perception of faith development in the present. Chapter 2 highlighted key points identified in the literature relating to young people's attitudes to the Catholic faith, how staff in Catholic schools can best implement Jesus' model of servant leadership in supporting students' faith development and the importance of teachers' witness and vocation in demonstrating faith in action, to encourage young people to develop their own faith.

My research set out to explore how far the practice in the case study school matched with the principles covered in the literature as to how best to provide for students' faith development in Catholic schools. Attitudes and perceptions of students were gained through a quantitative questionnaire survey and this data was triangulated with the attitudes of three members of staff who are key spiritual leaders in the school. The results of this research are presented and interpreted in Chapter 4.

In this chapter I will summarise the main findings of my research, identify implications for leadership, present limitations of the project and finally propose recommendations for action in the case study school.

5.2 Summary of Main Findings and Implications for Leadership

With regard to the provision of faith development in Catholic schools, I have identified three salient findings in relationship to leadership, i.e., Attitudes of Young

People to the Catholic Faith; Catholic Servant Leadership; and Role of Witness and Vocation. These will be elaborated in the following.

a) Attitudes of Young People to the Catholic Faith

Both the literature and student questionnaire survey highlighted that religion is less important to the lives of young people than in the past. The home-church link is now weaker and young people are not encouraged to go to Mass as much as they used to. However, students participating in the survey indicated that they did still appreciate the opportunity to go to Mass at school, especially if they didn't get the opportunity to often go outside of school.

Mass remains a key element of experiencing the Catholic faith in Catholic schools and whilst many students stated they would like Mass in school to be more interactive and engaging for all, they gave many positive points that they enjoyed about Mass, notably the community aspect and the lively singing. Spiritual leaders of the case study school should continue to celebrate the community aspect of Masses and ensure that everyone is included, without making students feel uncomfortable at being made to participate in ways they are not happy to do so. Spiritual leaders could also look to giving students more ownership over the Masses and developing further student spiritual leaders who could play a greater role in the prayer and liturgical life of the school.

Attitudes of young people to faith experiences in school, such as prayer and reflection days, varied. Some of the students surveyed received these opportunities well and felt that they were helpful in giving them time to develop their relationship

with God, especially if they didn't find the time for this outside of school. However, other students expressed the view that they are not comfortable with prayer in school and they did not want prayer time to be at the expense of learning. Furthermore, some students commented that reflection days are not always that effective if the 'fun' element detracts from the religious element. The implication here for leadership is to listen to the views of students, for example by conducting student evaluations of reflection days, to ensure that all students can engage in some way in prayer opportunities and reflection days.

The literature identified a possible 'dilution' of the traditional elements of the Catholic faith amongst young people. The members of staff I interviewed did not imply they saw this as a major issue as they recognised that developing the faith of young people has to be on their own terms if it is going to happen at all. The implication for spiritual leaders is to offer students a mix of faith experiences to cater for different preferences between students. The responses of the student questionnaire indicated a spectrum of attitudes to different faith experiences, which supported the idea that providing a variety of faith opportunities is important.

b) Catholic Servant Leadership

My qualitative research found that one of the key ways to serve students in their faith development is by giving them good quality experiences of the Catholic faith. Students will be receptive to these experiences if they find them engaging, if they include everyone and if students are given a degree of ownership over them without forcing them to do anything they are not comfortable with. However, these opportunities should not be overdone. Students need to feel that the faith element of

their education is in balance with the academic element of their education, otherwise they will feel resentful towards the faith.

Students also indicated in their questionnaire responses that they do not want the Catholic faith to be imposed on them. They need to feel that their views are respected and that they can explore and question the faith openly. This was particularly important in RE lessons when students have the opportunity to explicitly explore the Catholic faith. The survey revealed that not all students felt their RE teacher respected their religious views.

RE teachers, as key spiritual leaders in the school, need to be on their guard against imposing their beliefs. Students should feel that they are in an open, tolerant environment if they are to feel comfortable exploring and questioning issues of faith. As recognised by the interviewees and highlighted in the literature, the teenage years are naturally ones of questioning and this should be respected. If it is not, we risk turning students away from the faith.

