Flipped Learning: The efficacy of a flipped learning approach in chemistry teaching and a pedagogical rationale for the design of flipped lesson content

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What is Religious Education for? A study of Independent Secondary school views on the aims of Religious Education and how this could impact on the preparatory schools curriculum design

Abstract:

This research aims to establish whether there needs to be a change in the epistemological groundings for RE at preparatory schools, and therefore a change in curriculum design and examination syllabus. My research reviews the vast amounts of literature on the aims of Religious Education and begins with an exploration of the history of the subject in England from the confessional model and the important impact of the *1870 Elementary Education Act* on Religious Education. It goes onto an analysis of the non-confessional approaches including modern, post-modern and liberal approaches of the 60s,70s and 80s right through to RE in contemporary England. I use Gearon's paradigmatic framework for understanding the nature of Religious Education. By using the 'paradigms' to investigate a 'paradigm-shift' I will answer my research question of what is Religious Education for, whilst focusing on the implications on curriculum design in Prep Schools. I use qualitative research methodology to build a strong case to describe the current system in place at Prep schools as being inadequate to fulfill the subject's social aims. I examine government reports on the Prevent agenda and schools' role in combating radicalization.

The findings of the research demonstrate that in order for RE to achieve its aims, it must go through the paradigmatic-shift. This will be from the confessional model, typical of Prep Schools, to one that is more philosophical-conceptual and socio-cultural in outlook. This is in order to help pupils become positive and tolerant members of our liberal and multi-faith society.

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Introduction

The School Context: Collaboration with other schools and grounds for research.

In today's multicultural and largely liberal society, it is evident that *"there are few who would question that the challenge of enabling people and communities with diverse identities and commitments to live responsibly and respectfully together is one of the most pressing issues faced by educators in most late-modern democratic societies. (Barnes 2014. P. 234)* Barnes also states 'Religious Education has an important role to play in meeting this challenge,' and I believe this is the case because it is a subject that was uniquely designed in a way that can allow for empathy and reflection on learning in the context of our society.

'Team spirit is the willingness or enthusiasm of team members to co-operate and collaborate in a team in order to create change and to make a significant contribution to the organisation(s) in which they work' (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002, p. 148.) Due to the fact at S1 I am a one-man deparment , with this in mind I set about to collaborate with the other schools in 'S1's family of schools' (a collection of independent schools made up of 4 preparatory schools, 1 secondary school, 3 international schools and one academy.)

After meeting up and collaborating with the other RE departments in the collection of schools, we together decided that I would embark on this research and development project on behalf of the RE heads of departments who represent each school. The idea was based on the knowledge and recognition that for each school there are different underlying epistemological grounds for the design of curriculum; and therefore the pedagogies used in Religious Education throughout each school are differing. In some cases there was complete uncertainty about their own pedagogy. There was across the board a consensus that the current syllabus being used in each, the Common Entrance Religious Studies at 13+, was not

adequate in meeting the aims of the subject. Through collaboration we decided that I would embark on this project to try to uncover more answers to a long-debated question; what is Religious Education for? In so doing we would have an epistemological grounding for designing a new curriculum.

This is being carried out with the specific intention that there will be implications for S1, and make a fundamental change in the school by implementing a new curriculum design in Religious Education. The desire is that we have a duty to improve the benefits to pupils' individual spiritual and moral development, as well as to their communities by helping them become socially aware and positive members of the community. If successful in S1 this would be rolled out at the other prep schools in the 'family' of schools.

Overview of Literature Review

Part of the reason I am embarking on this research and development project is, as is explained by Menter et al, 'engaging in and with research can help teachers become more expert' (Menter et al., 2011, p. 26) Whilst this might seem a selfish reason, it is in fact with the intention to impact not only on my school but through collaboration, others also.

To use George Santayana 's famous quote**, "**Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (16 December 1863 in Madrid, Spain – 26 September 1952 in Rome, Italy) It is therefore important for my research that I analyse the historical foundations of Religious Education just as much as I analyse the social context of the subject in contemporary British education. To improve upon something, I must first understand its current and past weaknesses.

- I give insight on confessional Religious Education as it is central to one of my the research questions of whether Prep schools need to go through the 'paradigm- shift' from the scriptural-theological' to more contemporary paradigms that are 'so clearly identifiable in state Religious Education' (Gearon, 2012 p10.)
- An investigation of non-confessional Religious Education. I will explore the nature of liberal model of Religious Education and the different forms and methodologies in which it is expressed in educational settings. I will discuss the paradigms, after having a look at the important work of Thomas Kuhn and Liam Gearon to help understand Religious Education through these 'paradigms'.
- I look closely at the phenomenological approach particularly comment on the positives and negatives of the central epistemological points of the phenomenological approach to religion and its distinctive interpretation of religion and how it should be taught in schools.
- I critique the liberal model of Religious Education by exploring Barnes' detailed study and his belief that it is 'conceptually incapable of challenging intolerance and contributing to the social and moral aims of 'liberal' education.' (Barnes 2012 p.14)

Barnes' work has been key to my own research as he has written so extensively on the topic of the failures of the current forms of Religious Education.

- I give an overview of postmodern thinking, and recognise its influence in Religious Education. In describing the post-modern shift I explore Robert Jackson's 'Interpretive' approach to Religious Education, and explain it using the terminology of a 'post-modern model'.

- I have an important look into RE and Morality. I critique Barnes case for "reconnecting Religious Education with moral education and for education to take advantage of the potential that religious conceptions of morality bring to the moral development of pupils and to the social development of communities." (Barnes 2014 p.14)

My aim was to, having gained rich insight from the literature and gained understanding of expectations of Independent school stakeholders in Religious Education Departments, I will draw the threads of the argument together that answers the research question of 'What is Religious Education for?' and outline the groundings for a new post-liberal model of Religious Education which I will investigate as to whether it should be adopted by my Preparatory school. I will conclude by stating whether or not this project has given me an epistemological foundation from which to implement a great change at my S1 by writing a new RE curriculum for years 3-8 and then for me to take that forward to the other RE coordinators at within the 'family of schools' that S1 is a contingent, and to the larger audience of the District X of independent schools in England.

The Socio-Cultural Context and The Prevent Agenda

At the time of writing Britain and Europe have suffered recent atrocities that have shaken the very foundations of our societies. The London and Manchester attacks this year all committed by, using a term favored by the press, 'home-grown' terrorists. Why is this relevant to Religious Education? Unfortunately it is part of the fundamental nature of society in which we live today. Extremist religious ideology seems to be the justification for many of these attacks. Extremist ideology can sometimes feature in the counter-response such as the white supremacist groups in Charlottesville. The public are traumatized by such atrocities particularly those unfortunate enough to be caught up in such tragedy. RE has the opportunity to empower young people with skills and knowledge necessary to combat extremist ideology and radicalization in society and prevent discrimination of minority groups.

Another answer to this question is that it's because the government has demanded it of the education system. Under Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 all "schools are subject to a duty, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". Everyone in the world has to deal with the consequences of terrorism and should do what they can to try and prevent it. Young people spend such a large proportion of their lives at school so it is understandable that the government believes schools have a key part to play in this.

The Prevent Agenda

In the UK the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, in the Home Office, works to counter the threat from terrorism. Their work is covered in the government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The strategy is based on 4 areas of work:

1. **pursue**: to stop terrorist attacks
2. **prevent:** to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
3. **protect**: to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
4. **prepare**: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack

Point 2 is affecting individuals, schools and universities in the UK. Those groups with extremist ideologies often target young people due to their vulnerability and desire to seek a sense of belonging. Schools have a lot of contact time with young people and may be best equipped to recognise any signs of radicalisation. The strategy is outlined in chapter 23 of the 'Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act' (2011) and HM Government document CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, (July 2011). The foundation it is built on point 1.06. *"We judge that four factors will continue to enable terrorist groups to grow and to survive: conflict and instability; aspects of modern technology; a pervasive ideology; and radicalisation."* and to further this, point 1.11 states *"between January 2009 and December 2010 over 600 people were arrested for terrorist-related activity in the UK. This is more than any other European country. 67 people have been prosecuted and 58 people convicted for terrorist-related offences."* It is with reference to the possibility of a pervasive ideology and radicalisation that education is paramount in the prevention of terrorism. Young people's extensive use of technology and communication through social media can make them easy targets for radicalisation from online sources if they do not have the skills to discern whether or not they are being manipulated. Due to the fact that the online world is hidden behind closed doors, families may find it difficult to recognise if problems arise. This gives further emphasis on the importance of the role of a school.

However, what is the Government's expectation as to what Education's role will be in this 'Prevent' agenda and 'preventing' radicalisation? Point 1.28 further claims that education has a role in preventing terrorism through challenging extremist views and holding debate. It states that we must *"work with a wide range of sectors (including education, criminal justice, faith, charities, the internet and health) where there are risks of radicalisation which we need to address."* It goes on to acknowledge that *"preventing radicalisation must mean challenging extremist ideas that are conducive to terrorism and also part of a terrorist narrative."*

The document states that one measure to challenge extremism in UK education can certainly help with 'Prevent' is by "supporting people who are at risk of being drawn into terrorist activity through the Channel process, which involves several agencies working together to give individuals access to services such as health and education, specialist mentoring and diversionary activities." (Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act, 2011) This should be seen as a last resort and on a more day-to-day basis schools are expected to not only provide an academic education but provide a nurturing and supportive environment for each individual that attends. This would allow them to enter into discussions about the nature of extremist thinking and why certain ideologies are pervasive in today's society and sometimes persuasive. It is in this area that I believe Religious Education can be useful in providing pupils with the necessary skills.

The government clearly states that education has a key role in preventing radicalisation; one could argue that Religious Education is one of the most important subjects of the broad school curriculum. This is because it is a subject in which pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions on contemporary issues. When acts of terror occur and

people are seeking understanding as to how this can happen, it is my experience that pupils will wish to discuss these events, even to the extent of commenting on extremist views. It is everywhere in the media, from newspapers to online. This can sometimes result in the perpetuation of stereotypes, recently it has been particularly prevalent of Islam, and at its worst, it can sometimes be referred to as Islamaphobia. In some cases, RE is a subject that allows opportunity for extremist views to come to light, however the opportunity also arises for these to be challenged by the teachers, and teachers of Religious Education are arguably the best equipped to do so because of their knowledge and understanding of the nuances of religion. Pupils not only have this platform on which viewpoints can be explored, voiced and challenged, there is also designated curriculum time spent learning about and from different world religions, which can and often are linked to terrorism. As a result, Religious Education can combat the representation of a certain religion/worldview and provide an accurate presentation of it.

Research Questions

Narrowing down my research questions is 'the vital first step in any research' (Lewis & Munn, 1987, p. 7) This will be my starting point before I delve further into my literature review. Although I am aware that my Literature Review might even alter or potentially uncover further questions, I will use this process as my starting point.

'A research question is one which makes explicit the precise area of investigation; it identifies, within the area of general concern, the specific aspect(s) which is or are of particular interest' (Lewis & Munn, 1987, p. 7). Due to this, I have chosen my research on a specific area that I am both interested and invested in.

Lewis and Munn (1987) believe that one must considerably narrow their research questions from being generalised, to having a very narrow and specific focus. They believe that a general research focus is in fact unhelpful as '1. They do not indicate precisely which aspects of the general area should be examined. 2. They do not indicate possible sources of information. 3. They do not indicate appropriate ways of collecting information' (Lewis & Munn, 1987, p. 7).

One very important idea that I came across whilst exploring the nature of small-scale practitioner based research, was from Menter et al., 2011, where it states that 'Research questions are informed not only by your main interest but also by factors that may impact on the feasibility or manageability of your research' (Menter et al., 2011, p. 31). Due to this notion, and because of the factors including working at an independent Preparatory school, I decided that my research questions must directly be linked to this school context and in particular my specific department, so that my small-scale action research and development

project can be both feasible and manageable this results in my research aimed at interviews with management and teachers of local schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

B: What is RE at Prep School for? Is it helping to create a more tolerant society?

At this point I have some hesitations over research question A, mainly because as Gearon states; 'Whether the subject 'works' or not is both epistemologically complex and also, at an existential level, possibly even unanswerable…. the answer to that question will depend on the understanding of the aims and purposes of Religious Education' (Gearon, 2013, p. 138). This will be why 'understanding the aims' of RE will be a major focus of my literature review that will lead me to explore the history and roots of the nature of contemporary British Religious Education. There is no point undertaking research that won't be challenging. If I feel that there is change to be made, I must establish an answer to research question A. An answer to this question will allow me to consider the changes I need to make to the curriculum at my school.

There are a number of people who this research could directly affect, from the pupils themselves to teachers of RE at other prep schools. Therefore my research will not be 'done in a vacuum' as Lewis and Mum agree it shouldn't, and 'It may well impinge on pupils, parents and colleagues' (Lewis & Munn, 1987, p. 8).

I have been given the impression that RE in prep schools is often not good enough and the teachers are unclear about the aims they are wishing to achieve.

For it to reach its potential in creating positive change, then it is my intention to work collaboratively with other RE departments in the other prep schools, and share all findings between the schools and departments.

Literature Review

To identify the relevant research, using key terms, I searched the libraries and online databases to uncover key journals.

1.) The Paradigms of Religious Education, founded in the work of Thomas Kuhn

A reason to explore Gearon and his paradigms of Religious Education is that he believes that 'in Religious Education, the nature of this pedagogy has changed dramatically over past decades.' (Gearon, 2013 p. 28) As I have already stated, to understand the nature of Religious Education today, one must firstly understand the history of where it has come from. Therefore it is important to investigate the ideas of Gearon and the paradigm-shifts in Religious Education.

Gearon's important work changed the way many practitioners of Religious Education see the importance of re-establishing their grounds for teaching their discipline. He explains why researchers and teachers alike require a more 'rigorous theoretical conceptualisation of the underlying paradigms of contemporary Religious Education.' (Gearon, 2013 p.23) Gearon does this by explaining how a satisfactory understanding of the paradigms in Religious Education require an understanding of the epistemological grounds of each. Gearon outlines six paradigms: the scriptural-theological; the phenomenological; the spiritual-experiential; the philosophical-conceptual; the socio-cultural; and the historical-political. These paradigms will be the framework for which I explore the nature of RE.

Before I go further into an analysis of these six paradigms, it is important to explain Gearon's grounding for using the word paradigm. Unlike Cornelia Roux's published works (Roux 1998; 1998a; 2003; 2008; 2009; 2011) Gearon's use of the word paradigm is directly taken from the concept embedded in thought by Thomas Kuhn and his work The Structure

of Scientific Revolutions. In short, a paradigm is a model of understanding that provides a field's members with viewpoints and rules on how to look at the field's problems and how to solve them. Using this concept, Gearon has been able to break down six paradigms that are the basis of the way religious educators and theorists understand the subject of Religious Education. This is important and relevant to my own study when looking at the analysis of results; it will be essential later in being used as a way to identify which paradigm the participants of my research project ground their understanding of the subject.

"In studying religion in its own right, religious studies, as the 'science of religion' has come more commonly to be known, would use a full range of historical, linguistic, philosophical, political, psychological and socio-anthropological approaches in order to understand religion." (Gearon 2013 p.28.) Gearon in a 'Masterclass in Religious Education' lays the foundation of this paradigm approach to understanding the nature of RE. Gearon claims that *'many of the latter theories of religion would become influential in shaping pedagogies of Religious Education. These pedagogies sought to identify neither with religious life nor theology, but with the very sciences which had critiqued religion.'* (Gearon 2013 p.29) This is important in understanding post-modern Religious Educational pedagogies and important to my research project as I will argue later the link between challenging ideologies and religious thought as a skill that allows children to combat radicalisation from extremist ideology.

I will be using the paradigmatic model that he developed as a foundation block for analysing the data. As Gearon states

"I think the notion of paradigm and incommensurability is one way to interpret significant changes in the nature and purposes of Religious Education……Religious Education

researchers, for example, use (paradigmatic) social science frameworks in order to delineate both problems and frameworks as well as methods for resolving them." (Gearon 2013 p.104) This method is important in understanding the attitudes of the participants in my research study. It also allows me to consider what they view the role of RE to be, which may have been influenced by their own experiences of it. I must bear this in mind when writing my interview questions, so I can overcome any natural bias in their responses. Gearon goes onto say:

'Through this we view the broader intellectual sources and influences, religious and the secular, that have impacted the field. So, an example in Religious Education terms might be: where Religious Education was once related integrally to the religious life, it is now in state Religious Education, increasingly dominated by agendas set by secularity.' (Gearon 2012 p.104) We are seeing these curriculum changes in the new GCSE specifications which outline clearly that atheistic and humanist attitudes must also be included in the teaching of GCSE, by comparing this to the Religious Instruction that the pupils in the 1950s would have got, we can see a huge change in what the role of RE ought to be.

Gearon is not the only person to think of Religious Education by using paradigms, as Barnes also does in his 2014 work. *"Kuhn used the term paradigm to refer to the common assumptions, beliefs and commitments that unite a particular group of scientists and regulate their experiments; and in a similar way the term paradigm or model has been used here to refer to the common assumptions and commitments that unite a particular group of religious educators and regulate their practice." (Barnes, 2014 p.232)*

Like Barnes and Gearon I will be using the paradigms as a framework to understand the nature of Religious Education, it is important to note here that Gearon's adoption of the concept of Thomas Kuhn's 'paradigms' has come under criticism from Robert Jackson, "I

have responded elsewhere to Gearon's misapplication of Thomas Kuhn's work on paradigms in the philosophy of science to his analysis of Religious Education and its pedagogy." (Jackson, p. 27, 2015)

Although Jackson states that Gearon has misunderstood the nature of a 'paradigm' and misapplied it to Religious Education. I defend Gearon and argue that these paradigm-shifts in Religious Education are evident because they are seen in the different teaching methods we used in the classroom today. Where I do give credit to Jackson is that the paradigm-shift in the scientific discipline maybe more easily defined than one in Religious Education, such as the change from a geo-centric view of the universe to a helio-centric one. Historically in society, and in individual teachers' pedagogy, we can often see a blend of Gearon's six paradigms. This does not mean we should immediately discount Gearon's use of the term, however we must be clear on our use of the word 'paradigm' in this context.

The paradigm-shift that Gearon speaks of should be seen as less of a shift from one aim of RE to another, but more as a redistribution of the six paradigms in a hierarchy. For example the scriptual-theological was most prioritized over philosophical-conceptual up until the rise of the phenomenological and more recently the socio-cultural and historical-political have taken priority. At no point were any of these paradigms ignored, and can be identified in all forms of RE to some extent.

Of the six paradigms that Gearon describes he identifies the political paradigm as dominant in our secular world. Gearon states that the 'Government's interest in social cohesion goes further than promoting tolerance of diversity, but extending into the murky field of security' (Gearon, 2014 p.34). This securitised Religious Education links clearly with the political world. Gearon argues that the Religious Education classroom now becomes ''the counter terrorist classroom.' (Gearon, 2015 p.346) With the Prevent Agenda the government expects that education will play a role in preventing radicalisation. By

requiring classroom teachers to play a role in counter-terrorism, this counter-terrorist classroom 'will inevitably shift the aims and purposes of Religious Education to the aims and purposes of political and security interest' (Gearon, 2013 p.243). In our current geo-political climate we live in a world of increasing terrorist threats despite, and some argue because of, an increased religious and cultural diversity. It is clear why this issue has been highlighted by the government and a counter-terrorism agenda has affected the education sector. When discussing the six paradigms of Religious Education Gearon states that 'Each', says Gearon, 'in being the grounding for Religious Education, has tried to appropriate Religious Education for its own ends' (Gearon, 2014 p.241) He believes it to be the case that the RE classroom is being used as a tool for the government's political agenda.

