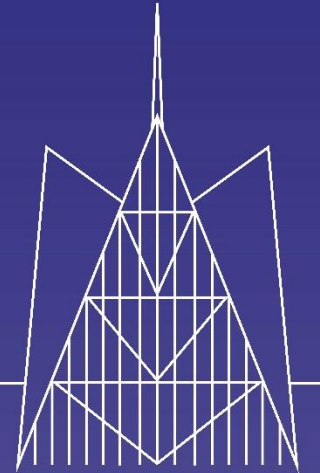


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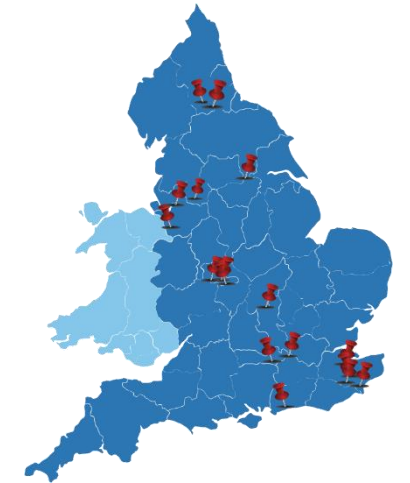
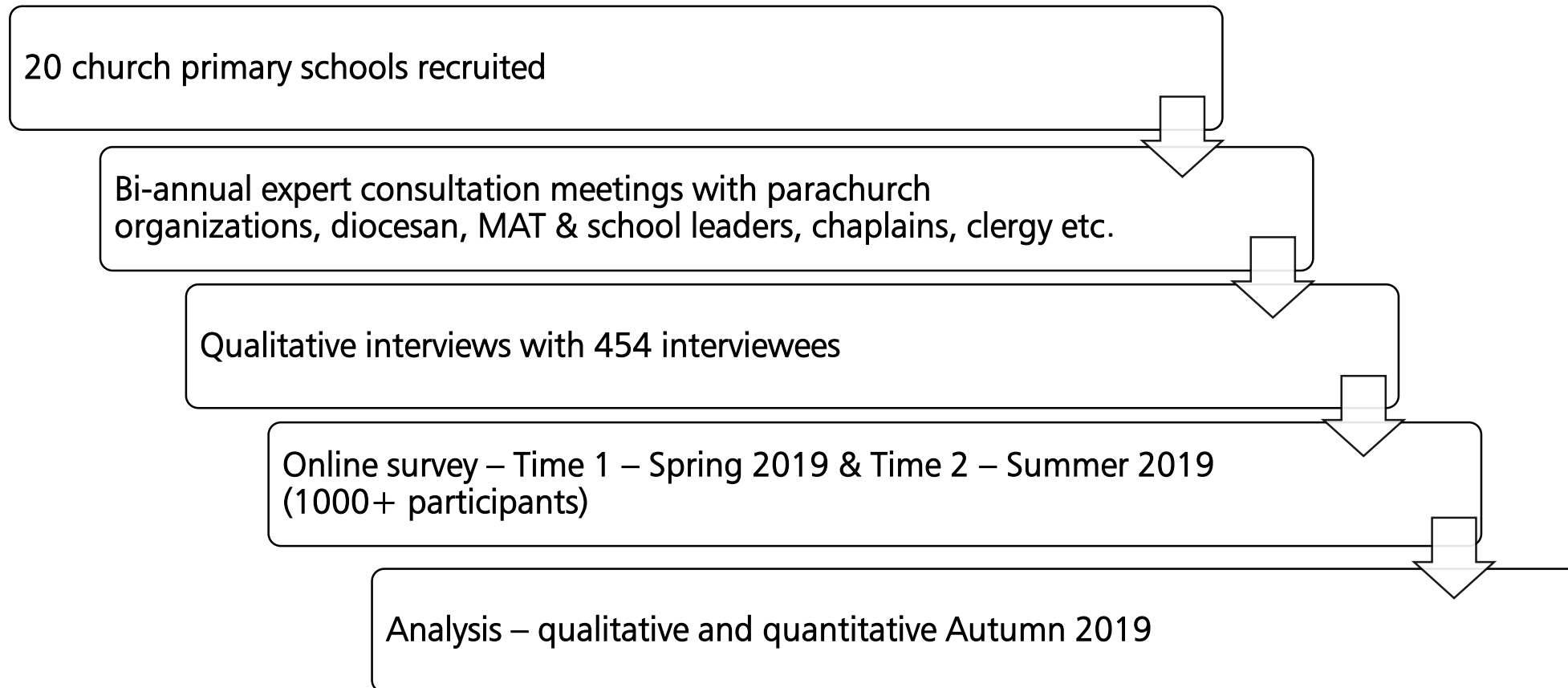
Faith in the Nexus:
Listening to young people in church schools