Another key way Catholic schools can serve young people in providing for their faith development is through effective RE lessons. For the lessons to be have a positive impact on faith development, students have to engage in them and they are more likely to do this if they consider the lessons to be relevant to their lives. Whilst most students surveyed agreed that RE lessons were relevant to their lives, not all of them did. Furthermore, Years 8, 9 and 10 were less likely to find RE lessons relevant than Years 7 and 11. This, however, is in keeping with the findings that Years 7 and 11 were more positive towards religion and the middle years least positive. Spiritual

leaders in the RE department need to be sensitive of the difference in attitudes between the year groups and consider how the RE curriculum can better students, perhaps by having more challenging and controversial content in the middle year groups, which is more explicitly directed at the lives of young people today.

c) Role of Witness and Vocation

The witness of teachers is a key way in which students in Catholic schools can see the faith as a credible way of life and be influenced by faith in action. However, whilst many students surveyed were positive in observing Christ-like actions amongst teachers, not all teachers were perceived to be good role models in following the way of Christ or to be genuine in their leading of prayer carousel. This suggests that not all teachers display full commitment to supporting the Catholic ethos of the school. Interviewee B demonstrated confidence that the school has a strong Catholic ethos, yet this was not the perception of all students in the way they viewed the behaviour of all teachers.

Furthermore, if teachers are to be effective in their witness and sense of vocation in their job, this needs to be supported by the school through provision of the spiritual development and formation of staff. However, the comments of the interviewees indicated that this is a neglected area. This has a key implication for spiritual leaders of the case study school as it is an issue which needs more attention if staff are to have a more positive impact on the faith development of students. Improving the provision of in service training (INSET) on Catholic ethos and support for the spiritual development of staff needs to be considered further.

Finally, a gap between principle and practice has been identified in the area of RE provision. If Christ is to be at the heart of the Catholic school, it should follow that RE is regarded as a core subject. It is clear from the research that RE is not perceived as a core subject in the case study school, perhaps partly because of parental attitudes, but also because it does not have sufficient time on the curriculum. Students are therefore being denied sufficient exposure to teachers who act as key witnesses to Christ for them, as well as regular opportunity to learn about the faith.

5.3 Limitations

My research, with the combination of quantitative and qualitative data, has been useful in providing a snapshot understanding of how effective provision of students' faith development in the case study school is viewed by a select number of students and staff. The timescale permitted for this research limited the number of students and staff I was able to consult, as well as volume and depth of questioning. With more time, this case study would benefit from consultation of the wider staff to assess their views on how they see their role in contributing to students' faith development. I would also have liked to interview students to extract more qualitative data on the reasons for their views on faith development provision in the school.

Whilst this research project has been limited to one school, and some of the activities contributing to the faith development provision of students are particular to this school, I believe that many of the students' attitudes are representative of young people of their age. This research can therefore be of benefit to other researchers examining the issue of faith development provision in Catholic schools.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of my research have highlighted a number of areas for improvement pertinent to the case study school, which would contribute to more effective faith development provision of students. These are discussed below:

- **Increase curriculum time for RE at Key Stages 3 and 4 to 10%, from September 2016**

  This is a requirement of the Bishops' Conference and was noted as an action for further improvement in the school's last Section 48 Report. Increasing curriculum time for RE to 10% would enable the RE department to implement a wider range of opportunities for spiritual development, in addition to further academic study. It would also provide students with greater contact time with RE teachers, thus facilitating more opportunity for RE teachers to build positive relationships with students and greater exposure of students to teachers who can show them how to live a life with Christ and show them that it is a credible way of life.

- **Implement an annual opportunity for staff spiritual development, through INSET time or a staff retreat, by the academic year 2015-16.**

  One of the issues raised in my research was that spiritual leaders in the school need their own spiritual wells refilling if they are to lead others effectively. Their roles in the school are not merely jobs, but vocations, and if they are to fulfil their vocational role effectively, they need support for their spiritual development.