He directly opposes this and argues that 'Religious Education needs to be grounded in the religious life in order to address the critical moral and existential questions at the heart of the religious domain in human experience' (Gearon, 2014 p.35) State schools have to adhere to these government changes and so you see the shifts in focus in the curriculum, for example the recent inclusion of Humanism in the new GCSE specifications. One benefit of the independent prep school system is that they are able to independently decide what curriculum they will choose for RE. It is certainly the case that most RE at prep schools, with a Christian ethos, are grounded in the religious life, but it is often not he case that they address the critical moral and existential questions.

On this, unlike Robert Jackson, I will not be criticizing Gearon's argument that Religious Education is dominated by agendas set by the secularity. As I believe that secularity has indeed set agendas that directly affect Religious Education in schooling, in particular in the Political paradigm more specifically through Security. As I have previously shown, one those agendas is The Prevent Agenda, an important part of the governments method of combating radicalization.

It is clear to me as a teacher and head of department in a preparatory school for 5 years and an active member of the ISEB district, that the paradigm-shift that has so clearly already happened in state Religious Education has yet to have had a significant impact on the Religious Education curriculums taught at preparatory schools. Here lies an interesting difference between independent and state: the post-modern forms of Religious Education often taught in state schools, and referred to as part of the 'non-confessional' era has had a 'paradigm-shift' away from the 'scriptural-theological.' Gearon himself argues that this is 'The most easily identifiable paradigm-shift' (2013) He argues that the shift of Religious Education away from scripture and theology in Judaeo-Christian context reflects parallel political and wider intellectual currents. However the interesting point here is that in the current context of preparatory schools in the UK whom the vast majority use Independent Schools Education Board's Common Entrance syllabus at 13+, both syllabus A and B, I would argue in Gearon's terminology rooted in Kuhn's concept, that Prep schools have not made this paradigm-shift. The Religious Studies curriculum is still firmly rooted in the 'scriptual-theological,' and because of this potentially affecting the moral stability of a small proportion of society.

2.) The Confessional Model

A modern interpretation of the 'confessional approach is described by Watson as 'passing on the truth of the religion which has sustained society in the past.' (Watson, et al 2012 p.7) This is an important starting point for exploring the history of Religious Education from the 1944 Education Act into the 1960s.

We must step back even further to really get to the roots of Religious Education in Britain. The *1870 Elementary Education Act* saw the state step into the educational world

for the first time. Population growth saw to the slow decline of the Church's ability to provide education for the masses. The Board Schools, the first schools set up to be run by the state to provide education in areas where the Church was too stretched. In these Board schools the state recognized the need to incorporate Religious Instruction that was representative of not only the majority denomination represented in their population, the Church of England, but also the non-conformists Roman Catholics, as well as a recognition of a small but growing body of atheists and agnostics. There were several clauses signed such as the 'Conscience Clause' introduced by W. E. Forster in parliament, which allowed the right for any pupil to be withdrawn from any Religious Instruction or Religious Observance in school.

"It shall not be required, as a condition of any child being admitted into or continuing in the school, that he shall attend or abstain from attending any Sunday school, or any place of religious worship, or that he shall attend any religious observance or any instruction in religious subjects in the school or elsewhere, from which observance or instruction he may be withdrawn by his parent, or that he shall, if withdrawn by his parent, attend the school on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs." (Section 7, Elementary Education Act. 1870)

The Cowper Temple clause further showed the first real observance and tolerance to diversity in education in England as it stated in the second reading of the Bill in parliament that 'No religious catechism, or religious formulary which is distinctive of any religious denomination shall be taught in a Board school.' (Barnes, 2014 p.16) This meant the first 'non-denominational' teaching of Christianity in an attempt to be as religiously inclusive as

possible. This is an early example of the Religious Education in England trying to confront the difficulties of religious diversity of society that we still see today.

This was the start of a joining of the Board Schools and Church school under the Local Education Authorities, and it wasn't until the 1944 Education Reform Act when this the authority in Education really went to the State as it became one, state 'maintained,' education system. Ken Jones has described this moment as the moment when the state bought 'influence for cash' (2003 p.58) The church relinquishing control for state funding.

The next significant changes to RE in England came out of the 1988 Educational Reform Act. The traditional Confessional Religious Education in schools was slowly being seen as 'indoctrinatory' and a popular assumption was being held that there was a link between confessional Religious Education and indoctrination into a specific denomination of the Church. Barnes maintains "we tend to think of indoctrination describing a situation where pupils are not encouraged to think for themselves or to question the beliefs and values of the worldview into which they are being inducted, or when they are given a partial and distorted view of things." (Barnes 2014 p.60)

Watson describes the confessional approach as this idea of undesirable indoctrination and argues it inadvertently leads to its own downfall. "Confessionalism…teaches a faith as true to an involuntary, immature and therefore vulnerable audience from diverse backgrounds." She states therefore it was open to "justified criticism which brought about its downfall." (Watson, 2012 p.18) Although this is still the main method of delivering Religious Education in faith schools, there is no confessional RE in state schools as it is considered indoctrination and considered to give a distorted view of religion and its not representative of society in the UK today.

3.) The Post-Confessional Models

The Phenomenological Approach.

It could be argued that it wasn't until the famous *Working Paper 36: Religious Education in the Secondary School (School Council 1971; SCAA 1994b),* written under the direction of Ninian Smart, laid the foundations for a new path for Religious Education. The paper introduced a non-confessional, phenomenological approach to the teaching of religion. This is described by Watson as being 'A world religions approach focused on an empathetic study of the phenomena of religions, justifying the retention of RE on the curriculum.' (Watson, 2012 p.14)

Without this development RE would have been seen as old-fashioned and irrelevant and could have been eliminated from the state school curriculum. This is an important point to consider when we examine the need for change in the subject in prep schools later on in my research project.

In the phenomenological approach 'the intention is to help pupils to understand the nature of religious questions and religious affirmations, and to develop a personal intellectual integrity in dealing with the profoundest aspects of their own experience now and in adult life.' (H.M.I. Red Book: Curriculum 11-16, Working Papers by H.M Inspectors: a contribution to the current debate, December 1977) The phenomenological approach may have been seen as necessary in an increasingly multi-cultural world. People found themselves socializing with people from other religious backgrounds and cultures. It became more important for young people to understand what people of different religions did and why they did it than it had ever been before. This is one area that in most prep schools RE is still lacking and it's

relevant to my research project as I will be questioning whether there needs to be some sort of multi-faith Religious Education instead of the narrow Common Entrance syllabus.

Barnes believes that "the fact that the phenomenology of religion had already established its academic credentials at university level no doubt contributed to its favourable reception by teachers." He also believes that the phenomenological approach 'was the only viable alternative to confessionalism.' (2014. P.94) These two reasons, as well as the endorsement given by the given by the *Working Paper 36*, is why it wasn't until much later on that educators and theorists really started critiquing this approach, and as to why it was adopted so quickly around schools in Britain at the time and remained popular for many years.

In *Debates in Religious Education* (2012 p.14) Brenda Watson summarises the many criticisms of the phenomenological approach:

- Hulmes (1979 p .44) describes RE as providing an indigestible diet for pupils of miscellaneous facts. Grimmit (1987) Hammond et al. (1990) and Jackson (1997) describe a subject that is failing to relate to pupils' real needs and personal development.
- A large criticism of the phenomenological approach comes from Jackson (1997) and Greaves (1998) who argue it teaches false impressions of religion through generalizations which deny diversity within religions. This particular criticism can also come down to the way teachers' approach designing their schemes of work.
- Grimmit (1987) and Barnes (2007c) both highlight the fact there is a divide between the way religion is being portrayed in the classroom and the way it is seen by religious believers.

- Wright (1996) and later Thomson (2004) both suggest that the phenomenological approach just promotes relativism through failure to engage pupils critically with religious truth claims.
- Thompson in his same work criticizes the phenomenological for ignoring the central importance of Christianity in British Society.

These show that whilst the phenomenological approach has its benefit of being relevant to the contemporary construct of society and diverse population, it is by no means a perfect model and one that needs to be amended to something without weaknesses.

The Modern-Liberal Model.

Due to the flaws of both the confessional and phenomenological model, theorists have proposed alternative methods of delivering Religious Education in our modern and liberal age. When considering this progression of the subject throughout history, we see that '*No one person has had more influence on the development and promotion of Religious Education in virtually all of its aspects in the UK and internationally over the past thirty years of significant social, religious and educational change than John Hull'* (Bates, 2006 p. 19) A second and more valuable reason why Hull's work is significant is because he '*provides an opportunity to consider the liberal model of Religious Education in its purest form, namely its commitment to the thesis of religious unity and its associated strategy for undermining religious intolerance, without the various subsidiary arguments that are commonly used to support the position.'* (Barnes 2014 p.146)

Of particular significance is that Barnes identifies Hull's model is liberal, commits to religious unity, and undermines religious intolerance.

The liberal model is important today because of the current geo-political climate. We have intolerance in a very multi-cultural society where a large proportion of people also don't associate themselves with any organized religion. We need to see the similarities between disparate communities in our society, on a local and global scale so that we can promote tolerance and acceptance of others despite difference of faith, beliefs and cultural traditions. Without this liberal attitude we see a rise in religious intolerance, which can perpetuate further to prejudiced attitudes in younger generations. It can even result in the anti-Muslim attitudes in America and areas of England and pro-white marches seen in Charlottesville in August this year.

One tends to focus on superficial differences between religions and this is a cause of conflict between denominations and members of different religions. Barnes sums up Hull well by stating that, *"unlike the phenomenologists of religion, Hull simply overlooks the challenge of showing how the different religions and their different doctrines can be reconciled. He simply assumes that the different religions are complementary and that Religious Education pursued on this basis would effectively undermine religious intolerance and discrimination."* (Barnes 2014 p.146)

Barnes lays out the premises for Hull's pure form of Liberal Religious Education in the following way that is helpful for the purposes of analysis and assessment.

1. There is religious intolerance and discrimination.

2. This precipitates community, national and international conflict and disharmony.

3. The cause of religious intolerance and discrimination is religious claims to uniqueness and superiority.

Therefore:

4. Religions and the different religious adherents should relinquish claims to uniqueness.

This entails:

5. The religions should be regarded as complementary.

6. The religions should be regarded as complementary. The full weight of the educational process should be thrown behind attempts to deconstruct religious uniqueness.

(Barnes 2014, p.146/7)

Whilst I believe Hull's aims to be of honorable intention, relinquishing claims of uniqueness can lead to misrepresentation and trivialization, which are two real problems of the multi-faith approach to RE. In the 5th premise it states that religions should be regarded as complementary but I would argue that this is possible without attempting to present them stripped of uniqueness. This is could be done through looking at how religious people of a variety of faiths live in modern society in coherence with our modern British values as well. Another method could be to focus on the investigation of life's big questions and the different ways we make moral decisions.

The Post-Modern Model and Robert Jackson's Interpretive Approach

Barnes himself highlights the difficulties of characterizing the 'post-modern' model of Religious Education.

- Accentuates local traditions of religion over universal expressions;
- Focuses on issues of interpretation and representation;
- Views claims to religious knowledge and truth with suspicion and looks to identify the influence of technologies and hierarchies of power in any claim to knowledge;
- Rejects binary oppositions;
- Privileges individual expressions of belief over communal beliefs;
- Is skeptical of essential definitions of religious beliefs and practices;
- Identifies the way in which human language is used to reinforce and perpetuate religious structures of power;
- Draws attention to internal diversity and the contested nature of religious traditions.

(Barnes, 2014 p.181)

Barnes believes that religious educators should aspire to identify and represent the true nature of religion in their teaching; he argues in all its different dimensions and in its diversity, is the important aspect of how the religions should be taught about. Here he raises an interesting point that challenges the interpretative approach "Religious Education needs to represent religion as it is and not as some 'interpreters' would like it to be or to become." (Barnes, 2014 p.236) In his work Barnes has also identifies further weakness and 'anomalies' in post confessional Religious Education in Britain He highlights

- Accusations of secularism and the alienation of religious minorities;
- Superficial and truncated pupil learning;

- The negative attitudes of pupils to the subject and their perception that Religious Education has little or no relevance to their concerns, sense of identity or spiritual development;
- The disassociation of Religious Education from moral education;
- Misrepresentations of the nature of religion.

(Barnes, 2014 p.236)

The last of these points is a particular criticism of Jackson's interpretative approach.

A New Post-Liberal Model

There are without doubt those who might claim that seeking positive social outcomes from Religious Education is having a detrimental affect on understanding the complexities within religion. Some of RE's major goals, such as spiritual development or social and community cohesion, have some kind of impact upon the way that the subject is being taught. 'accommodation with the meta-narrative of liberalism shifts the focus of religious education from the intrinsic significance of religious truth claims to extrinsic concerns for the enhancement of the prevailing moral and political order.' (Wright, 2004 p.169).

Barnes agrees that there are systemic problems with the current system and he argues that the two educationally dominant models of post-confessional Religious Education in Britain, the modern and the postmodern, are failing to provide fully convincing interpretations and representations of the nature of religion. This is the reason for him putting forward a new model, one that he labels Post-Liberal, one that addresses those problems, identified by Ofsted, of misrepresentation and trivialization, but also allow for greater development of the social positives gained from the subject. This makes me think

that there is no point shifting paradigms of how RE is taught at prep school from a model that is flawed to another.

It is of paramount importance that teachers accurately represent the complex nuances within a religion, also try and get pupils to engage with a variety of world-views and question life's biggest mysteries. Whilst this might seem to much to ask for with constraints of examinations and timetabling, I believe that with subject specialists teaching in prep schools, it could work with changes being made to the current curriculum design and by withdrawing from the traditional Common Entrance at 13+

'*The study of religion should...provide an appropriate balance between and within Christianity, other principal religions, and, where appropriate other religious traditions and worldviews* (HMSO 2010, p23). This government report clarifies the need for a fair representation of all religions taught in RE. However, it is Jackson who points out that there is still '*carelessness in details, recurrent errors, and skewed portrayals of religions*.' (Jackson et al. 2010.) I would argue that both misrepresentation and trivialisation of religions can be attributed to the nature of RE in most prep schools.

This leads us to think about the criticisms of the current way that Religious Educators are handling the teaching of religions. A key consideration here lies in whether a subject should be taught to pass the exams, as a matter of professional competence, or should the teacher focus on truly representing the religions without any trivialisation regardless of what the exam board requires. Without doubt this would not be advisable simply because as a teacher you would be failing your students. So the question then becomes, within this tight time frame, how best is it to teach about these religions so that misrepresentation and

trivialisation can be addressed? One question that is asked is - should there be systematic or thematic schemes of work? If a class only has one hour a week devoted to RE, is it not of utmost importance that the teacher ensures that work is focused on passing those exams and not on any issues of wider social or political implications? What is often overlooked in this debate between traditionalists and progressives is the influence of a wider concern about the need for qualifications and an assessment-driven agenda. So therefore it would be preferable to teach the subject well, tackle misconceptions and misrepresentations, tackle trivialisation, explore wider implications by removing the constraints and allowing the pupils to get the most out of their lesson time. This can be done in the prep school context by withdrawing from Common Entrance and allowing changes to be made to the curriculum design.

One implication this research has had on myself is in the nature of a question that I feel must be explored in the interviews with the participants from secondary independent schools. Do they feel the children from prep schools should even sit the Religious Studies at 13+ Common Entrance exams, which is the norm, if studying towards this exam is having a negative outcome because teachers trivialise and misrepresent religions?

If curriculum design and time-allocation permit it Religious Education has obvious relevance to the moral and spiritual development of individuals and to the social development of communities. The two are not unrelated, part of the argument that Barnes lays out in his Chapter 14 of his work states that moral development and moral commitments are linked to positive social attitudes and behaviour.

This new approach incorporates the positive aspects of some modern models as well as some post-modern models whilst excluding the negatives. As Barnes states “elements from

both the modern and postmodern models of Religious Education need to be appropriated by any new model." (Barnes, 2014, p.238)

So this means that any new model design must include the elements I feel are most beneficial from previous models. Therefore part of my research will be to identify what exactly is most needed in a redesigning of a prep school RE curriculum.

Barnes believes the aspects that must be assimilated into the new model are:

- As argued earlier, the confessional Religious Education is inappropriate for state schools that aim to be inclusive of the community; though it was also argued that the confessional model is appropriate in some contexts and one of the advantages of a post-liberal model of Religious Education is that it can accommodate both confessional and non-confessional forms, unlike either the modern or postmodern model).

- the educational relevance and appropriateness of multi-faith Religious Education in state schools, thus endorsing the argument of Working Paper 36 (Schools Council 1971). Support was also given in that chapter to both systematic and (with reservations) thematic presentations of the different religions in Religious Education, as was support for the principle that the content of Religious Education should reflect its historical and religious context.

- The final point at which the position of Working Paper 36 was endorsed (and defended against later practice) was in relation to the need for a balance to be struck

between providing pupils with knowledge and understanding of religion and addressing their existential concerns as they search for meaning in experience.

- Robert Jackson's interpretive approach to Religious Education, and Chapter 13 acknowledges this while also identifying weaknesses. Attention is given by Jackson to the role of individuals in appropriating and reinterpreting religious traditions and to the way religion is 'lived out' in the life and experience of religious believers. Particularly valuable is his account of the hermeneutical challenge of interpreting religion and his positive proposals for portraying religions and religious phenomena to pupils in the classroom.

(Barnes. 2014. P.238)

Whilst everyone has their specialties, it's good to portray religions as 'lived in things' because it makes them more relevant in today's society. Otherwise children are just learning abstract doctrine that is so far removed from their daily lives and experiences of the world. So many adults have such poor theological literacy, it's important we get it right for this generation. Even when deconstructing an argument presented in the media they should have the skills to see what is logically coherent in what is being presented to them. The pupils should be able to see the links between Ancient Greek society and what is going on in politics today so that they can be critically reflective. We can see that Barnes model is relevant in today's society because this is exactly what the government is asking schools to do with the Prevent Agenda.

In an attempt to drive up standards and deliver harder content a lot of teachers have lost the ability to teach these argumentative skills, just to get through the information that is required for the exams.

Although currently limited, successful RE must engage fully in challenging religious intolerance and religious prejudice, for example a curriculum must include topics such as how inspirational people have overcome social justice and also look at how religion can cause intolerance too. Barnes speaks of the lack of theoretical resources that affirm respect for yet recognize difference between religions. This means an in depth study of religion is necessary to show we are avoiding common problems of trivialization.

For the subject to reach its educational potential a study of religion needs to be 'complemented by explicit challenges to religious and secular sources of intolerance.' (Barnes, 2014 p.243) If extremist thinking of any kind is allowed to spread unchallenged in society the result will be a harsher, excluding intolerant world where people face discrimination for everything that makes them different. This would be tragic to allow considering we have the opportunity to create a significantly better world than we currently live in.