The National Institute of Christian Education Research
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Faith in the Nexus: The research project

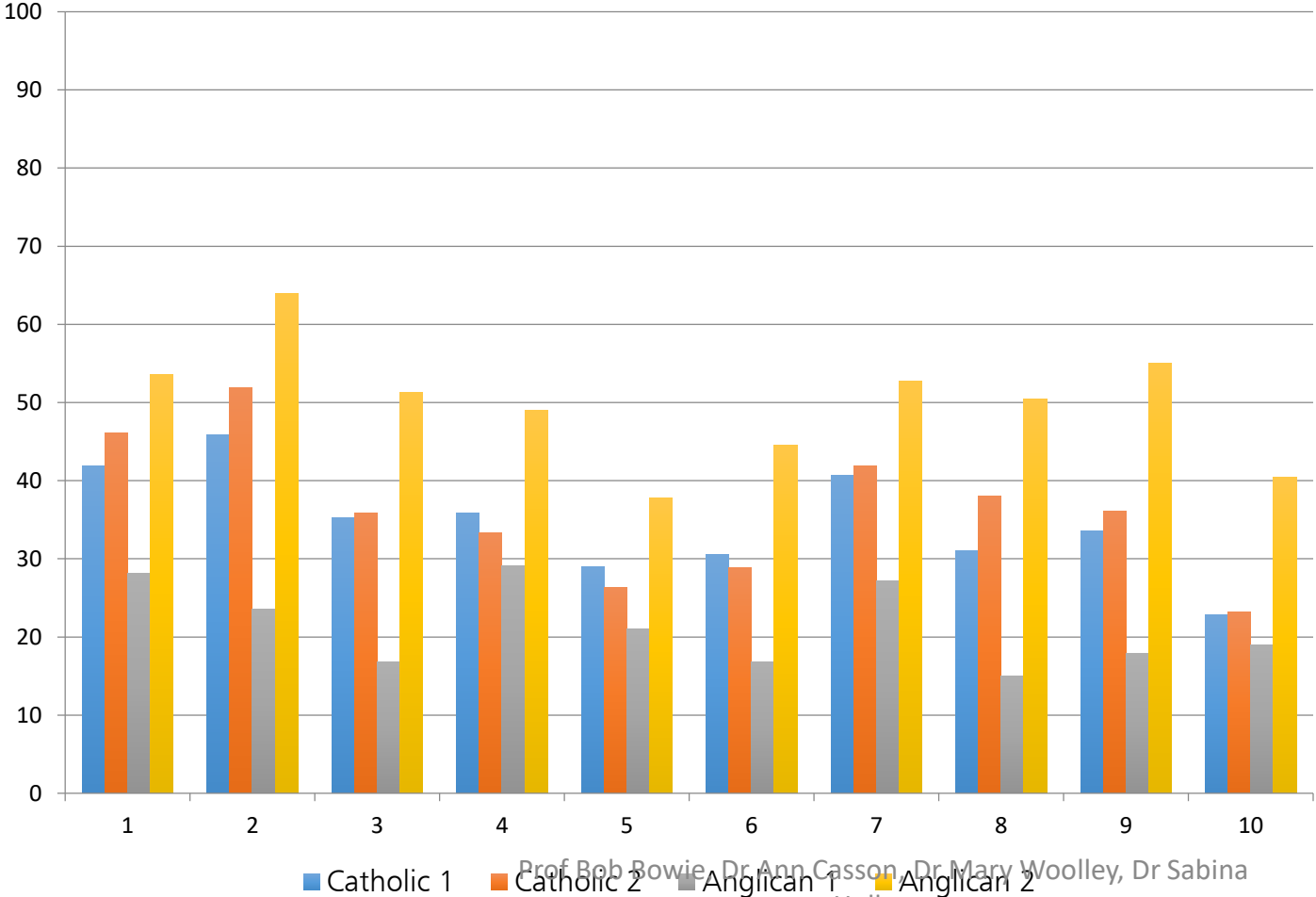
How do church primary schools facilitate opportunities for the exploration of children's faith/ spiritual life in the home?