- **RE department to explore, in the 2015-16 academic year, a revision of the Year 9 curriculum to better tailor it to the lives students**

  My research has shown that Year 9 students are least likely to show an interest in religion and a significant number also question the relevance of RE lessons to their lives. If students are to engage with their own faith development, even at the level of questioning faith, they need to find RE lessons of interest and relevance to them. If they do not, they may be put off the subject altogether and, subsequently, other faith development opportunities provided for them outside of the classroom. There is then the longer term risk of students being disengaged with the subject higher up the school and leaving school with a negative attitude towards the Catholic faith. There is therefore a need for the RE department to revisit the curriculum and explore how to better provide for the faith development of Year 9 students.

- **Implement, as soon as feasible, a spiritual 'Action for the Week' for staff to encourage them to support the Catholic ethos of the school further.**

  The 'Action for the week', for example 'Be tolerant and forgiving', would be a daily reminder to staff of their responsibility in a Catholic school to role model the way of Christ for students. It would hopefully improve the actions of staff in acting as servant leaders in a visible way for students. A notice for it should be displayed in a prominent place for all staff, such as the staff room.

- **Raise awareness of staff involved in leading Masses in the school of the findings of this research, by December 2015.**

To improve students' engagement and positive response to Masses, it would be beneficial for staff involved in leading Masses in the school to be aware of the research findings and then act upon them. This would involve building upon the aspects of Masses that students valued, such as the community feelings and the creative elements, e.g. music and drama. Staff could then also work on the suggestions student made as to how Masses could be made more engaging, such as not making students feel forced to participate in ways which make them feel uncomfortable.

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Appendix I

St Mary's University

Ethics Sub-Committee

Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor, and forwarded to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the School Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one PDF (in order of the checklist) and clearly entitled with your **Full Name, School, Supervisor.**

Please note that for all undergraduate research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:
- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

Please note:

In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.

St Mary's University Twickenham London

St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application.

Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

	Enclosed? (delete as appropriate)		Version No
Document	Yes	Not applicable	
1.Application Form	Mandatory		
2.Risk Assessment Form			
3.Participant Invitation Letter			
4.Participant Information Sheet			
5.Participant Consent Form	Mandatory		
6.Parental Consent Form			
7.Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of Posters, newspaper adverts, website, emails			
8.Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct the study on the premises)			
9. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule			
10.DBS included			
11.Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)			

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one PDF document entitled with you: **Full Name, School, Supervisor.**

Signature of Applicant:

Signature of Supervisor:

Ethics Application Form

1) Name of proposer(s)	Johanna Fogell
2) St Mary's email address	050295@live.stmarys.sc.uk
3) Name of supervisor	Dr David Fincham

4) Title of project "Sowing the Seed: implications for leadership in a Catholic secondary school"

5) School or service	Education, Theology & Leadership
6) Programme (if undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research)	MA CSL
7) Type of activity/research (staff / undergraduate student research / postgraduate student)	Postgraduate

8) Confidentiality	
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998	YES

9) Consent

Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants / participants' representatives?	YES

10) Pre-approved protocol	
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?	YES/NO/ Not applicable Date of approval:

11) Approval from another Ethics Committee	
a) Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	YES
b) Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	YES

12) Identifiable risks	
a) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?	NO
b) Are participants over 65 years of age?	NO
c) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	NO
d) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	NO
e) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	NO

f) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	NO
g) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	NO
h) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	YES/NO
i) Will highly personal, intimate or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	NO
j) Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	NO If yes, please provide details
k) Could the relationship between the researcher/ supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?	NO

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13) Proposed start and completion date   March 2015

Please indicate:

- When the study is due to commence.
- Timetable for data collection.
- The expected date of completion.

Please ensure that your start date is at least 3 weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.

The study is due to commence in March 2015. I expect the data collection to take two or three months from the date of commencement. I expect the research study to be completed by the end of May.

14)Sponsors/Collaborators

Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include you supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.

- Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.

- Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support.