Barnes makes a call for support from other religious educators and a need for co-operation, well this is a weakness of this whole argument as surely it is not good enough that some children are benefiting from this post-liberal model whilst others are left behind. A potential way to solve this problem could be implementing National Curriculum in RE. This could be the best way to support the teachers so that they are prepared with the resources to deliver this high standard of education, in a way that can guarantee its effects will benefit all students.

Conclusion of literature review and implications for research.

Having read through the literature about the old and current models of Religious Education in Britain, it is clear to see that they are limited in their capacity to challenge prejudice and religious intolerance and thus are prevented from having the maximum benefit of community cohesion that Religious Education's aims set out to achieve.

It is with this understanding and that of the socio-cultural environment of contemporary British Education, also taking into consideration the location and socio-economical character of S1, that I have a strong argument to change the curriculum at my S1 from a confessional model/ scriptural/theological paradigm to shift the paradigm to one that is epistemologically grounded in a Post-Liberal Model with a emphasis on the socio-cultural; and the historical-political paradigm.

If I am successful, then the like of Barnes would have to agree that I have been able to use 'this new integrated set of beliefs, commitments and values is intended to enable Religious Education to make a positive contribution to the creation of a tolerant, cohesive society where people are respectful of each other and responsible socially' (Barnes 2014 p.243) in my S1 and potentially have an impact on the other Religious Education departments in the other schools in District X and my family of schools. My research is only the starting point for our school, but I would hope to take this model and implement it, evaluate its success, and then share it with other teachers in my district. It is only with the cooperation of a large number of teachers and schools, that we can deliver the highest standard of education in our subject.

I believe any leap forward in epistemological groundings for a new curriculum design must be done with the intention of not just shifting models to what the majority use today, one that has been highlighted by many as flawed, but to create or assimilate with a new model of teaching Religious Education that neither has the negatives of the old confessional model or those of the post-confessional era, but in fact takes the benefits from both, and strives to aspire to do something greater.

By looking at the historical development of RE in England through the framework or lens of Gearon's paradigms, I can clearly see a continuous rebalancing of the hierarchy of the six paradigms. At the moment this leaves us most commonly with the scriptural theological still in prep schools, but a more socio-cultural and philosophical-conceptual model in secondary schools. I think therefore that a new shift is necessary for prep schools; so that the socio-cultural and philosophical-conceptual are in fact at the head of the hierarchy and are promoted in priority over the scriptural-theological. This is not to say that this aspect of the education should diminish entirely but that there is a priority shift which will in turn have a greater positive impact on the social outcomes of Religious Education.

One limitation of my Literature Review is my heavy reliance of Barnes' work. I justified this by arguing that his work has been key to my own research as he has written so extensively on the topic of the failures of the current forms of Religious Education.

Methodology

Research Question: ***What is Religious Education for?*** *A study of Independent Secondary school views on the aims of Religious Education and how this could impact on the preparatory schools curriculum design."*

Since the late 1990s, there has been a 'new flourishing of research in Religious Education.' (Stern, 2014. p12) Grimmitt (2000 p.21) talked about a 'need for a stronger relationship between classroom practice and the research community.' This is exactly what I hope to do achieve on a small, localised scale through my research.

A Qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews would be the best method of research to gain the richness of insight and emotions that will allow me understand the narrative that is being presented. I am aware of the two different categories of knowledge: practical wisdom and generalisable, research-based knowledge (Korthagen et al, 2001) It is the practical wisdom that I am interested in developing so that I may enable change at my S1 and collaborate with other prep schools to do the same.

I have reflected on Lincoln and Guba's concept of 'trustworthiness.' (Schwandt 2007 p.12) I agree with them that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. Their criteria that I use to check the 'trustworthiness' of my project is below:

- **Credibility** - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings
- **Transferability** - showing that the findings have applicablity in other contexts
- **Dependability** - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated

- **Confirmability** - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

I will not be requiring statistical analysis of the quantitative approach which would create more generalisable knowledge. I have instead decided to examine the participants' words and actions as I believe that will give me a greater understanding of the specific cases in their our school settings.

The Westhill Seminars on the long-term effects of CPD (Stern, 2014) were bold in their nature and are a good example of research carried out over a longer period of time. It resulted in something very real, Stern's 'National RE CPD Handbook.' My research is by nature far more limited and therefore has different aims to the Westhill Seminars. The outcome of my project will be more localised, with the collaboration between myself and my colleagues at the other schools, we will try to ensure we are all providing the best Religious Education curriculum for the pupils in our school settings.

Whilst many argue that this research could be deemed too limited because it's not searching for socially verifiable facts, this does not take anything away from the power of the language that will be expressed by these people in positions of Senior Leadership and Subject management. This is therefore one of the reasons that I have accepted my method of qualitative research. I started by writing a script of questions as seen in the Appendix, however after reading about educational research and the understanding the limitations of such closed questions, I changed my approach to focus around a semi-structured interview where the questions were more open. This was highlighted by Stern, (2014 p.9*) 'It might be said that these questions are simply eliciting opinions. However, there are specific questions*

asking about the possible mechanisms leading to effects, and these, along with the more open questioning techniques, in interviews, are intended to encourage the respondents – themselves describable as co- researchers – to provide plausible evidence.' This idea of writing open, less-structured questions to help the participants to become 'co-researchers' was an interesting idea and one I used to build a feeling of collaboration between us.

Rationale

'*To gain a better understanding of the real world, to bring about greater individual happiness in stable societies and to explore those factors which restrict levels of individual liberty'* (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994 p.24) It is with those three ideals in mind that I carry out my own research. But for my research to be widely accepted I must explain why it is reliable, so that people can read it and that I might be successful in my task of implementing change to curriculum design in the family of schools. I believe that all knowledge is socially constructed and all experience is mediated through language and culture and I don't believe knowledge can be ranked in hierarchy with objective truth. Therefore the rationale behind my methodology is that the qualitative method of doing 5 different interviews will be enough to gather a rich insight into the questions that I want answering.

Approach

My own approach is to use semi-structured interviews. I interviewed five participants at S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6. I have chosen to use this qualitative approach because I am better served by getting material which provides a more rich insight into the topic, drawing on information provided by fewer participants (Denscombe, 1998) I had to also bear in mind

that my research would also explore some sensitive issues that, for reasons of 'honesty', are best gained through 'face-to-face' interviews. (Denscombe, 1998 p.27) I used semi-structured interviews so that I could retain a clear list of topics that I wanted to discuss but at the same time to allow for flexibility.

I made sure that I could access the population out of which I wanted my sample to be taken. However in this situation I am heavily relying upon whether the participants will be interested in taking part in the research. A problem with this is the incredibly busy schedule of the participants who mostly have senior positions in schools.

Sampling

My research project and research questions naturally created limitations for my sampling as they had to include members of a specific population. In my case I chose my sample to include the leaders of secondary schools that S1 feeds to, members of the RE departments at these schools or people with experience of Prep School management that I had access to. To make sure that my research was realistic, it resulted in a limitation to my project; I had a limited sample of five participants. I still believe that they would give me a clear picture of the situation. I understand that if I wanted to make sure that my results most accurately represented the population from which the participants were selected then randomness would be an important factor in creating a sample. However, I do not plan on making grand generalisations that a lot of research aims to do. My own goal is to gather information on a topic that gives me a greater understanding about a localised area that can be experienced by this select group of individuals. Therefore for my sampling, I believed randomness was not, as important as the quality of interview. Therefore I went in the direction of purposive

sampling (Quinn Patton, 1990) I also referred to the technique called snowball sampling identified by Maykut and Morehouse (1994.) This method was previously labelled theoretical sampling by Glaser and Struss (1976) They said it allowed the researcher to build and broaden theoretical insights in the ongoing process of data collection and analysis. The implications for me that I used to justify using any contacts that were available to me to gather my sample.

My Sample:

Participant A = Teacher of Religious Education at an independent secondary school that some pupils of S1 go to study after finishing S1.

Participant B = Head of a Religious Education Department at an independent secondary school that some pupils of S1 go to study after finishing S1.

Participant C = Director of Studies of a local prep school to S1.

Participant D = Headmaster of a Prep School, and current Deputy Head of an independent Secondary School.

Participant E = Head of a Religious Education Department at an independent secondary school that some pupils of S1 go to study after finishing S1.

My qualitative research method should give me a rich and detailed picture of the perceptions of the current CE syllabus and points of view surrounding the aims and outcomes of Religious Education. Another reason I chose the qualitative method is because I know that it creates openness, encourages the participants to expand on their responses and I am able to question their responses face to face. However I understand that the limitations of my choice in this method of analyzing individual experience, means it's difficult to give systematic comparisons particularly because I had a limited sample of people therefore there will be inevitable limitations because of my own interpretation of the data..

Data Collection

The 'data' of this qualitative research enquiry is the teachers' words and I had to use a method of collection that allows me to capture their language. This is shown in transcripts. (Appendix 2) I collected the data through audio taped interviews which I later personally transcribed to further analyse.

Data Analysis

I was wary of what my own pre-conceived ideas, would have on the data-analysis and in turn how this would affect the 'confirmability' of my research, a point made Lincoln and Guba in their concept of trustworthiness (Schwartz 2007. P.18) In a similar style to the research reviewed by Fancourt in Teaching about Christianity in Religious Education: a review of research (2012) the analysis was conducted both deductively using a broad

pedagogical framework, and inductively, identifying the particular themes that emerged. I had a category for both negative and positive comments about Common Entrance, as can be seen in Appendix (3) to try to promote objectivity. It was inevitable that throughout the process of data collection and transcription of the audiotapes, that in my mind some of the analysis was already taking place. I tried to engage with the data by 'Epoche' as described by Katz (1987. 36-7) "*Epoche is the process whereby the researcher engages to remove, or at least become aware of prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation.*" Epoche is argued to help the research become more objective and leave behind prejudgements so to not impose meanings onto the data too soon. Katz argues out that Epoche allows one to set aside 'personal points of view in order to see the experience for itself.' (1987 p. 37) I decided to try apply this approach, so I created the categorisation system of themes that that the data can be categorised into prior to analysing the data as objectively as possible rather than leading it all to when I go through the process of trying to interpret the data. However, of course, I expected there were going to be some issues arising within the analysis that won't have been predicted and extra 'categories' might well be created.

My research is something that I have spent the best part of two years thinking about. Therefore it was hard to employ Epoche when analysing data, but I know to make my research trustworthy, I must look out for meanings and pick out experiences of others, but at the same time try to be aware of the fact that my own preconceptions might be influencing my interpretation. This was important to keep in mind as I analysed the data.

Maykut and Morehouse descibe my style of research as creating a 'continuum ranging from low-level of interpretation to and abstraction engaged by the researcher, to a

high level of interpretation and abstraction that is required for theory building' (1994 p.122) My research fits between what Strauss and Corbin, (1990 p.23) describe to be one end of the continuum; that which requires a 'level of interpretation from the data' in order to arrive at a way of 'organizing concepts and tenets of a theory to explain the phenomenon of interest.' (1990 p.23) And the middle of the continuum as Maykut and Morehouse suggest 'accurately describing' what the researcher has understood, reconstructing the data into a 'recognizable reality.' (1994 p.122) This research approach is called the 'interpretive-descriptive' analysis. I believe that my data analysis is in a method that is 'interpretive- descriptive' but also uses the interpretation and some abstraction for theory building.

My analysis consisted of a method of coding and that is as follows, I have kept to an easy coding method to avoid confusion.

A1 : The number refers to the question number and the letter to the specific interview participant.

Example: C7 is the code that would mean it's from question 7 of the transcript of Participant C.

Ethical Considerations:

I made sure that I was following the strict guidelines set out by BERA in the 2011 Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. I made sure that the following areas were adhered to and well considered within my responsibility towards my participants:

- Voluntary informed consent – All participants were asked if they would like to join voluntarily.
- Openness and Disclosure – I explained in full the method and rationale behind the research.
- Right to Withdraw – I gave all participants a right to withdraw agreement, if they wanted to redact some statements at the time of interview or withdraw from the research at anytime.
- Incentives – Collaboration to benefit the school and pupils.
- Detriment arising from participation in Research- Due to anonymity, the participants were considered not to be at risk.
- Privacy – Anonymity ensured through codenames.

  As my research method consisted of interviewing members of Senior Management Teams at the place where many of our pupils go after leaving S1, there might well have been ethical issues with me conducting my research. However, with advice and using the BERA guidelines, I made sure that my research was in no way breaching any ethical code. I had no questioning about the participants personal religious belief, direct views on government policy or political leanings. My questioning was only about their professional opinions based on their experience of management of the School.

I also have a responsibility to seek to make public the results of my research once it is completed for the benefit of educational professionals, policy makers and a wider public understanding of educational policy and practice.

Trustworthiness

My epistemological and ontological philosophical standings, is that not all knowledge has to be statistically verifiable through years of gathering empirical evidence. I do believe that I can verify the existence of facts within our natural world through empirical understanding of the natural laws of it. However, I believe that knowledge does not just remain valid through statistical analysis. It should be made clear at this point that I understand that it is important to accept that 'there are no objective data on teaching and learning because, no matter how we select and obtain information, it is in some way distorted by the process.' (Aubusson et al, 2009 p.87). If I can argue that my research has Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability according to Lincoln and Guba's concept, then I believe my research can be trusted however.

Expectations

Informed by the literature and my own prior classroom experiences I expected my research to highlight the following areas; similar criticisms of confessional model of RE and Common Entrance Religious Studies at 13+, a desire for a change to prep school RS curriculum design, criticisms of the phenomenological approach and positivity toward towards philosophy and ethics in the curriculum. I expect that the participants will be of the view that there needed to be changes made to the curriculum design of RE currently taught at most prep schools.

Data Analysis

Whilst analyzing the data I had to bear in mind the points that would make my research trustworthy, so I referred back to Lincoln and Guba's concept of trustworthiness. In particular, because I was interpreting data, I was concerned with confirmability. I had to make sure I was as neutral as possible in my analysis. Therefore I created a three layer plan for analyzing the data.

The first layer was to code the transcripts (Appendix 2) according to themes. I did this using colours to distinguish different ideas of the narrative of each interview according to pre-chosen themes.

The second layer was to create a new document of the data analysis (Appendix 3) then code this again into subsections so that a narrative made up of similarities could be established. To do this, I sieved through the data one more time to gather the necessary and relevant points to include back into my final analysis.

The third and final layer was to separate each participants' points by coding them using different colours again to identify the responses of certain participants. This allowed me to see how balanced the similarities were between all the participants or if there was just one participant who spoke on a certain subject.

Coding for Analysis.

For my data analysis I used a method of colour coding themes that are raised by the participants in responses to my questions.

RED = Aims of RE should be to benefit social cohesion and creating positive members of society.

BLUE = RE should give the skills to combat intolerance, or to promote empathy.

ORANGE = Criticisms of the confessional, current or past models RE

GREEN = Positives of confessional or current models of RE.

PURPLE = What should RE look like at Prep School

YELLOW = Anti-Radicalisation in the school

BRIGHT GREEN = Critical of Common Entrance at 13+

BRIGHT BLUE = Positive about Religious Studies Common Entrance at 13+

BRIGHT PINK : Moral Education an important part of education

Interview Questions.

My interview questions (Appendix 1) were split into three categories based on the research questions.

A: What is RE for? Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

A2: Are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

B: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

Analysing the data

Perception of Common Entrance Religious Studies at 13+

The interviews frame a stark picture for this examination syllabus and the teaching of it for prep schools in the England. Whilst the limitation of my small sample should be remembered, the fact that these participants are from different school settings and have a range of personal experiences in different educational contexts. They paint a fairly damning narrative about this Syllabus which is so widely used and has been relied upon by Prep Schools for decades.

Participant A refers to the RS Common Entrance as "very confessional, very 'what comes next in the story?' kind of thing. That's not helpful and I don't think that's what children need now. We need critical thinkers with a moral compass and a global awareness!" (A-26) Participant A later states that she feels pupils that she currently teaches, who have been through CE generally show "A really shallow understanding of the content they were taught." This makes me think that even if it is a rather confessional model then this suggests that it is not even a very good one.

Participant B makes her point of view very clear when she answers the question; Is RS CE at 13+ good enough, are we teaching the pupils what they need? Her response is simply "No." (B-21) She also comments on the fact that "it is rarely taught well." (B-22) She goes onto say that "whether they need to be able to parrot stories is questionable." (B-22) and specifically on the structure of it, "The "coursework" element is a joke." Later on in the

interview whilst answering another question she elaborates on the last point when answering the question on if she had any negative personal experiences of CE she said “Some of the CE "courseworks" that I was forced to mark as a senior school HOD. Identikit printed powerpoint slides on Islam. Really bad.” (B-27)

Participant D’s view on RS CE at 13+ fits in with his narrative very well. He clearly feels that Prep Schools are not doing a good enough job. “I do believe that at the moment we are failing our children in many prep schools in that regard.” (D-13) Participant D gives a very clear reason for this through several answers. “ To be able to operate with tolerance and in that society they need to have a very good understanding of these different beliefs. (D-13) The use of the language here is damning. The fact that a prep school Headmaster can be saying that of the education at prep schools is worrying.

He believes that “the CE syllabus is such a narrow syllabus, way to narrow and very heavy on knowledge of the scripture without allowing for it to really fulfil its important aims as a subject. It doesn’t create balance in my view or give children knowledge of world religions other than Christianity.” (D-20) This is linking to the criticisms of the confessional model I earlier analysed in this section.

When answering question 20 he makes a comment that supports the experiences had by Participant A; that CE only gives pupils a shallow understanding, “Even then, its knowledge based really, not focused on the pupils engaging with it or even really understanding it.” (D-20)

Participant D makes his position even clearer when he states “CE has a very heavy leaning on the Bible and Christianity and although I know that that a good knowledge of scripture is important, but the leaning was too much. In my view the CE at 13+ doesn’t deal enough with moral values, ethics, philosophy and world religious views. The moral values cross over so many of the religions and that is why it is so important to educate the children this way. (D-20)

He cements his position by stating “Well I mean I have given my views to you on CE and how I don’t feel its good for the pupils. I think its just too narrow for me.” (D-28)

Participant E is particularly negative about Common Entrance and this is obvious when he states “what I’ve seen of the Common Entrance, most of it is entirely useless. The only part that is worth reading, and hence worth marking, is where students are asked to sustain their own opinion.” (E-6) He says the only part that is worth marking is where pupils have to write about their opinion. In fact this aspect that Participant E is referring is worth only 15% of the total marks of the CE exam, and there are only several questions in this style in the exam paper.

We can clearly see from the narratives of each interview that there is a negative view of the RS CE Syllabus at 13+ being used as the Religious Education in Prep Schools. Whilst originally I felt that maybe my sampling method having members of the education community from different positions commenting, would be a limitation, in fact I am starting to see that maybe it is helpful to see the opinions of people from different school contexts. There is a question it leads me to ask; does it make the similarities of what they are saying even more poignant? By have a Secondary RE teacher, two secondary RE Heads of

Departments, a Secondary Headteacher and a Prep School Director of Studies all saying that they feel RS CE syllabus being taught at prep schools is not good enough, it highlights to me the importance of this issue.