Revealing differences between church primary schools

PUPILS

How often do you do any of the following at home?



1. Sing hymns or play worship songs
2. Say prayers
3. Read bible stories
4. Draw or make religious or spiritual things
5. Ask to visit or talk about places of worship
6. Watch Bible stories
7. Have time for reflection or spirituality
8. Retell Bible stories
9. Read religious or moral stories
10. Act out Bible or moral stories

N=730 from Catholic 1 =

Key Findings 1: Church Primary Schools

Schools facilitate opportunities for the exploration of faith in the home when

- There are **active connections** between church and school
- Provision of ***reflection time & space***,
- Opportunities for ***spiritual leadership*** roles for pupils,
- RE curriculum focussed on Christian ***concepts and questions***.

Key Findings 2: School & Home

- Primary schools increase the parents confidence by
 - Encouraging attendance and ***participation in worship*** in school and church
 - Encouraging or '***giving permission for***' talk about spiritual matters, encounters with faith & beliefs,
 - ***Encounters with scripture*** in collective worship
 - ***Explicit expression of Christian ethos and values*** in school through explicit communication of Christian values, beliefs, and practices through a variety of media – newsletters, websites, signage, displays.

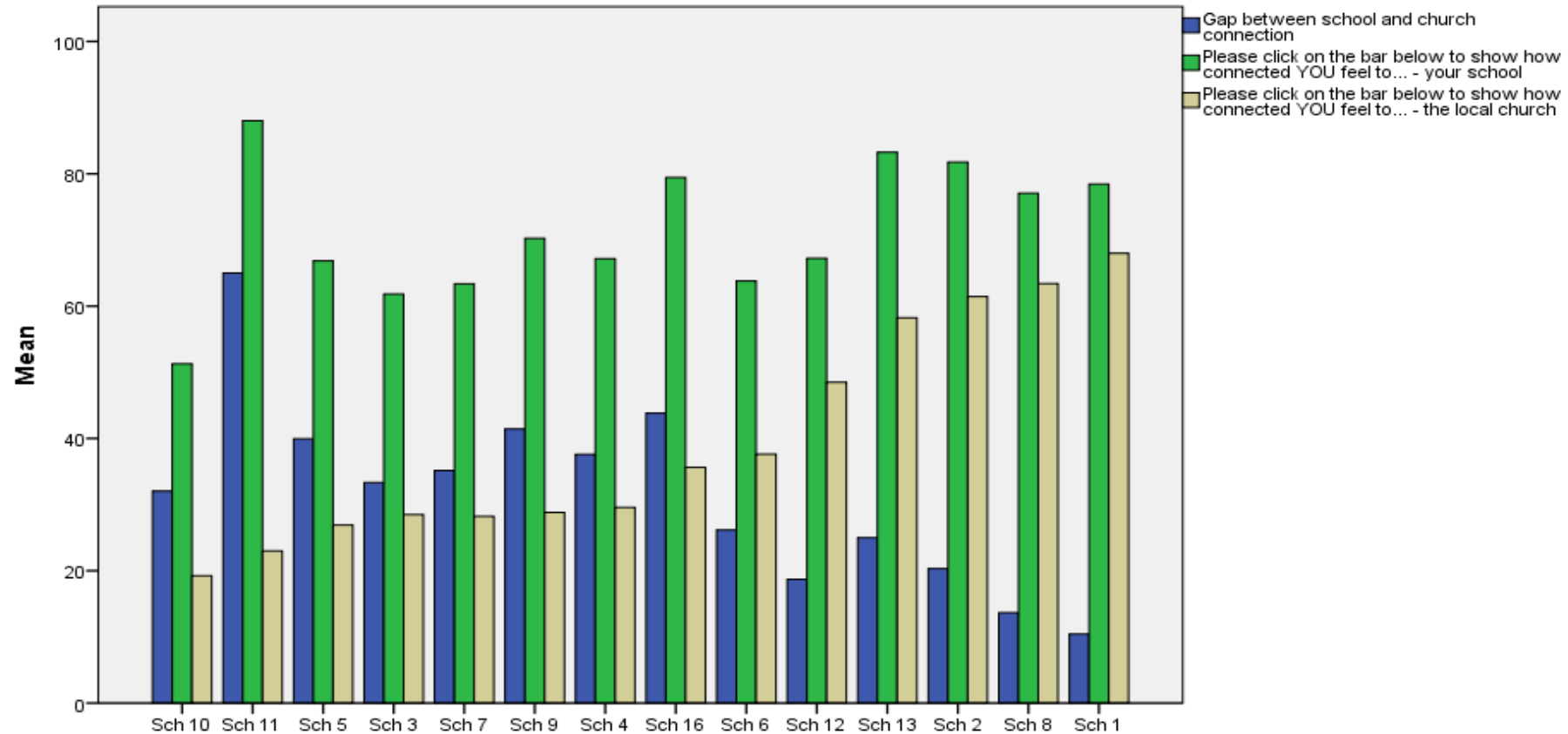
Key Findings 3: School, Home & Church

- Characteristics of a positive relationship between school, home & church
 - The ***presence of the minister in the school***,
 - Visits to church – ***worship in church***
 - ***Celebration of festivals***
 - ***A sense of belonging*** and connection to the church community and building.

Key Findings 3: School, Home & Church

- The local faith community and parachurch organisations
 - Parent & child experience/ ***encounters with faith in Messy Church.***
 - Children attending more “selective” schools reported talking more than those attending “non-selective” schools about 9 of the 10 areas explored . All except for the Messy Church where no significant differences were detected as shown
- It is not clear whether Godly Play and Open the Book reach the home in the same way.

Connection To School And Church (Year 5 & 6 pupils – 598 responses)



Connection To School and Church

- The more children feel ***connected to the School*** the more they display attitudes and behaviours that facilitate spiritual conversations and interactions at home