N/A

15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval

- Please indicate whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. the NHS Research Ethics Committee).
- Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project
- Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.

N/A

16. Purpose of the study

In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study.

- Be clear about the concepts / factors / performances you will measure / assess/ observe and (if applicable), the context within which this will be done.
- Please state if there are likely to be any direct benefits, e.g. to participants, other groups or organisations.

As an RE teacher, I feel a strong sense of responsibility towards assisting students to explore questions relating to the Catholic faith. I am committed to the mission of Catholic education to evangelize; however, I believe this must be done in an environment in which

students feel comfortable to come to the Catholic faith if they so choose, rather than feel under pressure to do so. It is therefore important that students can see the faith 'lived' in a Catholic school as much as possible to fully appreciate the value of Catholic faith in one's life.

I am keen for this research project to be of practical use for my school. I have observed what I regard to be innovative and engaging provision for students' faith development at my school. However, I would like to explore the extent to which the students have the same attitude towards the activities provided for them. I appreciate that it is hard to evaluate progress in faith development, especially seeing as the seed that is sown may not grow until an individual is into their adulthood. However, it is important to seek feedback from students to ascertain if what we think we are doing well is in fact being well received.

17. Study Design/Methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:
   a) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
   b) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
   c) You should also include details regarding the requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
   d) Please include details of where the testing will take place.
   e) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

The study will include quantitative questionnaires of both staff and students to explore their attitude to the Catholic faith and identify their attitude to the school's approach to faith development. I also aim to interview a select number of staff in leadership positions who influence the approach the school takes to faith development. If I am able to arrange it, I would also like to interview the youth coordinator for the local parish to discuss her experience of faith development with young people and what she finds works with them.

The quantitative questionnaires will use Survey Monkey on the Internet and will consist of approximately 20 questions each, the majority of which will be closed questions, asking the participants for their response to a statement ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A very small number of statements will then be followed by space for the participants to give their reasons for their response. The questionnaires should take a maximum of 10 minutes to complete.

The questionnaires and interviews will take place at my school.

The materials/procedures I am using are original. I aim to do a pilot of the questionnaires will a small group of students to check that they will be effective.

18. Participants

Please mention:
  a) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex.
  b) How they will be recruited and chosen.
  c) The inclusion / exclusion criteria's.
  d) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants.
  e) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken.

I would like recruit a cross-section of students to get as a broad a picture of their opinions as possible. I will therefore set the questionnaire as an RE homework, to be given to every class in the school. To allow for the fact that some students may fail to complete the homework, I aim to book an ICT suite for at least one class per year group so that the students can complete the questionnaire during lesson time. The questionnaire will require students to identify which year group they are in.

The staff questionnaire will be sent electronically to all 72 members of the teaching staff.

19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet clearly makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

  a) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done

  b) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?

  ➢ Children under 18
  ➢ Participants with learning disabilities
  ➢ Participants suffering from dementia
  ➢ Other vulnerable groups.

  c) If any of the above apply, does the researcher/investigator hold a current DBS certificate? A copy of the DBS must be included with the application.

  d) How will consent be obtained? This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

There are no incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part.

The majority of the participants will be children under 18. I hold a current DBS certificate, which is attached.

Consent will be obtained through the Participant Consent Form.

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20. Risks and benefits of research/ activity

a) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.

b) Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.

c) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.

d) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).

e) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).

f) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research (e.g. gain knowledge of their fitness)?

There are no potential risks or adverse effects to this study, nor does this study involve any invasive procedures.

The interviews and questionnaires will not include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting.

The benefit to the organisation taking part in this research is that it will lead to better understanding for the Senior Leadership Team and the RE department of how well they are supporting students in their faith development and what changes could be made to better support students in their area.

21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection

    a) What steps will be taken to ensure participant's confidentiality?

- Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored.
- Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others data.

    b) *Describe how you manage data using a data a management plan.*

- *You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publically available once the project has ended.*
- *You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.*

    c) Who will have access to the data? Please identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).

    d) Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?

- Explain what information will be identifiable.
- Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.
- Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.