It's evident that the CE is being criticised for similar reasons to the confessional model, which boosts my idea that the CE RS syllabus might well need to go through a paradigm-shift that has happened in most other RE in England. All of the participants recognise that we no longer live in the 19th Century. It is not 1870 and teachers should not have to adhere to the Elementary Education Act (1870) and deliver religious instruction.

If this is enough then this data supports a proposal that S1 needs to withdraw from this RS CE 13+ Syllabus, so that a new curriculum can be implemented. The question that comes back full circle as in the literature review; what should that look like? This will make up the next phase of my analysis.

It is important at this point to note that there were 3 positive comments about the CE syllabus

'Well it's good because they do have the biblical knowledge that is going to be foundational to any RE GCSE they sit. Of course that's an advantage.' (A-22)

Good that kids should study the bible, (B-22)

CE has a very heavy leaning on the Bible and Christianity and although I know that a good knowledge of scripture is important, (D-20)

This is the same positive mentioned by three of the five participants. This links with what Barnes was saying about, when a new model is created then it should incorporate the good aspects of what has gone before. In the case of the confessional style and CE, these three participants would argue that it is the knowledge and understanding of the scripture. This links with what I suggested in the conclusion of my literature review that, whilst we change the hierarchy of paradigms and prioritise the socio-cultural and the philosophical-conceptual over the scriptural-theological at the top, that it is important to make sure that this element does not disappear from the curriculum and that it must still all be grounded in this way, as Gearon puts it, 'grounded in religious life.'

Views on the Phenomenological approach

'It would be wise for religious educators to employ a broad mix of teaching methods to appeal to a wide range of learning styles among different students. Good use should be made of visits to religious sites' (Francis & Fearn, 2001, p. 47).

There are aspects of the phenomenological approach that are clearly believed by the participants should be in any prep school model of RE and they seem to support Watson's view of the phenomenological study of religion is an 'empathetic study.'

"I think in a nutshell, children should be educated to make their own choice – that is what it boils down to. To ensure children are able to make their own choices, rather then be

dictated to, the state needs to make sure that they have a balance of different religions taught to them within their Religious Education. Without any leaning towards a particular faith." (D-6) Participants D's comments on what RE should like rings accord with this passage from Hull 1981:

'... no assumptions about the truth (or falsehood) of any one of the religions. It simply presents them, describes them, holds them up in all their beauty and their ugliness, helping the pupil to understand without prescribing what the outcomes for any pupil may be should he make choices or rejections.' (Hull 1981, p.200).

There is a stark similarity between Hull's support for the phenomenological approach and Participant D's comment.

This view also echoes with comment made by participant E when they stated that RE should be about "Creating openness towards questions that don't have over-determined answers." (E-1)

However the interviews more broadly shows very clear criticisms of phenomenological RE.

"I think the multi faith approach makes RE teachers job really hard because you can never be an expert on all of the 6 main world religions. Let alone all of the smaller and really interesting ones. Sometimes it's badly representing the religion and in some cases outright lying in order to try to show similarities that aren't even there. " (A-7)

Participant A clearly shows limitations of the 'multi-faith' approach as she clearly links the fact that not all teachers are experts, therefore it can lead to misrepresentation of religions. A theme that I investigated in my literature review.

Participant B also shows a scathing criticism of this model of RE as she states 'It is a fantasy borne of sociology departments in the 1970s. Yes teach about different religions, but the idea that this can be done neutrally and adequately from a phenomenological or thematic approach is nonsense.' (B-4)
Participant B seems to be suggesting that if it is truly objective in its presentation it just becomes a 'series of miscellaneous facts' (Hulmes 1979)

She had already previously highlighted criticism of it when she said from the very start of the interview…"I don't have anything to do with "RE"... Which I see as an ill-conceived offshoot of multi-cultural social engineering likely to result in apathetic atheism and even hostility to faith." (B-2) What participant B was referring to is the current form of 'Religious Education' taught widely, based on a phenomenological epistemological grounding.

Participant C highlights an actual problem from their experience caused by this approach, where it results in a negative outcome for the pupils. "some of the pupils they have used what they have learned and taken it completely out of context. You know through saying something to another pupil about their religion. Or using it as a derogatory term to another pupil. There is that element that has happened in the past because of a lack of understanding. (C-28)

Whilst these are all criticisms of the phenomenological approach, from the analysis of the data in the last section it is clear the RE still needs to be relevant to the pupils, so whilst there are limitations and criticisms of a multi-faith approach, to design a new curriculum one would have to bear that in mind. World religions must be represented, but represented properly and in depth so 'not to fail to relate to their real needs' as Watson identified (2011 p.178) A link back to the literature review here suggests that the issue of relevance is one of the positives of the phenomenological approach that the New Post-Liberal Model would offer, "the educational relevance and appropriateness of multi-faith Religious Education in state schools, thus endorsing the argument of Working Paper 36 of Schools Council 1971" (Barnes 2014 p.28). He demonstrates this in his new post-liberal model as he emphasises the internal diversity within a religion and individual expressions of belief. By focusing on how person of faith represents their religion and interprets key teachings it has a direct impact on the student learning. This in a new curriculum would therefore mean that it would be important to have visits into religious communities and places of worship so students can see how people live out their faith.

Views on Moral Education in RE

'As an important educational theme, human rights have the scope to bring real and enduring relevance to Religious Education' (Gearon, 2002, p. 148). Gearon recognises this area as one where Religious Education should become relevant.

Just like Gearon, it is clear from the interviews that each participant felt there was an important link between Religious Education and the development of morality which links

very much to the literature review where I found that RE needed to ‘nurture a supportive environment’

In order to consider what a new model for prep schools might look like, it is important to note the clear emphasis these participants place on a moral education. Participant A sees that RE classroom as being “really a space in the curriculum for students to ask questions and be given time to contemplate different ideas and to hear different people's views in the class. They can challenge stuff they've heard.” A23b

These other responses are all in answer to whether there should be a link between RE and moral education.

B- 13: Absolutely

B-13a: Yes

B-20: Yes.

B-21: Some impact, but it does not bear all the responsibility.

C-12: Yes it should. They cross over

C-12a: - Yes (RE) definitely is. It’s a class in which the pupils can engage with moral issues, both religious and non-religious.

C-19: Yes. I think so. That for me, as a parent and a teacher, you want your children to be the best they can be…… Understanding of what's right and wrong, have an appreciation of different people and different cultures. And have a capable level of emotional intelligence to be able to

C-19a: As I touched on earlier this comes from RE, but also everywhere else.

C-19 b: It definitely does. Through different versions, you can find many good examples of that.

D- 12: Yes I do, If moral education was simply taught through one subject then it would impact on its effectiveness. Morality is a part of everything therefore it should be taught within all disciplines. If we are really going to embed moral values into children's' thinking it needs to be coming from everywhere. In both academic and non-academic. Inside and outside of the classroom.

D-19: I think everyone has a role to play in that regard, including schools, including RE lessons, to help make pupils become adults who are going to contribute positively to society in a tolerant and respectful way.

All of this analysis has led me to the next point of analysis of the data. Having already uncovered the criticisms of CE RS at 13+, the confessional model, the phenomenological approach, I now need to see what the participants though about what therefore should good RS at prep schools look like.

What should a new Prep School RE curriculum at look like?

1.) A subject that produces pupils who can challenge intolerance and improve skills to combat radicalisation.

It is evident here that RE needs to play a role in this, and this can be done through many ways, such as exploring the morality of religions. However another suggestion is that RE has an important part to play in enabling pupils to not only challenge intolerance but also challenge injustice and the 'pervasive ideologies' highlighted by the government's Prevent Agenda in the literature review. Participant B makes this clear when she states the following "I think that RS, done well, is a great protection against radicalisation in that it teaches kids to think and question what they are being told, and to be suspicious of definite answers and promises about the afterlife!" (B- 17)

Participant A's own professional experience shows us what a platform the RE classroom can be "It's really a space in the curriculum for students to ask questions and be given time to contemplate different ideas and to hear different people's views in the class. They can challenge stuff they've heard. …….So many times I've heard students say something outrageous that's clearly just been parroted from something they've heard their parents say. In RE the teacher can actually say "why do you think that?" Give them time to contemplate it and more often than not if it really was an outrageous thing then they realise it. And I think that's amazing. Imagine if we lived in a world where people didn't think about why they believed something" (A-20b)

Participant C agrees with this point and his view can be clearly seen when he says "Developing the skills of how to form an opinion and to respect an opinion, but also how to debate against things and challenge things that you disagree with. That is an important life skill, particularly in this day and age where you have intolerance out there in the real world." (C-9)

Later in the interview he returns to this notion and confirms this is his opinion by going on to say "what is also important is the skill, and its also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view." (C-20)

He mentions it again later "Develop their moral compass and the understanding of right and wrong is really key! You know when they see something happen that is wrong they need the skills to be able to be able to challenge it rather than just accept it." (C-24)

Participant D also speaks of intolerance in the world, he speaks of this concept of challenging it as 'skills to argue against what is unacceptable'.

"Another thing that it should support is not only to be tolerant of other faiths but also to actually be intolerant, maybe not the right word, but what I mean is to give the children skills to argue against what is unacceptable." (D-1)

Interestingly to note here that he uses the context of the problems in Charlottesville with the extremist views, this is the second time this has been used to justify the idea that children

needs skills to be able to challenge intolerance. “I see what is going on in America at the moment and I see young people being swept along with this tide of intolerance towards others. It makes me think that maybe we need to make sure we are doing all we can to help our children in this country see why that is wrong.” (D1)

Participant D values what role RE can play in developing those skills; “of course it might lead children to question things they hear at home, which is a good thing. We need to give them the skills to challenge wrong and be advocates for the morals we teach them. RE has a role to play because it gives them a platform for discussion that can help them build self-confidence and the confidence to challenge what is not right.” (D-17)

These sentiments exactly mirror what Hull aims to produce from his liberal model of RE in so much that it priorities religious unity and tolerance and seeing the complimentary nature of religion rather than focusing on its divisions.

After analysing all of the data, I can therefore conclude that all participants feel that schools have a large role to play in giving children skills that they can go onto challenge intolerance and injustice in society and also that RE can be a platform for developing those skills.

2.) Philosophy and Ethics in the curriculum

There was throughout the interviews an overwhelming belief that the inclusion of philosophy and ethics in the RE curriculum was an important thing. This highlights to me a

clear link to Gearon's 'philosophical-conceptual' paradigm and suggests that this is particularly relevant today.

A-8 : Philosophy and ethics, given enough time, can get young people to engage in the world around them and apply the skills they learn in the classroom to what is going on in the world around them.

A-27: Definitely. (Participant A is responding to whether Philosophy should be taught at prep school.)

B-5: "I am a big fan, obviously……when done well it can be transformative."

C-8: I think its positive. It develops an enhanced level of thinking for the pupils. It can prepare them for their future lives, and current moral dilemmas they face. It is good to give them a platform to how to deal with these situation. I think it is also important to give them a chance to practice listening. Listening to other peoples points. This develops empathy.

C-20 As I said earlier this comes through the subjects of philosophy and ethics, so it would be important to have those in there I suppose. It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason.

C-25: Yes I think so. Ethics is important because its in a way, a non-direct way, Its giving the children exposure to different situations. How people have coped with the situations in the past, how other people would approach this situation and it allows the children to then

think about how they might act in a certain situation. ……its giving them the skills to reflect on their own beliefs and how that influences their actions in the world. It helps them know themselves. It also important they just reflect on things happening in the world to see whether things are right or wrong.

C-20: Give the pupils a confident level of emotional intelligence to deal with situations. As I said earlier this comes through the subjects of philosophy and ethics, so it would be important to have those in there I suppose. It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason. Whilst these skills can come through a range of subjects, I think RE needs to incorporate this and be delivered specifically as part of this subject.

D-8: To answer the question more directly, philosophy and ethics should be being taught in schools, its just a question of whether it is part of the RE curriculum or not?

Participant E emphasises the value of philosophy and ethics in RE when he goes as far to say, when talking of the philosophy and ethics approach to RE, that "this is the only RE that I support." (E-8)

3.) Skills that have to be taught in any new curriculum design:

A series of different responses from different participants have unearthed practical skills that need to be specifically taught at prep schools to enable pupils success in their secondary

school. In the conclusion I will reflect on whether or not the current CE curriculum does enough to develop these skills.

B-22: Clear and accurate description, developing an answer with several points, giving reasons and evidence to support a point.

B-25: Basic literacy. Skills in developing written answers using evidence, multiple points, other points of view.

C-20: It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason. Whilst these skills can come through a range of subjects, I think RE needs to incorporate this and be delivered specifically as part of this subject.

C-20: The ability to offer opinion but also respect opinion, but what is also important is the skill, and it's also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view.

C-24: Presentation skills and listening skills is a part of that. Being able to understand other peoples opinions. Ability to think wider than maybe just their own opinion. And have that understanding of others. But not just know what other people think but actually understand why other people think in that way. Emotional intelligence. Being able to create a well balanced argument when in discussion.

C-24: Give them the skills to see something that has happened in the past but then work out, okay, well this has happened, how can we make the future better for everyone.

D-24: Writing to argue, debating skills, both paper and verbally. A broad understanding of the major world religions. I think that's it. If they are able to have the knowledge and the skills, then they can debate and discuss real issues in the religions. They would be well prepared. There is a crossover with English and Humanities subjects.

It is immediately evident from each participant they valued the children being able to write or dictate well constructed argument and skills such as empathy that allow the pupils to develop an understanding of other people's opinions.

4.) Other points for A New Model:

When asked about what approach is best at a prep school, many of the participants pointed out that there needs to be a mixture of knowledge and understanding of world religions and philosophy and ethics.

A-9: A mix I guess. It's important to know about religion and stuff and Bible stories have had such an impact on art and literature. If I had to pick one of… say philosophy and ethics for the reason I just mentioned.

A-23 : Definite focus on the skills. But teaching them through the knowledge. Like with the science and religion stuff it can be all about constructing a good, a convincing, argument and identifying fallacies in your opponent's argument.

A-23 I think prep schools should try to mirror how secondary schools assess pupils. So GCSE has some short mark questions. 1 2 or 3 marks. Maybe a 4 mark explain question. But they all have a longer, 12 or 15 mark essay type question. Of course they have to include knowledge in this bit but it's mostly about how they can argue, use evidence and construct a convincing argument.

A-26: Constructing arguments, using evidence, addressing opposing views but then analysing them so it fits into your original argument. Writing extended pieces of work too. A lot of kids come to secondary school and are daunted at the prospect of writing a page or a page and a half.

Participant B points out that there needs to be still an aspect of the confessional in how it is taught- in a way that gives the pupil a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the religion being taught.

"I think studying the bible is the only worthwhile bit of "confessional" RE.. It provide some rigour and interest and something of use to the non-believer. " (B-3)

Participant B makes an interesting point about whether philosophy and ethics should only be taught from 14+, so at the secondary school level. "Philosophy and ethics from 16+ - or

perhaps 14+ - done rigorously and in the context of proper rs as described above." (B-9)

An interesting contradiction between some of the participants is over allowing flexibility to teach to the teacher's strengths. Participant B shares her belief that differences between teachers' knowledge and practices should be embraced and that teachers should teach to their strengths and not their weaknesses.

"I think we need to embrace the different strengths of teachers and allow for different styles of teaching, including a more spiritually aware approach. I like chaplains teaching RS, but i like atheists teaching it as well." (B-11) This can be related to the argument in the literature review that surrounds RE teachers who teach about topics they are not expert in, leads to misrepresentation and the pupils to have misunderstandings. Participant A agrees with this notion, she says "I think the multi faith approach makes RE teachers job really hard because you can never be an expert on all of the 6 main world religions. Let alone all of the smaller and really interesting ones. Sometimes it's badly representing the religion and in some cases outright lying in order to try to show similarities that aren't even there." (A-7)

Participant C makes a point about the importance of expert teachers. "You really need experts to do this. People who have studied and trained to do it. That's why we as a school have employed a secondary trained RE teacher, rather that have, what many other prep schools do, a history, or English teacher try their best to teach RE." (C-13)

Participant D on the other hand disagrees with the importance of this expertise, he argues that having RE teachers only focus on their specialism can lead to the subject being badly taught and results in a skewed, and unfair view of the religions. "I think there is a danger that RE teachers, which traditionally have come from 1 faith , are quite narrow in their own thinking and even subconsciously are leaning towards a particular type of religion,

and that blurs the objectivity of teaching, either consciously or subconsciously. This is why it might be an idea to have a state imposed national curriculum for RE. "(D-28)

This argument of B's leads her to comment that the subject needs "to have a narrower specification, taught more rigorously by specialist teaches. Pipe dream i know." (B-24) Later she states there needs to be a "Rigorous study of the bible and religions! I know it often doesn't but it can and should." (B-26) Rigour and depth is what she calls for in the subject.

Particiapant C argues for, not just "an understanding of Chrisitanity and the main faith of the school you are in." But also makes an argument for "A strong understanding of many different cultures, religions and beliefs that exist in the world." He argues this because "you are going to surely come across these different beliefs through an average persons life." (C-1)

Whilst there is no total agreement of how many religions should be taught, there is without doubt a clear argument that the teaching of a single religion, in a confessional model is not good enough for the pupils in modern diverse society. As participant C states
"I think that it is something that when we are educating the young we need to prepare them for the world that they are going to live in." (C-4) When talking of teaching about more than one religion; "I think its important, I really do. Children need to be aware of different faiths and what those followers of that religion believe." (C- 7)

Ideally you would combine aspects of them (confessional, multi-faith, philosophy and ethics). (C-9)

E-3: it should be a subject that challenges received opinion and that makes students engage with profound questions regarding knowledge, life, meaning and purpose

5.) The Importance of a Platform to Reflect:

It is suggested throughout that going forward RE needs to be a subject in which pupils have a platform to reflect, for the development of their spiritual and moral selves. The reflective nature of RE is shown as being important. Participant A identifies this by saying: "It's really a space in the curriculum for students to ask questions and be given time to contemplate different ideas and to hear different people's views in the class. They can challenge stuff they've heard." (A-20b)

Participant C also agrees with the importance of a reflective style of RE. He ties it up with a notion that this benefits both the individual and in turn, the wider society. "It (RE) helps them reflect on what they do and how they go about their day-to-day actions. There is an element of giving them time to develop some purpose. Reflect on what they are, what they are about, where they are going and also to help other people through that process. Its not just about the individual either, its about the people around them in their community." (C-11)

This last point that C makes about this moral development being important for not only the individual but also for the people around them in their community, is an important link between what he believes the outcomes should be, and the overall aims of the subject. One way in which C believes it benefits society is through the development of tolerance through

knowledge and understanding and the development of empathy. “RE needs to make sure that pupils can express their own opinions about certain religious beliefs, but also so that they can be educated to be respectful of other peoples religious beliefs and to see that others should respect their opinions as well. “(C-3)

Participant D also sees this as a valuable part of what the future curriculum should look like. He argues it needs to give the pupils “An understanding of the religions, the background and history of each faith and why people have faith, and why people don’t have faith.” Participant D links this to benefiting the community also by that point leading onto say “At the same time once we have the children come to that understanding then we come back to the issue of moral understanding and the development of tolerance.” (D-1)

6.) It must be multi-faith:

Participant A questions the model by suggesting that the confessional model is simply not as relevant as it used to be. “The problem with the confessional type of RE is that so many people are not religious nowadays so they don't see it as relevant. If it's taught in the way my parents generation was then it is boring and some abstract stories.” (A-6)

Later in the interview participant A again brings in a criticism of it by saying that it’s “not helpful and I don't think that's what children need now. We need critical thinkers with a moral compass and a global awareness!” (A-21)

Participant B talks of her own experience of being taught in that model as being “Pretty dreadful to 16 - entirely Christian” (B-2.)