- The ***connection to the local Church has a stronger association*** with these attitudes and behaviours than the connection to the School
- ***Asking about Death*** is the only behaviour not associated at all with connection to the School or the local Church
- ***Caring about other people*** and ***Caring about the Environment*** are the only behaviours more strongly associated with a connection to the School than with a connection to the local Church

Who Are The Families In Church Schools?

(Year 5 & 6 Pupils)

"I am a Christian & go to church."

"We are Christian and don't go to church"

"We have beliefs, but don't attend church."

"We are kind of religious"

"We are Muslim" / "We are half Muslim half Christian. I go to church "

"My grandparents are religious, my parents are not, me and my brother are"

"Not religious but I believe in God"

KEY FINDINGS 5: Faith Conversations At Home

- Faith conversations in the home
 - Evidence suggests that the child is a dynamic initiator of conversations
 - Conversations are stimulated by activities, curriculum, and worship at school. However, parents sometimes struggle with how to respond to these, and may close them down, due to a lack of knowledge, confidence, and fear of indoctrination.

Why focus on conversations about faith in the home?

- Previous research (Boyatzis 1996, Wuthnow 1999; Dudley and Wisbey 2000; Francis & Ap Sion 2019) has shown the importance of conversations in the home about faith in shaping religiosity; beliefs; church attendance and prayer.
- Boyatzis concluded that a mutual bi-directional reciprocal style of communication is more typical than a unidirectional transmission style.
 - **Children need to be viewed as active participants in religious socialization rather than as more passive recipients of parental influences**

Children talking about faith in the home

For reflection I lay on my bed ... I reflect on like the world and how lucky we are to have the things that we have (Pupil)

I just turn it round and say "well what is it that you think?"
Because I don't want to influence ...
(Christian parent)

When they come home and they pose you a question ... **So not only is it good for the children I think it also encourages the parents and the adults to actually think about what it is they're saying.** (Parent)

I have the [school] values at home. I have the picture of that value in my house and I use it. [I say] "is that being forgiving? Are you being kind to that person. (Parent)