Data will be stored on my computer at home, which is password protected. Any responses that are individually quoted in my dissertation will be identified by a respondent number to protect the individual's confidentiality. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data.

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22. Feedback to participants

Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:

- As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable to format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriate written.
- Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

I intend to provide feedback to my school by providing a copy of the dissertation for the library and any interested members of staff.

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Signature of Proposer(s)	Date:
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects)	Date:

APPENDIX II – Questionnaire for Students

A. Personal questions:

1. What is your gender? Male / female

2. Which year are you in? Year 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12

B. Students to respond to each of the statements by ticking one of the following:

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Unsure

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Your own beliefs:

3. I believe in God.

4. I am Catholic.

5. I am comfortable with being quiet to explore a relationship with God eg.

    through prayer.

6. I believe true happiness can be found in God.

7. I am interested in developing my spiritual nature.

8. Religion is an important part of my life.

9. I am encouraged by my parents / carers to go to Mass.

10. I believe going to Mass is an essential aspect of being Catholic.

RE lessons:

11. RE teachers respect my freedom to choose whether to follow Catholic beliefs or not.

12. RE lessons are relevant to my life.

13. I would like more time for prayer and reflection in RE lessons.

14. Please give reasons for your answer to question 13. *[open question]*

15. RE teachers use words I understand when discussing issues of faith.

16. RE teachers are caring.

17. Please give reasons for your answer to question 16. *[open question]*

Masses:

18. I appreciate the opportunity to attend Mass at school.

19. List up to three things you enjoy about Mass at school. *[open question]*

20. List up to three things you think could be done to make Mass at school more engaging. *[open question]*

The impact of the wider school on my faith development:

21. Reflection days have made me think about my relationship with God.

22. Please give reasons for your answer to question 21. *[open question]*

23. Tutors are genuine in their leading of prayer carousels.

24. I would like to be more involved in leading prayer at school.

25. My teachers are good role models in following the way Christ.

26. Please give reasons for your answer to question 25. *[open question]*

Appendix III – Interview with Interviewee A

Hannah Fogell (HF): Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed today. It's very helpful for me to be able to talk to you about your views on how things are going in terms of the role we play in developing the faith of students at our school. I just have a few questions to ask you. Firstly, I wanted to ask, how do you think we can best support our students in their faith development?

Interviewee A (IA): I think, first of all, being examples to them in the way we sort of act around the school in lessons and out of lessons, but also give them options of ways to engage in faith not, sort of, only targeting one area, so sometimes in schools we might go for a very traditional approach or a very modern approach. It's trying to find a balance. I know young people are all different and they might be more appealing to them for example more like the organ music than the praise and worship that is done sometimes. I think the more options we can give to them being a Catholic School there is a fairer way of doing things.

More particularly we have prayers every day, assemblies which revolve around liturgy, so I think it is sort of developing a model, making sure staff are trained in running these things. So, helping the students to lead prayer and things like that, and also allowing them to hopefully take ownership of their own faith. I think that's essentially where we need to get to, because when they go beyond school it's them and they've got to be people of faith, otherwise it's not going to really work.

HF: So kind of establishing the ground work, as far as we can, so when they go out on their own they've had that background. And is there anything that you feel through your experience since you've been here that has particularly worked well with the students that we have at our school?

IA: I think one of the things that works really well is interactivity. To be talked at in whatever way, whether that be an assembly or a liturgy, sometimes it will go in one ear and out the other, so to actually get them involved in some sort of symbolism, which especially for the Reconciliation services I did last was getting them to write things on a bit of paper and rip them up and putting a rock down as a symbol of burdens.

HF: They're doing something a bit more physical.

IA: Yes, I think that helps. And not being afraid to target things like silence and getting them used to things like that, although it might seem like counter-cultural to be silent, to be still.

HF: But to give them that opportunity I suppose. Ok, thank you.

My second question was to ask, to what extent are you concerned about a sort of pick and mix approach young people have to Catholicism which some people could say is having an impact on the traditional aspects of faith and diluting it? Is

it something you are concerned about with young people here or is it just whatever approach they want to take to the faith you are happy to work with?