Whilst participant C seems to agree with participant A by giving relevance as the reason for their criticism of it. “I think it has a purpose but it doesn’t necessarily now reflect our

society. I think that it is something that when we are educating the young we need to prepare them for the world that they are going to live in." (C-4)

Participant D is more critical in the language he uses, calling the confessional model "too tunnel visioned" (D-1) and states that 'in this day and age' the outcomes of RE have to become more about the understanding and tolerance between different faiths. This is interesting nod towards the paradigm-shift mentioned by Gearon in the literature review.

Participant D clarifies his point by saying that the confessional model doesn't allow the pupils the freedom to make their own choices about faith. The lack of balance between different faiths is once again the criticism of this approach.

"I think in a nutshell, children should be educated to make their own choice – that is what it boils down to. To ensure children are able to make their own choices, rather then be dictated to, the state needs to make sure that they have a balance of different religions taught to them within their Religious Education." (D-6)

It is clear from these interviews that there is an underlying negative perception of confessional RE. Much has already been said to clearly identify the need for the subject to have a multi-faith approach. All participants don't seem to see Watson's opinion mentioned in the literature review that confessional RE is 'passing on the truth of the religion' (2012 p.7) They seem to agree with Barnes that it is 'not inclusive.' (Barnes, 2014 p.60)

Here are some further points to clarify the participants' beliefs in this matter. Participant C believes in the importance of the multi faith approach "I think the appreciation of different

religions. The moral development of the individual. The ability to offer opinion but also respect opinion, but what is also important is the skill, and its also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view." (C-20)

Participant D "An understanding of the religions, the background and history of each faith and why people have faith, and why people don't have faith. At the same time once we have the children come to that understanding then we come back to the issue of moral understanding and the development of tolerance" (D-1)

In my literature review, Barnes demonstrates the same thoughts shared by participants A-E by showing the importance of having an in depth study in any multi-faith teaching as an part of his new post-liberal model. He emphasises the internal diversity within a religion and individual expressions of belief. By focusing on how person of faith represents their religion and interprets key teachings it has a direct impact on the student learning. This, in a new curriculum, would therefore mean that it would be important to have visits into religious communities and places of worship so students can see how people live out their faith. This would ensure there wouldn't be a any skewed portrayals of religion which is a worry shared by Jackson (2010)

Engagement through relevance:

Religious Education faces challenges and one area is in pupil engagement. It can be argued that 'we should not underestimate the extent to which students are engaged in RE as a function of its not being treated seriously – they are relaxed in it and often the teachers work

hard to engage students' (Conroy et al., 2013, p. 226). As participant C states in his interview – "But what is also important is how it is delivered." When speaking of the RE teacher he says, "You talk to children in his lessons and they love them. It's so great that they are showing this understanding, of not only the religion that is associated with the school but also other world religions. But you need to have that delivery as the final piece of the jigsaw to make sure that there is an impact that the subject can gives is as good as it can be." (C-26) Participant C is clearly stating that engagement of the pupils is an integral component of a successful subject, regardless of curriculum design. This is something to bear in mind when reflecting on any new curriculum design; the teacher must be able to engage the pupils.

Participant A believes that the inclusion of philosophy and ethics has a role to play in why children find the subject engaging: "The philosophy and ethics is actually an area of RE that I love teaching and I think children find really engaging. It was the part of RE that really made me love the subject. It's just so relevant to life in the same way it was thousand of years ago with the ancient Greeks." A-8

Barnes is skeptical that a post confessional model can lead to superficial and truncated learning or negative attitudes to the subject this could be avoided by ensuring the curriculum stays relevant to the concerns, identity and spiritual development of a student and ensures it includes elements of a moral education.

Research Evaluation and Conclusions

When searching for meaning from the data, I feel the answers the participants have given about RE's aims were often varying that, at first, I felt it complimented Gearon's question and my initial reservation in the literature review of 'whether a subject works at existential level is epistemologically complex if not unanswerable.' (Gearon, 2013) However, on after going through the process of analysing the data I feel that there are conclusions that can be made and that are trustworthy.

Summary and Conclusions from Data Analysis

- CE Religious Studies at 13+ is not good enough as it does not meet the aims of what RE should have.

- RE has a social responsibility, not just an individual one.

- Rigour and depth is what is called for in the subject.

- It should be more multi-faith

- Philosophy and Ethics should be included

- RS gives a platform to reflect; and this is beneficial both individually and to the community

- RS should help pupils understand the nuances of arguments.

- It must teach pupils the skills to enable them to challenge poor arguments, intolerance and injustice.

- RE should give a deeper understanding of the religions, not just surface knowledge.

- It should have an impact on the moral development of the individual.

- It has to be both relevant and engaging; the prior also helps with the latter.

- Important to have visits into religious communities and places of worship so students can see how people live out their faith.

Implications for Personal Practice.

Due to the nature of my own school setting that if I feel that I am able to deliver moral education through my curriculum and as a result help my pupils at S1, and then I have a duty to do so.

From this realisation, with my headteacher's and the school governors' agreement, I have changed the nature of Religious Education at S1, we have created the paradigm-shift to enable the philosophical-conceptual and socio-cultural to be at the top of the hierarchy. In practice, I have created a new Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) curriculum that is

epistemologically grounded in a new post-liberal model whilst being not to distant from religious life and multi-faith, it also has aspects of philosophy and ethics allowing for the development of the skills that will enable the pupils to combat intolerance in society and become better equipped to tackle radicalisation. RPE will be implemented from September 2017 from years 3-8 at S1.

Implications beyond my own school setting

In the build up to the change at S1 I had several meetings with the Head of RE at the Secondary school that leads the family of schools that S1 is a part of. With his endorsement for change, I have held a meeting with the other prep school heads of departments, who were initially part of the collaboration, and who have all been able to feedback into the design of a new curriculum based on the results of my research and their experience in RE. Through collaboration with the other prep schools and the sharing of the success of our new curriculum, I have the hope that the other prep schools will also withdraw from CE at 13+ and adopt the same curriculum design as of the academic year 2018-19.

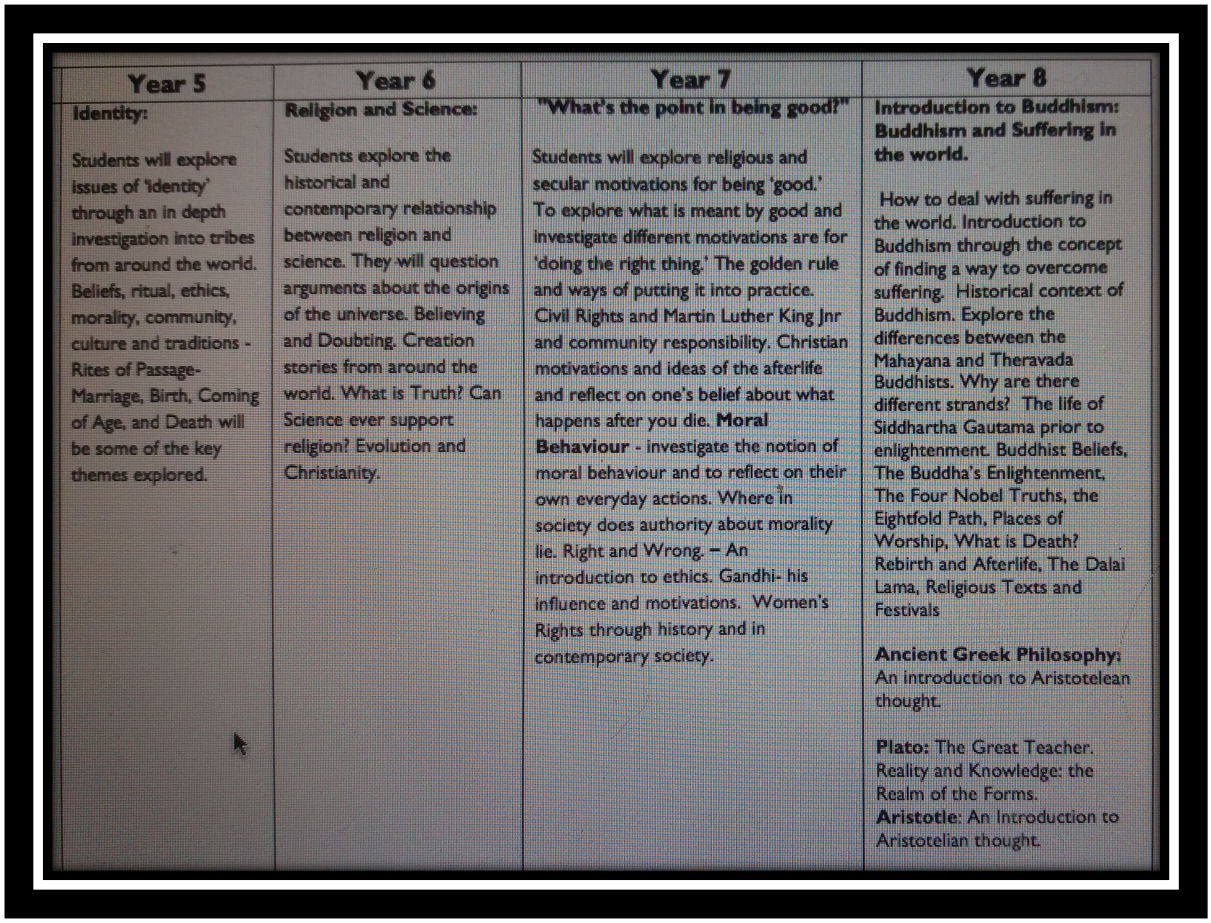
Implications on Curriculum Design

When designing our curriculum it will be essential to allow for opportunities for pupils to challenge ideas and ideologies in the classroom, as my research has shown me that it is a key factor in preventing radicalisation. So for example when we are looking at Christianity we will also be looking at the crusades, or the troubles in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics. Whilst they study about Islam they will look at misinterpretations

of the Qu'ran and how this leads to people acting violently in the name of their religion. As my research has shown me, the skills gained from studying in this way will empower the pupils to challenge intolerance. It was It is clear to me that when creating a new curriculum deign then the research tells me that I had to produce a 'systematic presentation of religions' as Barnes does suggest, so not to lead to teaching misrepresentations of trivialisation. This systematic, rather than thematic approach was incorporated into my new design when teaching the world religions.

Below is the model for a new post-liberal design of the RE curriculum for S1 from years 5-8. This would take place after a systematic study of the Abrahamic faiths in years 3 and 4.

Term 1:



Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
Identity: Students will explore issues of 'identity' through an in depth investigation into tribes from around the world. Beliefs, ritual, ethics, morality, community, culture and traditions - Rites of Passage- Marriage, Birth, Coming of Age, and Death will be some of the key themes explored.	**Religion and Science:** Students explore the historical and contemporary relationship between religion and science. They will question arguments about the origins of the universe. Believing and Doubting. Creation stories from around the world. What is Truth? Can Science ever support religion? Evolution and Christianity.	**"What's the point in being good?"** Students will explore religious and secular motivations for being 'good.' To explore what is meant by good and investigate different motivations are for 'doing the right thing.' The golden rule and ways of putting it into practice. Civil Rights and Martin Luther King Jnr and community responsibility. Christian motivations and ideas of the afterlife and reflect on one's belief about what happens after you die. **Moral Behaviour** - investigate the notion of moral behaviour and to reflect on their own everyday actions. Where in society does authority about morality lie. Right and Wrong – An introduction to ethics. Gandhi- his influence and motivations. Women's Rights through history and in contemporary society.	**Introduction to Buddhism: Buddhism and Suffering in the world.** How to deal with suffering in the world. Introduction to Buddhism through the concept of finding a way to overcome suffering. Historical context of Buddhism. Explore the differences between the Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists. Why are there different strands? The life of Siddhartha Gautama prior to enlightenment. Buddhist Beliefs, The Buddha's Enlightenment, The Four Nobel Truths, the Eightfold Path, Places of Worship, What is Death? Rebirth and Afterlife, The Dalai Lama, Religious Texts and Festivals **Ancient Greek Philosophy:** An introduction to Aristotelean thought. **Plato:** The Great Teacher. Reality and Knowledge: the Realm of the Forms. **Aristotle**: An Introduction to Aristotelian thought.

Term 2:

Sikhism – Lessons of Equality and Community. What is equality? The origins of Sikhism in a Hindu culture. The 10 Gurus. Respect and the Guru Granth Sahib. Community devotion and service. The 24 dispositions. The Gurudwara and its role in the community. Charity. Equality. The importance of the Khalsa .The 5 K's - The kesh, Kanga, kirpan, Kachera and Kara.	**Evidence and Enquiry:** A philosophical investigation into what is truth? What is Knowledge? Students will study ideas about truth, knowledge and evidence from ancient Greek to early modern philosophy. Ancient and modern Miracles. Questions of Faith, Belief and Spirituality. Historical look at the life of Jesus and his friends. Why is he important? Historical evidence. Did he save the world? Christian ideas about why did God send him.	***Moral Authority*** and ***Compassion and Selfishness.*** Where does Moral authority come from? An introduction to Humanism - speaker from the BHA - "what motivates you to do good?" Alternatives to religious motivations for being good. *Is there any value in being good for its own sake? Are compassions inherent in humans? Environmental and cultural* responsibility.	**Ethical Theory and Practical Ethics:** Deontology and Consequentialism: Kantian Ethics; Situation Ethics, Utilitarianism. Medical Ethics: Euthanasia, Embryo Research, Cloning, Recap of Environmental Ethics, Free will versus Determinism.

Term 3:

Jewish Identity and Morality: Ancient Jewish Identity. Historical investigation into monotheism. This unit will lead on from previous learning about identity by exploring Jewish identity. Personal relationship to God. Talmud ethics. Modern Judaism. Rabbinical studies. Dealing with modern issues. Relying on an ancient text for moral guidance.	**Environmental Ethics – Human Responsibility.** Do we have a responsibility to look after the environment? Interpretations of Genesis for a Christian perspective. Dominion Vs Stewardship. What do/can individuals do? Animal Rights/Human Rights.	**An Introduction to Ethics through Utilitarianism.** An introduction to Ethical Theory. What areas of life does ethics affect? Who does it affect? An introduction to an ethical theory – Utilitarianism – 'The Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number' Academic essay writing. Discursive writing. Referencing. Evaluation and Analysis.	**The 21st Century Church:** Worship, Denominations, Geographical spread, Christianity in Action, Oscar Romero, Sir Trevor Huddleston, Martin Luther King, Sister Theresa, Dame Cicely Saunders/others Christian charity groups

The limitations of my research

If my five participants cannot agree on how best to include moral education and spiritual awareness in Religious Education then it suggests it will be difficult to ensure an equal standard of RE can be delivered to all pupils nationally. Fancourt suggested in the literature review that moral education can either contribute to, or detract from a thorough understanding of Christianity. If there is no set standard of training RE teachers and expectation of delivering some form of national curriculum, no continuity can be expected. As a result, any moral education that is delivered to pupils is a bonus, but cannot be demanded as part of the curriculum.

I have also had to consider the fact that my research will not allow me to analyse and evaluate the implemented change that we have made in my school. This is due to the obvious limitations of my research because of the R & D project timeframe. However, I knew this from the start and I see the real issue that I have researched has been answered and I feel the most pressing question surrounding prep school Religious Education has been solved. Our new curriculum design that myself and the other department heads at S2, S3, and S4 have collaborated to create, will allow me to have a positive impact on the moral development of my pupils. My evaluation of my implementation of curriculum change, whilst I won't be able to discuss that in this research project, will be happening throughout the next academic year 2017-18 both independently and collaboratively with the other prep school heads of department and the senior school in our family of schools.

Final Conclusion

To answer Fancourt's concern, **"**While the demands for such a skill are often ethical and instrumental, such as open-mindedness in a religiously diverse society, the educational process must be pedagogically sound" (Fancourt, 2015, p. 183) I believe that through my extensive literature research and my qualitative research, albeit limited, I have successfully made sure the implementation of change is pedagogically sound. I have reorganised the hierarchy of paradigms at S1, but I am wary that we must keep the core of the subject consistently grounded in religious life to prevent us from turning RE into a subject that is a totally secular tool of the government. There is the need of a subject in this day and age that Religious Education does more than just initiate into a certain denomination or religion. We need to have a shift in our mindset from me to we. We must ensure that education is not just a vehicle for individual progress but the progress of society too. There is the potential for the subject of RE at prep schools to become something that doesn't just give pupils a good knowledge of Biblical scripture and a surface knowledge of some other world religions, and Prep schools due to their nature and structure have an opportunity to allow a subject that actually for the first time actually fulfils its aims to the benefit of both the individual pupils and for wider society.

To enable this change it is absolutely vital that we must remember Gearon's point that 'Religious Education needs to be grounded in the religious life in order to address the critical moral and existential questions at the heart of the religious domain in human experience' (Gearon, 2014 p.35). At the heart of any new model needs to be this realisation which means there must be a willingness of all RE specialists to build collaboration with local religious and non-religious communities. We now have an opportunity to change the

curriculum in prep schools according to what is needed for our pupils to engage with and challenge moral issues. We can empower them to challenge intolerance in society and give them the skills to combat radicalisation. We can help them become positive members of their local community and wider society, all at the same time of giving each child a deeper understanding and historical and contemporary knowledge of religious identity and world religions allowing no room for trivialisation, misrepresentation, misunderstanding and intolerance of others.

Whilst I have come to the end of my research and development project, it has by no means become the final stage of this shift of curriculum. What comes next is rigorous analysis of whether this new curriculum is indeed benefitting the pupils and a continued collaboration with the other prep schools to help them embrace the same paradigm-shift that we have at S1.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

A1: What is RE for?

1. What is your own experience of RE when you were at school?

2. What are the outcomes you would associate with Religious Education?

3. How highly do you rank Religious Education as an important subject on the broader curriculum?

4. What are the aims of the subject?

    a. Do you think the aim of the school, is different to what you envisage RE to be about?
    b. Do you think the school allocates enough hours to achieve this aim?

5. Should the state or happenings of society dictate what needs to be included within the subject's curriculum? Why? Or should it remain a discipline that is separated from the political world?

6. What do you think about the confessional model of RE? (Is there any point in children knowing Bible stories today?) Positives…. Negatives?

7. What do you think about the multi faith approach of RE?

8. What do you think about the philosophy and ethics approach of RE: where children engage with moral dilemma, like can abortion be justified, and philosophical questions such as can a loving God exist in a world where there is so much suffering?