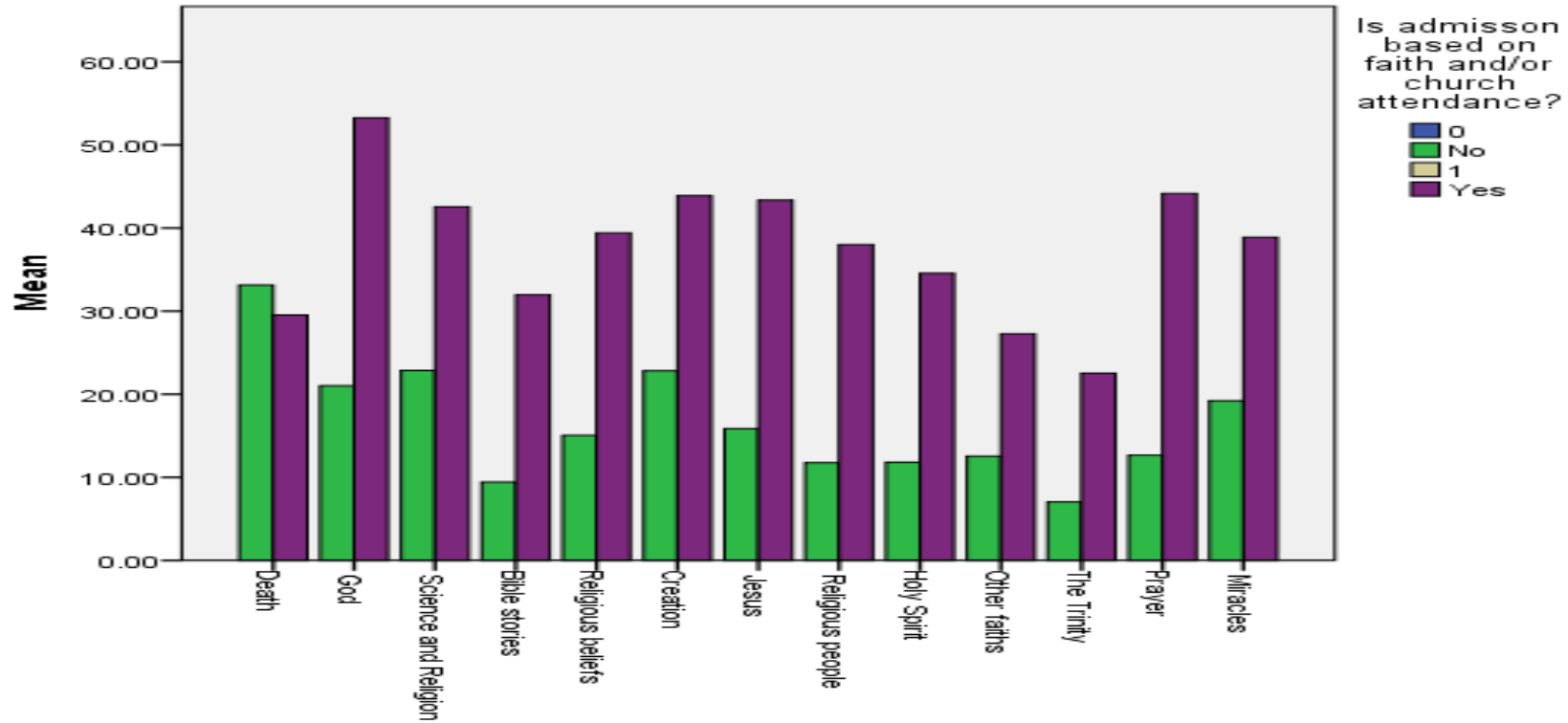


The Next Steps

We have more knowledge about

- The pinch points and areas that need to change
- The relationship between multiple factors, such as faith-based admissions criteria
- Influence of school, church, and diocesan strategies,
- The presence of fruitful faith conversations, prayer, and other practices in the home environment.