IA: Well, I think the Church is changing anyway and how we know it will feed the emergence of worship music in Mass is something quite recent and we know obviously because of Vatican II and how the big changes took place because of that, there could be a Vatican III with even more changes that might occur.

There are ways in which the Church responds to the modern world and there are ways in which the Church stays quite traditional, in terms of things like priests being male, something which is very traditional and rooted in what the Pope would say back in Rome. So I think we are getting to a place where, as such, students would say they are Catholic and receive Holy Communion at a school Mass, but wouldn't be going to Mass every Sunday, which is ideally not the situation.

So, one of the things I'm trying to do is to link in especially with the parishes and for a few trips, rather than doing it as a school led trip, but doing it as a parish led trip and signposting them back to the parishes. I think the community element is the key thing. If the young people don't feel a sense of belonging, they won't go to Mass. If they just feel it is something that they have to do, turn up on a Sunday, leave then nothing's changed. In some ways it's not useful. But if they go and feel a sense of community and see their friends, pray with one another and then go out with their friends and hopefully live the life of the gospel they've just heard and receive Jesus' Holy Communion and things like that, then that's the better option.

So I think it is trying to integrate that famous triangle of school-family-church and trying to link them all together, because to what extent do families pray together and things like that? I know that some of those things are quite traditional things, but whether any of them go home and say Grace before meals and things like that, that sort of thing is fizzling away. There is a mixture of things causing why it is a pick and mix option, I mean things like the sacraments as well, like Reconciliation, offering those sorts of things.

One of my bigger things is I don't think we should force faith upon people. We should give them the option and then allow them to pick, because I think there is nothing that will make young people more resentful than to say you have to go to Mass, but to give them a reason to be at Mass is a better way round it and then they will probably think, 'Yes, I want to be at Mass, I understand what is going on at Mass.' So the catechesis element of it, I think, is more important, because if they understand why they are saying those certain words or why the priest does these certain actions and how are they participating, even if they are not altar serving or singing in the choir, for example, just sitting in the congregation, they are still very much part of the Mass, it's not a priest thing.

In some ways it is a bit worrying, because they are going to hopefully, maybe one day, have their own kids and they're going to make their own decisions about it. I know lots of people who are changing to the opinion that they will let their children decide when they're older.

HF: As opposed to baptising them and bringing them up in the faith.

IA: Yes, which I think is not maybe the best move in the world, but in some ways it's hard to judge anyone, like the thing about casting the first stone. So you just have to give people options, as I said earlier, and let them make their own decisions and support them in the best way possible. And as I said, throughout their school life give them as much experience of faith, like the retreats, like going to different events and then also the stuff within school, within RE and other curriculum areas. For example, I'm looking to tie in to Geography next year to do stuff on climate change.

HF: Ok, so they can see more obviously that it's not an issue that is just within RE.

IA: Also, our Mission Week earlier on did a bit of that as well because lots of departments tied in to our Mission Week theme.

HF: I like the point you make about making the links with the parish because there is a sense that there is only so much that you can do in school and actually if you want to encourage students to practise their faith outside of school then you don't want them to have one experience in school and then a completely separate experience outside and then be put off what's outside because it is so different to what they're used to. So having that kind of relationship . . .

IA: It's all those mountaintop experiences, so taking young people to a big festival like Big Church Day Out and having Mass there with Matt Maher leading the worship music for Mass and then going back to their church and maybe having a dodgy organist and a choir which is not the most amazing in the world, which is the polar opposite, and then going to things like Lourdes, which can be quite a traditional experience, going on pilgrimage and having this most amazing experience at the grotto or any other pilgrimage like going to Taize, Medjugorje and all those youth things as well and having this really amazing relationship with God and feeling this closeness and then coming back and walking back into your church and saying 'It's not here.'