9. Which do you think is the best approach in today's society and why?

10. Does the current geo-political climate impact or alter the aims of your subject?

11. In my research I have come across some people who argue, even if it currently doesn't happen, RE should get students to contemplate life's big questions and become more aware on a spiritual level of their own beliefs.

12. Do you think there is any benefit to a student having spiritual awareness?

    a. Is there a benefit on their own well-being?

    b. Is there a benefit on their own actions?

    c. How does the school contribute to spiritual well-being?

    d. How much of it is outside the RE classoom?

A2 - Are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

13. Do you think there should be a link between academic subjects and moral education?

    a. Do you think in your school context RE is best equipped to explicitly to deliver Moral education?
    b. Do you think it's the only subject? Why?

14. Do you think there is a deficiency in the curriculum delivered by schools in countries where there is a separation of church and state? (School systems that don't deliver any Religious Education), do you think it will impact society when they leave school?

15. How does your school ensure that it meets the requirements of the government on Prevent?

16. Does your school have specific actions to combat radicalization?

17. Some people have claimed that it is the responsibility of RE to tackle this in the classroom. In our current geo-political climate how far do you agree or disagree with that.

18. To what extent should it dictate what is included in curriculum? (Has it?)

19. Who should decide what's included?

20. Do you think schools have a responsibility to develop pupils' a sense of moral duty to help people in the world around them.
    a. Where does this come from in the school?
    b. Does RE have an impact?

B: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

21. In an ideal world without constraints, such as timetabling and CE at 13+, what topics and skills would you like to see covered in RE in a prep school.

22. How do you feel that the RS CE syllabus at 13+ it prepares the pupils for their education at secondary school?

23. Do you think that there should be any changes to what is being taught – the content – or the direction of what is being examined – knowledge vs skills?

24. What do you think could be added to improve the pupils' opportunity for a better transition into secondary school.

25. What skills would you like to see focused on more to enable them more success in the future?

26. Some people would like to see more philosophy and ethics in the content of what is taught at prep schools. Do you think this would add value to the pupils' education?

27. In its current form does the RE in prep school deliver anything unique that can't be covered by other subjects and tutor time?

28. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils good examples of RE at prep school?

29. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils bad examples of RE at prep school?

Appendix 2: The Transcripts

Interview with Participant A

A1: What is RE for?

1. *What is your own experience of RE when you were at school?*

I attended a grammar school so all my lessons were very 'dry' in the sense that it was mostly textbook work and dictation from the teacher in the years up to GCSE. It focused on what different religions did but there was very little link to their beliefs or reasons for these practices. However I found the content and arguing side of things interesting and chose it for A level which was a philosophy and ethics course. Two new teachers joined that year and made the course much more interactive and led by classroom debate. This was one thing that cemented in my mind what good RE can be

2. *What are the outcomes you would associate with Religious Education?*

I think Religious Education is one of the only subjects in the school curriculum that really allows for critical thinking. So many subjects are just concerned with regurgitating information (sorry History, Geography and Science) and there is little scope for actually changing how you look at things. The outcomes of RE should be producing students who don't just take things at face value and who understand how people and events fit into the bigger picture of our authentic human experience

3. How highly do you rank Religious Education as an important subject on the broader curriculum?

As I mentioned before I think it is probably the most important subject. Of course it's important to know stuff about the world and how it works but, in my mind at least, what's the point of knowing about gravity but not understanding how to make a moral decision. Or how to do quadratic equations without considering what a just society looks like and how you can play your part in it. So many people in the world are religious and it's played such a big part in our history, you cannot argue it is not significant.

4. What are the aims of the subject?

The aims of the subject should be to achieve the outcomes I just mentioned! Critical thinkers with an awareness of the historical development of religious and philosophical world views

a. Do you think the aim of the school, is different to what you envisage RE to be about?

For a lot of schools teaching RE is just about meeting standards. I feel lucky to be teaching

in an Anglican school so the Christian ethos really permeates the school and this has an effect on students attitude to the subject. Having said that, I do think that the school doesn't share my view of it being the most important subject and probably place more emphasis on maths and English.

b. *Do you think the school allocates enough hours to achieve this aim?*

At my current school yes but often this is not the case.

5. Should the state or happenings of society dictate what needs to be included within the subject's curriculum? Why? Or should it remain a discipline that is separated from the political world?

Not in a reactive way. I am a member of a Facebook group for RE teachers and hate to see when there is a tragedy caused by terrorism and the next day people are planning to teach about it. I don't think RE can be entirely separate to politics because it's so tied in to it. Like you can't separate it from history. But I would like to see political changes influencing the curriculum in some bigger picture kind of way.

6. *What do you think about the confessional model of RE? (Is there any point in children knowing Bible stories today?) Positives…. Negatives?*

The problem with the confessional type of RE is that so many people are not religious nowadays so they don't see it as relevant. If it's taught in the way my parents generation was then it is boring and some abstract stories. Teaching Bible stories is one of my favourite things because even for children who are actively atheist there's exciting stuff there for them. It's that critical mind I mentioned before. No one in biblical scholarship agrees about whether Jesus was who he said he was or the historicity of king David but it's interesting to look into. It's good to know Bible stories but for Christians maybe that's something left for Sunday school.

7. What do you think about the multi faith approach of RE?

I think it's the start of all of this confusion about the role of RE. It started off really clear with the confessional role because the churches set up the schools so of course they were emphasising the teaching about religion and of course it was Christianity. I suppose it's when society became more multicultural and there were people living in towns who were Sikh or Muslim that the government thought "ah we had better make sure young people know about this religion". I think the multi faith approach makes RE teachers job really hard because you can never be an expert on all of the 6 main world religions. Let alone all of the smaller and really interesting ones. Sometimes it's badly representing the religion and in some cases outright lying in order to try to show similarities that aren't even there.

> 8. What do you think about the philosophy and ethics approach of RE: where children engage with moral dilemma, like can abortion be justified, and philosophical questions such as can a loving God exist in a world where there is so much suffering?

That's another thing that's tagged onto the RE teachers job. And it's often with much less timetable allocation that most subjects. How can we be expected to do all of this in an hour a week? The philosophy and ethics is actually an area of RE that I love teaching and I think children find really engaging. It was the part of RE that really made me love the subject. It's just so relevant to life in the same way it was thousand of years ago with the ancient Greeks. We are asking the same questions the pre-Socratics did. And that's the beauty of it. The benefit is in the process of thinking and working out your ideas in your mind. Not reading something in a book and reciting it under timed conditions in an exam paper. Philosophy and ethics, given enough time, can get young people to engage in the world around them and apply the skills they learn in the classroom to what is going on in the world around them. Consider the morality of Edward snowdons actions? What is morally permissible in a business deal? What is the right or wrong thing to do? Should politicians be expected to behave ethically? Should we hold celebrities to a higher moral standard than ourselves? People do philosophy all the time without realising it.

9. Which do you think is the best approach in today's society and why?

A mix I guess. It's important to know about religion and stuff and Bible stories have had such an impact on art and literature. If I had to pick one of say philosophy and ethics for the reason I just mentioned.

10. Does the current geo-political climate impact or alter the aims of your subject?

No. I think the same problems and the same questions pervade history. There's nothing new under the sun.

11. In my research I have come across some people who argue, even if it currently doesn't happen, RE should get students to contemplate life's big questions and become more aware on a spiritual level of their own beliefs.

Yes. It doesn't have to religion but to me spiritual means something greater than your self. Than your material self. If you understand you're part of a bigger picture it will make you a better person. Spirituality affects your actions

12. Do you think there is any benefit to a student having spiritual awareness?

Yes. I think it makes you more reflective about how you act. If we are purely material organisms there's no reason to act for anything but self preservation. But if I think I'm connected to other people and the world, whether that's because God created us and we have some divine spark or we all survived the evolutionary process, it will make me think about the consequences my actions have on you, or animals or that tree over there.

a. *Is there a benefit on their own well-being?*

I certainly think so. Richard Dawkins would disagree with me but I think life must be so empty for people who have a purely naturalistic view of the world. You're telling me we are

just atoms? That's it? Some sort of spiritual awareness is what makes you special and what can help you make moral decisions. Tigers don't make moral decisions and they have no spiritual awareness. Probably. We don't know for sure though...

>b. Is there a benefit on their own actions?
Yes.

> c. How does the school contribute to spiritual well-being?

This is what I mean. Schools shouldn't just be a building that students come to to learn facts and then they leave at 18. It's about making them into better people. I think it's spirituality but for some they call it community and charity and good sportsmanship. It's all about thinking about other people and not just yourself. Little children are naturally selfish and self absorbed. The job of a school and a teacher, as well as parents and other people they know in the community, is to make them better people. Schools do this through sorting out fights and encouraging kindness and all sorts of things. Sports day and being a good sport and not a sore loser does this.

> d. How much of it is outside the RE classoom?

I think most of it should be. I don't know if it's fair to say that most of it is. I think for the best schools and the ones with the most well adjusted students most of it is.

A2 - Are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

They should do. But I'm not sure if they are when the focus is on schools being exam factories.

> 13. Do you think there should be a link between academic subjects and moral education?

Yes. Morality is in everything we do.

> a. *Do you think in your school context RE is best equipped to explicitly to deliver Moral education?*

Possibly but only because it's more explicit in our specification so RE teachers maybe think about it more. Maybe this isn't fair to say but I think a lot of teachers wouldn't consider it part of their job. But it's absolutely something that should be in all subjects

> b. Do you think it's the only subject? Why?

It shouldn't be but it often is

> 14. Do you think there is a deficiency in the curriculum delivered by schools in countries

where there is a separation of church and state? (School systems that don't deliver any Religious Education), do you think it will impact society when they leave school?

Well morality and religious knowledge and critical thinking can come from so many places. But sometimes it doesn't. I don't know enough about say the French school system but you do hear a lot about religious intolerance in these secular countries that don't have RE. Like I've said before I think the critical thinking is probably the most important factor in good RE because it basically means you just don't trust everything you're told. So if you're told all Muslims are terrorists in a news report you wouldn't trust it. If you have good critical thinking skills of course. This may have come from school and other subjects or it may have come from your parents.

15. How does your school ensure that it meets the requirements of the government on Prevent?

We were given a document to read and sign a piece of paper saying we had read it. I think there was an online quiz where you had to spot signs of children being radicalised. Really I don't think much is don't. Certainly not on a classroom level.

> 16. Does your school have specific actions to combat radicalization?

No. Not that I'm aware of at least

> 17. Some people have claimed that it is the responsibility of RE to tackle this in the classroom. In our current geo-political climate how far do you agree or disagree with that.

I think it's everyone's job. It's not fair to put it on a single subject. Really it should be the responsibility or at least the biggest responsibility on who sees that student the most. That might be their tutor. Or their English teacher. It might be their RE teacher but you can't blame them if they didn't spot it. They shouldn't be the only ones accountable.

> 18. To what extent should it dictate what is included in curriculum? (Has it?)

It hasn't at all. We don't teach much Islam anyway. At a previous school it did and we were told we have to teach more about peaceful muslims and how they contribute well to society but I don't think that's fair. It kind of perpetuates the narrative that we should put those two things together in our mind. We aren't told to teach about white supremacy and that's probably a bigger problem nowadays

> 19. Who should decide what's included?

I think it's got to be down to the teachers in a school because they know their context and

their students best. I went on a training course where hey talked about a national curriculum for RE like science has where you're building on key concepts year on year and it consists of like 40% of the RE curriculum for all schools nationally. I love the idea but don't know if it would work in practice. Like you say who should decide? What if I disagree with what's put into it. So I guess it's got to be each team in a department.

> 20. Do you think schools have a responsibility to develop pupils' a sense of moral duty to help people in the world around them.

Definitely. They need to learn to good people before they are unleashed into society. So much of it isn't even in the classroom but it might be like sitting down two kids in your tutor group who have been bullying someone. That's giving them moral duty and telling them they acted wrongly and need to stop.

> a. *Where does this come from in the school?*

It should come from all over
>
> *b. Does RE have an impact?*

I think so. It's really a space in the curriculum for students to ask questions and be given time to contemplate different ideas and to hear different people's views in the class. They can challenge stuff they've heard. So many times I've heard students say something outrageous that's clearly just been parroted from something they've heard their parents say. In RE the teacher can actually say "why do you think that?" Give them time to contemplate it and more often than not if it really was an outrageous thing then they realise it. And I think that's amazing. Imagine if we lived in a world where people didn't think about why they believed something

> B: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

I don't teach in a prep school and I don't remember my RE at my own prep school. But the reputation is that it's very Bible based, very confessional, very what comes next in the story kind of thing. That's not helpful and I don't think that's what children need no. We need critical thinkers with a moral compass and a global awareness!

21. In an ideal world without constraints, such as timetabling and CE at 13+, what topics and skills would you like to see covered in RE in a prep school.

I would do some religion, definitely Christianity and Bible stories with historical links to Islam and Judaism. It's good to see how they came from each other. I'd balance it out with another religion. I love Buddhism and Sikhism so I'd probably pick one of those because I know it best. I'd want to look it how the religion arose and spread and it's influence on people today. What impact does it have on someone? I mean how do their beliefs affect their actions. I'd definitely have some ethics like utilitarianism vs deontology without calling it that. Classrooms are often filled with little kantians. "It's just wrong" you know? And something philosophical that wouldn't overlap with the new GCSE. Like can you be rational

and religious in today's scientific age and I'd look at what people like Richard Dawkins would say or how John polkinghorne would defend it. So many kids say "I'm not religious because in believe in the Big Bang". Which is like, ok fine, in my mind, but do you understand the nuances of the argument? It's not black and white like that. Kids love talking about science and religion.

22. How do you feel that the RS CE syllabus at 13+ it prepares the pupils for their education at secondary school?

Well it's good because they do have the biblical knowledge that is going to be foundational to any RE GCSE they sit. Of course that's an advantage. I'm just not sure it's as helpful as the kind of skills based RE you see sometimes.

23. Do you think that there should be any changes to what is being taught – the content – or the direction of what is being examined – knowledge vs skills?

Definite focus on the skills. But teaching them through the knowledge. Like with the science and religion stuff it can be all about constructing a good, a convincing, argument and identifying fallacies in your opponents argument. You can pretend you were part of that Huxley debate. I think prep schools should try to mirror how secondary schools assess pupils. So gcse has some short mark questions. 1 2 or 3 marks. Maybe a 4 mark explain question. But they all have a longer, 12 or 15 mark essay type question. Of course they have to include knowledge in this bit but it's mostly about how they can argue, use evidence and construct a convincing argument.

24. What do you think could be added to improve the pupils' opportunity for a better transition into secondary school.

Maybe more work between them. Behind the scenes I know a lot happens in boarding houses but maybe more interaction between classrooms and classroom teachers. Like if a secondary school has one or two main feeder schools they could set up a day or half day for students to visit and see what it's like. I think teachers already do a good job trying to communicate more. Twitter and Facebook groups are great for that but it happens face to face too.

25. What skills would you like to see focused on more to enable them more success in the future?

Constructing arguments, using evidence, addressing opposing views but then analysing them so it fits into your original argument. Writing extended pieces of work too. A lot of kids come to secondary school and are daunted at the prospect of writing a page or a page and a half.

26. Some people would like to see more philosophy and ethics in the content of what is taught at prep schools. Do you think this would add value to the pupils' education?

Definitely.

27. In its current form does the RE in prep school deliver anything unique that can't be covered by other subjects and tutor time?

In its current form? If I'm right in saying it's mostly Bible based then I suppose most other subjects don't do that unless it's history teaching the reformation. They might touch on it. But the skills stuff. History and English will analyse and use evidence. Tutor time could be dedicated to the moral issues side of things. I don't think it would work as well as a specialist RE teacher though. That's what we're trained for. We just need more and better RE teachers

28. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils good examples of RE at prep school?

I don't really know sorry. Most pupils I can think of who were exceptional when they came into secondary school were from religious families and they just wowed me with the depth of their knowledge.

>

> 29. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils bad examples of RE at prep school?

A really shallow understanding of the content they were taught. Two people in a class who were at the same school and one of them says they weren't taught the topic and the other says they were? That must happen in every subject but it's frustrating. I guess they just forget it. But maybe they wouldn't if it was really engaging and made relevant to them and they could see how it benefitted them.

Interview with Participant B

What is Religious Education for?

Good question! I don't have anything to do with "re"... Which I see as an ill-conceived offshoot of multi-cultural social engineering likely to result in apathetic atheism and even hostility ot faith. For me, religious studies is an academically rigorous subject which goes beyond "knowledge" to explore its nature and context. When done well it becomes about helping young people to become fully human by reflecting on and contextualizing their whole education and life.

1. What is your own experience of re when you were at school?

Pretty dreadful to 16 - entirely christian with a head of re who dressed in combat fatigues, had a telephone hotline to god on her desk and told us jesus was the only man ever crucified... Amongst other things. Cover lessons alternated the silent scream and government information videos about nuclear war...

2. What are the outcomes you would associate with Religious Education?

Intellectually active and curious adults who want to keep learning and growing.

3. How highly do you rank Religious Education as an important subject on the broader curriculum?

Good rs is the most important subject on the curriculum - it is the heart of the curriculum. There is a hackneyed quotation about not producing "**learned** monsters, skilled psychopaths or educated **eichmanns"....** Without rs - or something doing the job i describe above - education becomes battery farming, a training-school for call-centers.

4. What are the aims of the subject?

> I am old... I think that you can't beat the about and from definition. I know it is fashionable to ditch the "learn from" religion... But i think it at least as important as learning about. By that i don't mean sitting in a circle staring at a candle flame though!

> *a. Do you think the aim of the school, is different to what you envisage re to be about?*

Yes. I teach at an anglican comprehensive. Sadly, re is all about ticking boxes designed to preserve the ofsted outstanding rating by excluding the wrong type of pupil from the wrong kind of family (i.e. The kind of family that is not able or willing to game the church attendance registration system).

b. Do you think the school allocates enough hours to achieve this aim?

Ample! We get 2 hours a week in 4 out of 5 of the 11-16 years, and 1 hour a week with year 8 as well. The curriculum is turgid and bores the teachers, let alone the kids. It makes the point that the church expects payback for providing an "outstanding" education.

5. *Should the state or happenings of society dictate what needs to be included within the subject's curriculum? Why? Or should it remain a discipline that is separated from the political world?*

I think chasing the news is a mistake, but the subject cannot be apolitical. The courses and discussions should be informed by world events, but not run as current affairs classes.

6. *What do you think about the confessional model of re? Positives…. Negatives?*

I don't see that studying the bible is necessarily confessional. I specialised in biblical studies as an atheist undergraduate and most biblical critics struggle to be part of a mainstream church. I think studying the bible is the only worthwhile bit of "confessional" re... It provide some rigour and interest and something of use to the non-believer.

7. What do you think about the multi-faith approach of RE?

It is a fantasy borne of sociology departments in the 1970s. Yes teach about different religions, but the idea that this can be done neutrally and adequately from a phenomenological or thematic approach is nonsense.

8. *What do you think about the philosophy and ethics approach of re: where children engage with moral dilemma, like can abortion be justified, and philosophical questions such as can a loving god exist in a world where there is so much suffering?*

I am a big fan, obviously. It can be done very badly, but when done well it can be transformative.