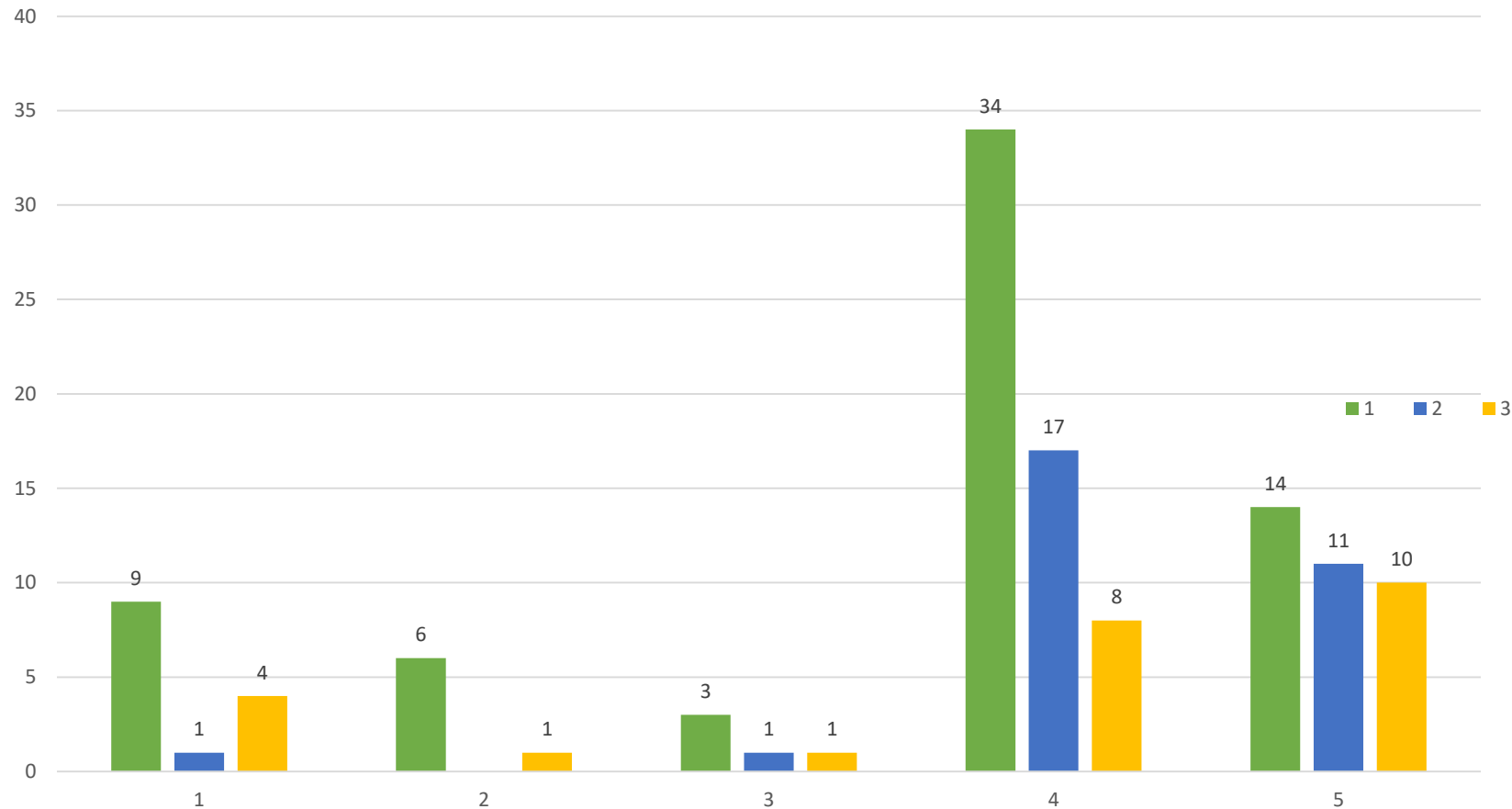
Faith-based Admissions



Questions

- What are **the critical features** that facilitate exploration of faith in the home?
- How does a positive church and school relationship impact on families engagement with faith/spirituality?
- How does the church primary school shape parents experience of church?
- Do the findings suggest that children are co-constructors of the faith tradition at home, or silent witnesses?
- Does provision of reflection space and time in school make a difference?

What Do the Parents Expect From Church Schools?



Replies sorted into 3 categories

Green = Values

Blue = Faith/spiritual

Yellow = Knowledge, skills

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