It's about being within that context of having that community of people around you, people who are quite passionate or not worried to show their face in the world today and actually walk out with a crucifix around their neck and holding doors open, the little things. St Francis would say preach the gospel at all times. So, and also being happy to help others. I think that's essentially, in a school setting, that's what we can do. We give them the morals, choices, especially when we get in to looking at euthanasia, abortion, assisted suicide and all those sorts of things. It's saying, look, this is what the Church teaching is, but actually this is what other people say too and you need to make your own decision, because at the end of the day if this happens to you, you could be making a decision on these kinds of things.

HF: Ok, that's great, thank you.

The third question I wanted to ask was how do you think the spiritual development and formation of staff should be supported at St Peter's? The reason I'm asking this is tying in to some of the things you've said already about leading and guiding students by example, given that not all the staff here are Catholic or practising Catholic, or even Christian. What can we do to support the staff?

IA: Well, I've been in a lot of discussions recently about induction for new staff, but also ongoing working in to the learning communities and things like that and hopefully providing a session in an INSET or something. Or whether I do something optional, to say look, I know some people might be struggling with this sort of thing, for example leading tutor group prayers, I'm available either this lunchtime or this time before school. I'll be in this room, or after school, I'll say, look, I'll run through a few things with you.

One of the things I realise about working in this school is people have different skills, so when I have an artistic issue I'll go and see the art department, a logistical issue I'll go and see someone who's good with that sort of stuff, but my skills lie in leading prayer. Chaplaincy is what I'm here to do, so my role, as far as I'm concerned, is to provide staff with what they need to do their job, otherwise I don't think I'm doing mine. But then also looking at their faith development and their ongoing spiritual development and one of the things I would like to do, maybe in the next academic year, or try for the following one, is organise maybe a staff retreat or something like that. Whether it's just an overnighter or a weekend away, it would be a time for staff to come together as a community again and just have a relaxing time, but also their time to step out and engage with faith as well.

HF: I think that would be very valuable.

The fourth question is how can you contribute to staff being effective role models in following the way of Christ and demonstrating confidence in communicating the Catholic faith to students? It's sort of leading on from the previous question.

IA: I think it is for me to model best practice, so in the way I am present around the school and wandering in and supporting staff and again I'm trying to work on that role a bit more for next year. Especially getting a kettle in my office so staff can come and have a cup of tea, for example. So making myself accessible for not only students, but staff as well. So best practice might be leading an assembly, leading a prayer time, where staff may see me on reflection days they will see this is a model of how you should engage prayer and scripture and help young people engage with the Lord, so modelling different things for them and then let them go away. I think that people need to do things according to their own personalities. They can't be me and I think that's great for young people to have these different models of prayer because somebody will say, look, this is what I'm in to and in tutor times they might get a different experience depending who their tutor is and depending on their personality as well.

HF: Then the last question is, the Bishops' Conference states that RE is not simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire education process. So what is your impression of how we sit in St Peter's in relation to that statement?

IA: One of things that I think I've seen recently is that RE feels that it should be quite important, but it's not getting as many lessons as some other subjects in certain year groups and things like that. I mean one of the things I've seen in the supervision process for the new academic year is that RE is going to be supervised by the headmaster and I think that's saying, look, actually this is a key part of our school and the governors and the headmaster are responsible for the Catholic ethos of the school. So hopefully that is a sign that they realise that RE is important and hence why it is being supervised from right at the top of the school, so hopefully that's a positive sign in the school. And also obviously, like having the RE day with the sixth form and how the RE department ties in with other things.

In some ways it can be seen as just an academic subject, but I think that is the difference between us at St Peter's and a school down the road who would do RE, but it would be an academic subject, not to lead the young people in faith. The feeling is not there, if that makes sense. It's just like teaching them Geography or History. It's a set of information preparing them for an exam. And also offering that within GCSE and A Level, that it's a compulsory requirement, like English, Science and Maths. I think it's showing that RE is an important subject where it can just be said, well it's actually just an academic subject, it's not important. So actually through doing those sorts of things the school shows that it is as important as those more academic subjects that employers would look for as well.

HF: Thank you very much for your time. It's been very helpful to listen to your views on all of this.