FAITH IN THE NEXUS

HOW DO CHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOLS, IN COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL FAITH COMMUNITIES, FACILITATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EXPLORATION OF CHILDREN'S FAITH/ SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE HOME?

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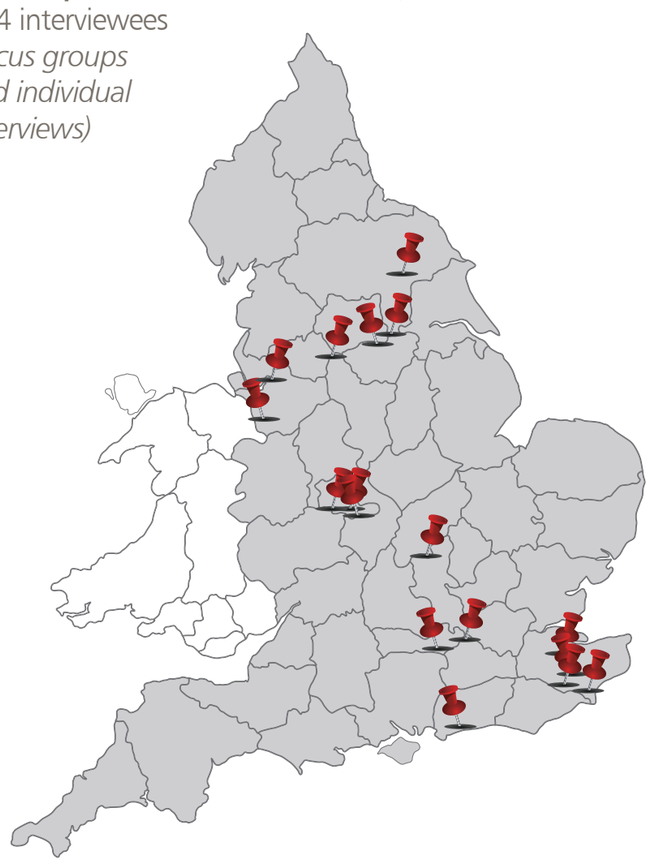
METHOD

- Qualitative interviews in 20 church primary schools (2018)
- Quantitative surveys of pupils, parents and stakeholders
- Time 1 (Spring 2019)
- School based initiatives to engage parents (Easter 2019)
- Time 2 (Summer 2019)
- Analysis and report writing (autumn 2019)

Participants - 20 church primary schools
454 interviewees
(focus groups and individual interviews)



187 Pupils
100 Parents
85 Staff
27 School leaders
21 Governors
18 Clergy
16 Other

The schools include Catholic, Church of England VA, VC and academies, Methodist & ecumenical school; ranging in size from less than 100 pupils to 450 pupils; from locations across the country urban and rural; in areas of socio-economic deprivation, remote country villages and London suburbs.

EMERGING AREAS FOR INVESTIGATION

- Reflection /prayer
- Relationships between church & school
- Leadership opportunities
- Religious Education
- Influence of parachurch organisations Prayer Spaces; Godly Play; Open the Book
- Worship in school & church
- Conversations at home

CHILDREN TALKING ABOUT FAITH IN THE HOME

EARLY THOUGHTS: WHAT HAPPENS IN CHURCH SCHOOLS THAT ENCOURAGES FAITH CONVERSATIONS IN HOME?

- Existential questions, in particular death
- Questions about God, and faith
- RE lessons
- Collective worship
- Bible stories
- Reflection time

AT HOME FOR, BY OR WITH THE CHILD?

PASSIVE RECIPIENT?

When conversations are started by parents, the main focus is on the school values.

SILENT WITNESS?

Children often didn't speak about faith at home, but may create a reflection place or time, or read Bible stories.

CO-CONSTRUCTOR?

The initial data suggest that the conversations focused on faith are one-sided, rather than dialogical. The parents are reluctant to explore this area, and keen for the child to make their own mind up.

DYNAMIC INITIATOR?

Parents report that is the child who will start the conversation - asking questions stimulated by something that has happened in school.

SCHOOL AND CHURCH WORKING TOGETHER

Key points of connection

- The pattern of the church year in school

- The Vicar in the school
- Open the Book teams & school worship
- Messy church/holiday clubs
- Church responding to socio/economic needs

QUESTIONS

Can we detect an influence of positive church and school relationship on faith exploration in the home? ?

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? ?

What are the critical features that are facilitating exploration of faith in the home? ?

> *"When they come home and they pose you a question and you think if I've thought about it quite that way before. So not only is it good for the children I think it also encourages the parents to actually think about what it is they're saying."*
> Parent

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