9. Which do you think is the best approach in today's society and why?

Philosophy and ethics from 16+ - or perhaps 14+ - done rigorously and in the context of proper rs as described above.

10. Does the current geo-political climate impact or alter the aims of your subject?

It makes it increasingly important, as most countries (barring this one) are realising.

11. In my research i have come across some people who argue, even if it currently doesn't happen, re should get students to contemplate life's big questions and become more aware on a spiritual level of their own beliefs.

I think most teachers are spectacularly bad at this and enforcing it would become like pulling teeth. I think we need to embrace the different strengths of teachers and allow for different styles of teaching, including a more spiritually aware approach. I like chaplains teaching rs, but i like atheists teaching it as well. What i don't like is people who don't know anything about it and/or who don't care being forced to teach it.

12. Do you think there is any benefit to a student having spiritual awareness?

Yes, obviously. I don't think that it can be provided to order in the classroom though.

a.) Is there a benefit on their own well-being?

There can be - although spiritual development is hard and often leads to misery as well.

b.) Is there a benefit on their own actions?

Again, there can be. Not always though.

c.). *How does the school contribute to spiritual well-being?*

Collective worship and the opportunity to worship regularly outside that, such as through voluntary communion services. Having an active and engaged chaplain is key.

d.). *How much of it is outside the re classroom?*

Most of it!

A2 - are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

They are contributing more to the creation of an apathetic society! There is a difference.

13. Do you think there should be a link between academic subjects and moral education?

Absolutely, see above.

a. Do you think in your school context re is best equipped to explicitly to deliver moral education?

Yes.

b. Do you think it's the only subject? Why?

No. Every teacher should be a teacher of ethics.

14. Do you think there is a deficiency in the curriculum delivered by schools in countries where there is a separation of church and state? (school systems that don't deliver any Religious Education), do you think it will impact society when they leave school?

There often is, although the role of good rs can be filled by a subject without religion in the name. Theory of knowledge, done well, can work. Philosophy, done well, can work. Social and political studies, done well, can work. Anyway, it is a myth that state schools in, for examples, the usa and australia do not teach about religion. They just do so in the context of history, geography, literature, art etc.

15. How does your school ensure that it meets the requirements of the government on prevent?

The head of department reads a power-point once a year. Box ticked.

16. Does your school have specific actions to combat radicalization?

No. We only really encounter radical elements of the tory party and ukip though...

17. Some people have claimed that it is the responsibility of re to tackle radicalisation in the classroom. In our current geo-political climate how far do you agree or disagree with that.

I think that rs, done well, is a great protection against radicalisation in that it teaches kids to think and question what they are being told, and to be suspicious of definite answers and promises about the afterlife!

18. To what extent should it dictate what is included in curriculum? (has it?)

If this means should the prevent agenda means that we all should do islam for gcse then no. I think that it could show the importance of teaching critical analysis and evaluation early though.

19. Who should decide what's included?

No easy answer to this. God save us from the dfe or their proxies... Because that means consultation with faith groups and a list of jargon being confused with a curriculum. Clearly some schools need help (!) But we need a "national curriculum for re" like a hole in the head.

20. Do you think schools have a responsibility to develop pupils' a sense of moral duty to help people in the world around them.

Yes.

a.). Where does this come from in the school?

The school's ethos - tutors, teachers' relationships with pupils etc.

b.) Does re have an impact?

Some impact, but it does not bear all the responsibility.

B: is re at prep school good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

No.

21. In an ideal world without constraints, such as timetabling and ce at 13+, what topics and skills would you like to see covered in re in a prep school.

Clear and accurate description, developing an answer with several points, giving reasons and evidence to support a point.

22. How do you feel that the rs ce syllabus at 13+ it prepares the pupils for their education at secondary school?

When taught well it isn't bad, but it is rarely taught well. Good that kids should study the bible, though whether they need to be able to parrot stories is questionable. The "coursework" element is a joke.

23. Do you think that there should be any changes to what is being taught – the content – or the direction of what is being examined – knowledge vs skills?

There are changes in the pipeline. I have written about the issues these raise in prep schools magazine. Https://cloud.3dissue.com/2389/3124/7028/ps88/offline/download.pdf i should probably have pulled my punches on this, but i had nothing to lose ;)

24. What do you think could be added to improve the pupils' opportunity for a better transition into secondary school.

A narrower specification, taught more rigorously by specialist teaches. Pipe dream i know.

25. What skills would you like to see focused on more to enable them more success in the future?

Basic literacy. Skills in developing written answers using evidence, multiple points, other points of view.

26. Some people would like to see more philosophy and ethics in the content of what is taught at prep schools. Do you think this would add value to the pupils' education?

As above in my article, i think that there are real dangers in going far down this road. Not against doing some philosophy and ethics, but we must be careful not to duplicate poplar gcse and a level topics.

27. In its current form does the re in prep school deliver anything unique that can't be covered by other subjects and tutor time?

Rigorous study of the bible and religions! I know it often doesn't but it can and should.

28. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils good examples of re at prep school?

Examples of great research projects produced by our prep-school once they abandoned doing ce rs.

29. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils bad examples of re at prep school?

Some of the ce "courseworks" that i was forced to mark as senior school hod. Identikit printed powerpoint slides on islam. Really bad.

Interview with Participant C

A1: What is RE for?

1. *What is your own experience of RE when you were at school?*

It was quite brief, 30 mins a week up to 16. It was very much based on Christianity not much on any other religion.

2. *What are the outcomes you would associate with Religious Education?*

For me I think an understanding of Chrisitanity and the main faith of the school you are in. A strong understanding of many different cultures, religions and beliefs that exist in the world. Purely because you are going to surely come across these different beliefs through an average persons life.

3. *How highly do you rank Religious Education as an important subject on the broader curriculum?*

N/A

4. *What are the aims of the subject?*

I think its to offer the knowledge to pupils about different religions. Give them an understanding of why different people have different beliefs and to open up their minds to the fact that people have different religious beliefs and they can co-exist in society, whether it's a larger society or smaller communities.

5. *Should the state or happenings of society dictate what needs to be included within the subject's curriculum? Why? Or should it remain a discipline that is separated from the political world?*

I think there needs to be some guidance but I believe that there should be something that becomes an open topic within the delivery of it, that it allows for discussion but within certain boundaries. RE needs to make sure that pupils can express their own opinions about certain religious beliefs, but also so that they can be educated to be respectful of other peoples religious beliefs and to see that others should respect their opinions as well.

6. *What do you think about the confessional model of RE? Positives…. Negatives?*

I think it has a purpose but it doesn't necessarily now reflect our society. I think that it is something that when we are educating the young we need to prepare them for the world that they are going to live in. However if a biblical story is being used to enforce a point on morality – that is great.

7. *What do you think about the multi faith approach of RE?*

I think its important, I really do. Children need to be aware of different faiths and what those followers of that religion believe. And also be aware learn more a bout the important theological aspects of their own religion. Not everyone gets an education from Sunday school.

8. *What do you think about the philosophy and ethics approach of RE: where children engage with moral dilemma, like can abortion be justified, and philosophical questions such as can a loving God exist in a world where there is so much suffering?*

I think its positive. It develops an enhanced level of thinking for the pupils. It can prepare them for their future lives, and current moral dilemmas they face. It is good to give them a platform to how to deal with these situation. I think it is also important to give them a chance to practice listening. Listening to other peoples points. This develops empathy.

9. *Which do you think is the best approach in today's society and why?*

For me its to do with the age-range. Ideally you would combine aspects of them. For us at my school its more to do with the philosophy element. It allows you to deliver more developmental points for the young person and to develop their level of thinking, and emotional intelligence that is really, really key. Developing the skills of how to form an opinion and to respect an opinion, but also how to debate against things and challenge things that you disagree with. That is an important life skill, particularly in this day and age where you have intolerance out there in the real world. Just lookat what is going on in the States at the moment, I mean Charlottesville. Kids need to be able to have the basic skills that will help them challenge those sorts of things in the real world. But it also starts with knowledge and understanding of other people and building awareness of religious and non-religious beliefs.

10. *Does the current geo-political climate impact or alter the aims of Religious Educaiton?*

I think its an awareness of the fact there are dreadful things happening. Everyone in the community needs to understand why. Why there is this thinking and why there are these terrible atrocities. I think that this is only one element of it though as there are also so many other wonderful things happening around the world and throughout history that Religion has given us., these can be delivered through the curriculum. But the age range I teach its about making them aware of the bad things, but importantly teaching them why. When you look at redicalistaion, you know, children, even young, can be radicalized. There is no age limit to it and its important that children are aware of that an are equipped to deal with it. I think schools can help with that.

11. *In my research I have come across some people who argue, even if it currently doesn't happen, RE should get students to contemplate life's big questions and become more aware on a spiritual level of their own beliefs.*

Do you think there is any benefit to a student having spiritual awareness?

Yes I believe so, I think for all the children they should have the opportunity to think about these things and be opened up to many different points of view about life's big questions.

a. *Is there a benefit on their own well-being?*

Yes, definitely. For some it just allows them to become more reflective about the world around them.

b. *Is there a benefit on their own actions?*

It helps them reflect on what they do and how they go about their day-to-day actions. There is an element of giving them time to develop some purpose. Reflect on what they are, what they are about, where they are going and also to help other people through that process. Its not just about the individual either, its about the people around them in their community.

c. *How does the school contribute to spiritual well-being?*

In many ways, through school assemblies, through tutor time, throught the RE curriculum, which all the children receive an hour a week. Through day-t-day time spent with teachers and with each other. Evening prayers at the end of the school week, this is a time for our staff to deliver certain moral lessons.

We don't have an exam, are exams the be –all and end all, I don't know. But it allows us to make the subject more about the knowledge and skills the children need, not just biblical studies.

A2 - Are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

12. *Do you think there should be a link between academic subjects and moral education?*

Yes it should. They cross over. You look at the childs every day. The moral battles that they have. It needs to be part of it. It is delivered through many small pockets within the school, across the staff, but maybe there needs to be a more explicit link.

a. *Do you think in your school context RE is best equipped to explicitly to deliver Moral education?*

Yes it definitely is. It's a class in which the pupils can engage with moral issues, both religious and non-religious.

13. *Do you think there is a deficiency in the curriculum delivered by schools in countries where there is a separation of church and state? (School systems that don't deliver any Religious Education), do you think it will impact society when they leave school?*

I honestly believe it would have an impact. I think otherwise it relies on families to deliver the knowledge and develop the child's skills in empathy and understanding other people's differences. You really need experts to do this. People who have studied and trained to do it. That's why we as aschool have employed a secondary trained RE teacher, rather that have, what many other prep schools do, a history, or English teacher try their best to teach RE. The family home might be good at teaching about certain things and moral lessons but will it give the pupils the skills and knowledge they really need. I'm parent, and I don't think I could, even as a teacher. I think its important that RE is a part of the weekly curriculum – it can't not be included.

14. *How does your school ensure that it meets the requirements of the government on Prevent?*

With that we have our RE curriculum. The staff are trained. The children are aware as it is covered with the children through the curriculum.

15. *Does your school have specific actions to combat radicalization?*

16. *Some people have claimed that it is the responsibility of RE to tackle this in the classroom. In our current geo-political climate how far do you agree or disagree with that.*

I think radicalization is wider than just subject specific. It's a society thing and I think schools should be looking to educate the children about it explicitly. RE has a large role to play, there is no doubt about it. But we also need work shops, assemblies, and all subjecs and staff within the community should contribute.

17. *To what extent should it dictate what is included in subject curriculum? (Has it?)*

I think it needs to be covered. I don' think you can ignore it. I think it needs to be picked up on, as of when is necessary. You could argue its age-appropriate to certain ages in the school. I mean we start in nursery at 2 and a half, but there will be the right time to bring it into curriculum within our age range.

18. *Who should decide what's included?*

Combination – you need to look at the material provided by the government, you need to look at the material provided by the Department of Education. Are we as a school wanting to included anything different? We also need to look at what other schools are doing to. Collaborate with our other prep schools around us. Sharing of best practice, also with the state schools as well as independent.

19. *Do you think schools have a responsibility to develop pupils' a sense of moral duty to help people in the world around them.*

Yes. I think so. That for me, as a parent and a teacher, you want your children to be the best they can be. There are key things that are important such as politeness and well mannered, you know, considerate of others. Understanding of what's right and wrong, have an appreciation of different people and different cultures. And have a capable level of emotional intelligence to be able to, I guess, not survive, but cope with life… and it is something that naturally schools have to be able to do, but it is also something that comes from home too. And must be reinforced at school.

a. Where does this come from in the school?

As I touched on earlier this comes from RE, but also everywhere else. The teachers, other pupils, the head, the senior management, the governers, the groundsman, the cleaners. All of the community in making helping the pupils have this, by setting a good example too. Even the visitors who come to the school.

b. Does RE have a specific impact?

It definitely does. Through different versions, you can find many good examples of that. To show how important that is.

<u>B: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?</u>

20. In an ideal world without constraints, such as timetabling and CE at 13+, what topics and skills would you like to see covered in RE in a prep school.

I think the appreciation of different religions. The moral development of the individual. The ability to offer opinion but also respect opinion, but what is also important is the skill, and its also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view. Give the pupils a confident level of emotional intelligence to deal with situations. As I said earlier this comes through the subjects of philosophy and ethics, so it would be important to have those in there I suppose. It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason. Whilst these skills can come through a range of subjects, I think RE needs to incorporate this and be delivered specifically as pare of this subject.

I mean part of it would come down to time and timetabling. Obviously this would be what is ideal but… you know… realistically can we do this? I mean maybe without the CE exam we could. Do we need to do exams in it? You know there are questions that need to be answered. In an

21. How do you feel that the RS CE syllabus at 13+ it prepares the pupils for their education at secondary school?

22. *Do you think that there should be any changes to what is being taught – the content – or the direction of what is being examined – knowledge vs skills?*

23. *What do you think could be added to improve the pupils' opportunity for a better transition into secondary school.*

24. *What skills would you like to see focused on more to enable them more success in the future?*

Presentation skills and listening skills is a part of that. Being able to understand other peoples opinions. Ability to think wider than maybe just their own opinion. And have that understanding of others. But not just know what other people think but actually understand why other people think in that way. Emotional intelligence. Being able to create a well balanced argument when in discussion. Be able to appreciate what has gone before and why it happened. Give them the skills to see something that has happened in the past but then work out, okay, well this has happened, how can we make the future better for everyone. Develop their moral compass and the understanding of right and wrong is really key! You know when they see something happen that is wrong they need the skills to be able to be able to challenge it rather than just accept it. To be able to empathise with others to, you know have that skill so they can actually in their own actions, put others first.

25. *Some people would like to see more philosophy and ethics in the content of what is taught at prep schools. Do you think this would add value to the pupils' education?*

Yes I think so. Ethics is importnat Because its in a way. A non-direct way. Its giving the children exposure to different situations. How people have coped with the situations in the past, how other people would approach this situation and it allows the children to then think about how they might act in a certain situation. It could be something hypothetical that they would never really find themselves in but actually its giving them the skills to reflect on their own beliefs and how that influences their actions in the world. It helps them know themselves. It also important they just reflect on things happening in the world to see whether things are right or wrong. And their opinion on that. Just seeing how some people behave in certain situations, then question would they behave differently. That's an important skill for school, but also for later life when they are more active members of society.

26. *In its current form does the RE in prep school deliver anything unique that can't be covered by other subjects and tutor time?*

Yes definitely. Um I see it as a bespoke curriculum that we offer. You know its something that our current head of our RS and Philosophy department he has brought in lots of different areas into that curriculum. Not just the CE exam syllabus but much more than that. He has covered areas that the CE syllabus lacks, that I think is really important for the children. But what is also important is how it is delivered. You talk to children in his lessons and they love them. Its so great that they are showing this understanding, of not only the religion that is associated with the school but also other world religions. But you need to

have that delivery as the final piece of the jigsaw to make sure that there is an impact that the subject can gives is as good as it can be.

27. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils good examples of RE at prep school?

I think the impact that the subject has had on the school and community as a whole has been really positive. I have been at the school for 6 years. One of the interesting areas that a school is measured on is behaviour and pupils understanding of right and wrong and what is the right thing to do in certain situations. That's something that has improved over time and I think that part of that is down to the curriculum that the RE teacher has delivered. Our children are reflective. They have an understanding of themselves and their place in the world. How they should conduct themselves. Also their academics. I shouldn't forget. They are using the skills they learn in RS & P to help them in other curriculum areas such as history and English. On big impact is that its created a community that is…. …. a just more open minded. Where the pupils, wherever in the world they are from, are able to appreciate each other for who they are, what they believe in, what they don't believe in. It's amazing I guess how tolerant the children are of each other in our school, compared to others I have worked in. They have the emotional intelligence to understand each other and respect each other for who they are. That is quite special.

28. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils negative examples of RE at prep school?

I guess for some of the pupils they have used what they have learned and taken it completely out of context. You know through saying something to another pupil about their religion. Or using it as a derogatory term to another pupil. There is that element that has happened in the past because of a lack of understanding. It is something that has been dealt with swiftly, and we can use the expertise of the RS teacher to educate, not just go through the behaviour management system. And interestingly enough reflect on using the skills they have learned to then reflect and realize that, oh actually that wasn't the right thing to have done, be reflective on it. There aren't a lot of repeat offenders in the school, yes they might make a mistake, but they won't make the same mistake again. I think that's a good measure on seeing how those children are developing as human beings.

Interview with Participant D

A1: What is RE for?

1. *What is your own experience of RE when you were at school?*

2. *What are the outcomes you would associate with Religious Education?*

Well there has been a danger in the past of it being far to 'tunnel-visioned.' By focusing too much only on Christianity. Although many schools are built upon that (Christian) foundation, in this day and age the outcomes have to be on a understanding and tolerance of different faiths. It has to be both of those things. An understanding of the religions, the background and history of each faith and why people have faith, and why people don't have faith. At the same time once we have the children come to that understanding then we come back to the issue of moral understanding and the development of tolerance. Another thing that it should support is not only to be tolerant of other faiths but also to actually be intolerant, maybe not the right word, but what I mean is to give the children skills to argue against what is unacceptable. For example extremist views. I see what is going on in America at the moment and I see young people being swept along with this tide of intolerance towards others. It makes me think that maybe we need to make sure we are doing all we can to help our children in this country see why that is wrong. If our children are not brought up to understand the positives of difference between cultures and people then they will become adults who are single minded and intolerant. Let's face it we need tolerance in our society now then we have ever needed.

3. *How highly do you rank Religious Education as an important subject on the broader curriculum?*

4. *What are the aims of the subject?*

    a. *Do you think the aim of the school, is different to what you envisage RE to be about?*
    b. *Do you think the school allocates enough hours to achieve this aim?*

5. *Should the state or happenings of society dictate what needs to be included within the subject's curriculum? Why? Or should it remain a discipline that is separated from the political world?*

I think probably it does. I think the danger of there not being some sort of curriculum is that you have a teacher that has a particular leaning when educating children in RE and that will impact upon their teaching, even if they don't realize it, and then of course on the pupils learning. I don't think that's fair. We need the pupils to have a broad understanding of religions. I do think the state should actually have a strong say in what is delivered and how it is delivered.

6. *What do you think about the confessional model of RE? Positives…. Negatives?*

Everyone will have different views depending on their upbringing. I think in a nutshell, children should be educated to make their own choice – that is what it boils down to. To ensure children are able to make their own choices, rather then be dictated to, the state needs to make sure that they have a balance of different religions taught to them within their Religious Education. Without any leaning towards a particular faith. I think at the moment prep schools undermine their ability to make that choice, even at a young age. Children are susceptible to particular learnings.

7. *What do you think about the multi faith approach of RE?*

8. *What do you think about the philosophy and ethics approach of RE: where children engage with moral dilemma, like can abortion be justified, and philosophical questions such as can a loving God exist in a world where there is so much suffering?*

The question should really be whether or not they should be combined. Religious Education and philosophy should be seen as a combined subject, or at least both subjects should be taught separately. The study about religions is just as important as philosophy. For so many reasons, some I said earlier about the need for tolerance in society. I think your original question on moral values. There are elements of philosophy that are relevant with Religious Education. To answer the question more directly, philosophy and ethics should be being taught in schools, its just a question of whether it is part of the RE curriculum or not.

9. *Which do you think is the best approach in today's society and why?*

10. *Does the current geo-political climate impact or alter the aims of your subject?*

11. *In my research I have come across some people who argue, even if it currently doesn't happen, RE should get students to contemplate life's big questions and become more aware on a spiritual level of their own beliefs.*

    Do you think there is any benefit to a student having spiritual awareness?

I really do. Spiritual awareness is really important to ones own well being for me. We don't need to be only associating spiritual awareness to RE. One can be spiritual but not religious. In an increasing busy and industrious world where our children, and adults, are busier and busier and pulled from one thing to the next, sprirtual awareness is about being able to bring everyone back a step and allow them to reflect on their own being and their own sense of self. My answer really is two-fold. With regard to spiritual awareness, I think it's a really important part of how we help our children as they go into the computerized busy digital world that they are going to be entering into**. I think the active teaching of all faiths is important. Part of that is that they only have to pick up the newspaper and see , or their history books, that religion has played such a huge role in world conflicts, and we can only change that with a real active education about religion to our children.**

a. *Is there a benefit on their own well-being?*

Yeah I've answered this. Yes it does.

b. *Is there a benefit on their own actions?*

c. *How does the school contribute to spiritual well-being?*

d. *How much of it is outside the RE classoom?*

A2 - Are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

12. *Do you think there should be a link between academic subjects and moral education?*

Yes I do, If moral education was simply taught through one subject then it would impact on its effectiveness. Morality is a part of everything therefore it should be taught within all disciplines. If we are really going to embed moral values into childrens' thinking it needs to be coming from everywhere. In both academin and non-academic. Inside and outside o the classroom.

a. *Do you think in your school context RE is best equipped to explicitly to deliver Moral education?*
b. *Do you think it's the only subject? Why?*

13. *Do you think there is a deficiency in the curriculum delivered by schools in countries where there is a separation of church and state? (School systems that don't deliver any Religious Education), do you think it will impact society when they leave school?*

Yes. I will expand on that. Whether a child or a school is of faith, it is irrelevant, because they are living in a society that is filled with millions of people of faith, also different types of beliefs or no faith. To be able to operate with tolerance and in that society they need to have a very good understanding of these different beliefs. I do believe that at the moment we are failing our children in many prep schools in that regard. And also we suddenly need to change the reason why we are teaching RE, it used to be so that the pupils can become part of a particular religion, but now it should be because it is such a critical part of how to understand the society in which they are going to be a part of as responsible citizens.

14. *How does your school ensure that it meets the requirements of the government on Prevent?*

Timing couldn't be more perfect as I have literally walked out of a Prevent training. Literally 18 minutes ago! So of course clearly, training for staff, giving the teachers an understanding of what Prevent means and how that links into what we are teaching our children about British Values. My personal view is I really dislike and opposed to the label of British Values, I don't think their British at all, they are universal. One might

call them European, or Democratic or something, but I really don't think you can call them just British.

Through regular training and questionnaires sent out to staff. The individual aspects of the so-called British Values, and I don't have a problem with the values themselves, just the name, needs to be taught about within each curriculum, whether that is RE or otherwise.

I think it is all about the culture of the school. Not so much, PREVENT, but the idea of tolerance and moral values and kindness. It is spoken about all the time by the management, staff and pupils alike. I am wearing a wrist band write now that says What is your random act of kindness?' and each member of staff has to wear one to remind us to be positive contributors to a kind community. Its to remind us about being kind and tolerant to other people, but also I think for the pupils to see that it is not something we just say, but it is a way in which we live our lives through our individual actions. This is a school where I have heard it talked about more than any other that I have worked in.

15. Does your school have specific actions to combat radicalization?

16. Some people have claimed that it is the responsibility of RE to tackle this in the classroom. In our current geo-political climate how far do you agree or disagree with that.

I think that RE departments have a big role to play, but I don't believe they have a responsibility for it alone. It will really help in the challenge but every single person in the school community from the headmaster, the groundsman, the teacher, the cleaner, the matron – whoever it is, everyone has that responsibility to help stamp out intolerance of others. It's why ongoing training of all staff is so important. In terms of RE it comes down to giving the pupils knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs, this will help develop empathy when it comes to seeing the differences between human beings.

17. To what extent should it dictate what is included in curriculum? (Has it?)

I don't think its relevant to what is being taught in the subject, but I think that what is being taught in the subject happens to be instrumental and relevant to helping Prevent radicalization. There is the danger that Prevent and a government scheme hijacks the RE syllabus which would then take away from all the amazing things that RE can teach about the world. Getting pupils to think in broad terms about tolerance and the impact they can have. And ultimately we are trying to create responsible citizens, therefore I think the school has a huge role to play. And of course it might lead children to question things they hear at home, which is a good thing. We need to give them the skills to challenge wrong and be advocates for the morals we teach them. RE has a role to play because it gives them a platform for discussion that can help them build self-confidence and the confidence to challenge what is not right.

18. Who should decide what's included?

19. Do you think schools have a responsibility to develop the pupils' a sense of moral duty to help people in the world around them.

Yes I do. It will be very easy to say no, it's the parents job, or no, it's the state's job. I would say that just as I would say it isn't just the schools job. I think everyone has a role to play in that regard, including schools, including RE lessons, to help make pupils become adults who are going to contribute positively to society in a tolerant and respectful way. I suppose the challenge that schools face is that sometimes they can have pupils whose parents do not share the same moral values, but the school still has a responsibility to unsure that the moral values are instilled in the child.

B: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

20. *In an ideal world without constraints, such as timetabling and CE at 13+, what topics and skills would you like to see covered in RE in a prep school.*

I think I will start by saying the CE syllabus is such a narrow syllabus, way to narrow and very heavy on knowledge of the scripture without allowing for it to really fulfill its aims as a subject. It doesn't create balance in my view or give children a knowledge of world religions other than Christianity. Even then, its knowledge based really, not focused on the pupils engaging with it or even really understanding it. An imbalance. This is why at the prep school I led, I pulled out of it which allowed room for a new curriculum that incorporated teaching of other religiouns and secular belief systems. CE had a very heavy leaning on the Bible and Christianty and although I know that that a good knowledge of scripture is important , but the leaning was too much. In my view the CE at 13+ doesn't deal enough with moral values, ethics, philosophy and world religious views. The moral values cross over so many of the religions and that is why it is so important to educate the children this way.

I would have philosophy in there. If there were no constraints, I would have maybe a separate subject to RE about philosophy. I would have it so the children need to show a greater understanding of world faiths as well as an understanding of atheism.

Having time in RE and Philosophy is so important, that is why in the Prep school I led we withdrew from CE and the exam at 13+. My worry is that schools just do not have time to teach it all, whilst giving pupils time to explore and reflect on the big mysteries of life, particularly they don't have the time because they are so constrained by the exam syllabus. One might argue that when they are younger they shouldn't be examined on this topic. They should have time to think and talk and debate. I wouldn't have a formal exam on it at CE - Its too constraining.

21. *How do you feel that the RS CE syllabus at 13+ it prepares the pupils for their education at secondary school?*

22. *Do you think that there should be any changes to what is being taught – the content – or the direction of what is being examined – knowledge vs skills?*

23. *What do you think could be added to improve the pupils' opportunity for a better transition into secondary school.*

24. *What skills would you like to see focused on more to enable them more success in the future?*

Writing to argue, debating skills, both paper and verbally. A broad understanding of the major world religions. I think that's it. If they are able to have the knowledge and the skills, then they can debate and discuss real issues in the religions. They would be well prepared. There is a crossover with English and Humanities subjects.

25. *Some people would like to see more philosophy and ethics in the content of what is taught at prep schools. Do you think this would add value to the pupils' education?*

26. *In its current form does the RE in prep school deliver anything unique that can't be covered by other subjects and tutor time?*

27. *Can you call to mind any current or past pupils good examples of RE at prep school?*

28. *Can you call to mind any current or past pupils bad examples of RE at prep school?*

Well I mean I have given my views to you on CE and how I don't feel its good for the pupils. I think its just too narrow for me. I think there is a danger that RE teachers, which traditionally have come from 1 faith , are quite narrow in their own thinking and even subconsciously are leaning towards a particular type of religion, and that blurs the objectivity of teaching, either consciously or subconciously. This is why it might be an idea to have a state imposed national curriculm for RE.

Interview with Participant E

A1: What is RE for?

1. What is your own experience of RE when you were at school?

We didn't have RE.

2. What are the outcomes you would associate with Religious Education?

Creating openness towards questions that don't have over-determined answers.

3. How highly do you rank Religious Education as an important subject on the broader curriculum?

Philosophy, ethics and religion is a vital subject and especially so in a curriculum that geared towards utility and functionality.

4. What are the aims of the subject?

Philosophy, ethics and religion (PER) should be a subject that challenges received opinion and that makes students engage with profound questions regarding knowledge, life, meaning and purpose.

a. Do you think the aim of the school, is different to what you envisage RE to be about?

It is a natural bulwark against a culture that becomes increasingly less patient and critical. If 'world-ready' does not include some critical element like PER, then we are not offering education.

b. Do you think the school allocates enough hours to achieve this aim?

Yes, more than other schools. The IB TOK has a similar function.

5. Should the state or happenings of society dictate what needs to be included within the subject's curriculum? Why? Or should it remain a discipline that is separated from the political world?

PER should not dictate and pursue its own goals in isolation from the rest of society; but neither should any subject be a slave to the wishes and needs of popular opinion.

6. What do you think about the confessional model of RE? (Is there any point in children knowing Bible stories today?) Positives…. Negatives?

I see no point in rote learning anything. Insofar as propositional knowledge is required for critical thinking, it should be included in education. But what I've seen of the Common Entrance, most of it is entirely useless. The only part that is worth reading, and hence worth marking, is where students are asked to sustain their own opinion.

7. What do you think about the multi faith approach of RE?

We live in a pluralistic society.

8. What do you think about the philosophy and ethics approach of RE: where children engage with moral dilemma, like can abortion be justified, and philosophical questions such as can a loving God exist in a world where there is so much suffering?

This is the only RE that I support.

9. Which do you think is the best approach in today's society and why?

As I said before

10. Does the current geo-political climate impact or alter the aims of your subject?

With a reduced curriculum and the need to pay off student debt and crushing house prices, I see that students are increasingly deciding matters using their heads instead of their hearts. This is a shame because it will have/has a bleaching effect on the heterogeneity of thought in society as a whole.

11. In my research I have come across some people who argue, even if it currently doesn't happen, RE should get students to contemplate life's big questions and become more aware on a spiritual level of their own beliefs.

12. Do you think there is any benefit to a student having spiritual awareness?

I don't know what you mean with spiritual awareness.

a. Is there a benefit on their own well-being?

b. Is there a benefit on their own actions?

c. How does the school contribute to spiritual well-being?

d. How much of it is outside the RE classroom?

A2 - Are schools positively contributing to the creation of a tolerant society?

I think you'll find that the very existence of independent schools functions as a form of intolerance by putting up invisible barriers. It's a form of hierarchical segregation that does not stimulate tolerance. It is hierarchical because students are well aware of the advantage their education gives them and it is segregated because it is highly exclusive. So unfortunately the answer is, 'no.' This is also by the way the dilemma of tolerance: should we be tolerant of intolerant practices?

13. Do you think there should be a link between academic subjects and moral education?

I think education should include a moral perspective but I don't think each subject is responsible for this. Why make a subject, like mathematics, direct its attention away from itself? In my view the consequence of insisting on such links results in such questionnaires that ask: 'How is ICT used in English, Maths, RE etc.

a. Do you think in your school context RE is best equipped to explicitly to deliver Moral education?

Yes

b. Do you think it's the only subject? Why?

Any subject should deliver an education that is stimulating and enquiring but some subjects lend themselves easier to particular questions than others. Hence PER is more suited to discuss moral aspects than Science, even though Science should pursue its own critical agenda.

14. Do you think there is a deficiency in the curriculum delivered by schools in countries where there is a separation of church and state? (School systems that don't deliver any Religious Education), do you think it will impact society when they leave school?

I support the division of church and state. The idea that the church would be able to design its own education seems entirely incestuous and contra to the aims of education.

15. How does your school ensure that it meets the requirements of the government on Prevent?

16. Does your school have specific actions to combat radicalization?

17. Some people have claimed that it is the responsibility of RE to tackle radicalisation in the classroom. In our current geo-political climate how far do you agree or disagree with that.

Every person in school and outside has a duty to challenge dogmatic opinions.

18. To what extent should it dictate what is included in curriculum? (Has it?)

We shouldn't design rules for the majority based upon the needs of a fraction. The aims of education should as disinterested as possible and should not cater to sensitivities of a fringe

group.

19. Who should decide what's included?

Educational experts.

20. Do you think schools have a responsibility to develop pupils' a sense of moral duty to help people in the world around them.

Schools have a duty to educate their students about the world and their place in it. As such it is incumbent on schools and parents to make students realise that no one is an island.

a. Where does this come from in the school?

b. Does RE have an impact?

Insofar as PER is concerned with questions that pertain to the environment and humanity, it doubtlessly makes an impact.

B: Is RE at Prep School good enough – are we producing what our pupils need?

21. In an ideal world without constraints, such as timetabling and CE at 13+, what topics and skills would you like to see covered in RE in a prep school.

Philosophy for kids, Social awareness, Awareness of sources, Religious pluralism, Moral dilemmas

22. How do you feel that the RS CE syllabus at 13+ it prepares the pupils for their education at secondary school?

23. Do you think that there should be any changes to what is being taught – the content – or the direction of what is being examined – knowledge vs skills?

PER is a subject that is both skill and content driven. Without the ability to read, write, develop opinions and construct arguments one will not do well at GCSE. Such skills are prerequisites for explaining and evaluating the content of the GCSE.

24. What do you think could be added to improve the pupils' opportunity for a better transition into secondary school.

Develop those skills. Stimulate debate, get them to think and question.

25. What skills would you like to see focused on more to enable them more success in the future?

Develop those skills. Stimulate debate, get them to think and question.

26. Some people would like to see more philosophy and ethics in the content of what is taught at prep schools. Do you think this would add value to the pupils' education?

Is this a trick question?

27. In its current form does the RE in most prep schools deliver anything unique that can't be covered by other subjects and tutor time?

Last year I asked a few students to describe their experiences of having studied elements of Buddhism and Christianity and the themes of social justice and war and peace. They replied that it had 'opened their eyes', that they had become more 'appreciative of others' opinions' and that they enjoyed the moral and philosophical elements of the course.

28. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils positive examples of RE at prep school?

29. Can you call to mind any current or past pupils negative examples of RE at prep school?

Appendix 3:

Data Analysis

Participant A = ORANGE

Participant B = BLUE

Participant C = RED

Participant D = GREEN

Participant E = PURPLE

What should be RE's aims?

A-2: The outcomes of RE should be producing students who don't just take things at face value and who understand how people and events fit into the bigger picture of our authentic human experience

A-3: Of course it's important to know stuff about the world and how it works but, in my mind at least, what's the point of knowing about gravity but not understanding how to make a moral decision.

A -4: The aims of the subject should be to achieve the outcomes I just mentioned! Critical thinkers with an awareness of the historical development of religious and philosophical world views

A-15: I think the critical thinking is probably the most important factor in good RE because it basically means you just don't trust everything you're told. So if you're told all Muslims are terrorists in a news report you wouldn't trust it. If you have good critical thinking skills of course.

B-1: For me, religious studies is an academically rigorous subject which goes beyond "knowledge" to explore its nature and context.

B-2: Intellectually active and curious adults who want to keep learning and growing.

C-2: to offer the knowledge to pupils about different religions. Give them an understanding of why different people have different beliefs and to open up their minds to the fact that people have different religious beliefs and they can co-exist in society, whether it's a larger society or smaller communities.

C-11b: Its not just about the individual either, its about the people around them in their community.

D-14: And also we suddenly need to change the reason why we are teaching RE, it used to be so that the pupils can become part of a particular religion, but now it should be because it is such a critical part of how to understand the society in which they are going to be a part of as responsible citizens.

E-1: Creating openness towards questions that don't have over-determined answers.

E-3: it should be a subject that challenges received opinion and that makes students engage with profound questions regarding knowledge, life, meaning and purpose

Critical of the confessional model

A-6 The problem with the confessional type of RE is that so many people are not religious nowadays so they don't see it as relevant. If it's taught in the way my parents generation was then it is boring and some abstract stories.

A-21: (About confessional model_ That's not helpful and I don't think that's what children need no. We need critical thinkers with a moral compass and a global awareness!

B-2: Pretty dreadful to 16 - entirely Christian

C-4: I think it has a purpose but it doesn't necessarily now reflect our society. I think that it is something that when we are educating the young we need to prepare them for the world that they are going to live in.

D-1: Well there has been a danger in the past of it being far to 'tunnel-visioned.' By focusing too much only on Christianity. Although many schools are built upon that (Christian) foundation, in this day and age the outcomes have to be on a understanding and tolerance of different faiths. It has to be both of those things.

D-6: Everyone will have different views depending on their upbringing. **I think in a nutshell, children should be educated to make their own choice – that is what it boils down to. To ensure children are able to make their own choices, rather then be dictated to, the state needs to make sure that they have a balance of different religions taught to them within their Religious Education.** Without any leaning towards a particular faith. I think at the moment prep schools undermine their ability to make that choice, even at a young age. Children are susceptible to particular learnings.

E-4: I see no point in rote learning anything. Insofar as propositional knowledge is required for critical thinking, it should be included in education.

Critical of the phenomenological approach

A-7 - I think it's the start of all of this confusion about the role of RE. It started off really clear with the confessional role because the churches set up the schools so of course they were emphasising the teaching about religion and of course it was Christianity. I suppose it's when society became more multicultural and there were people living in towns who were Sikh or Muslim that the government thought "ah we had better make sure young people

know about this religion". I think the multi faith approach makes RE teachers job really hard because you can never be an expert on all of the 6 main world religions. Let alone all of the smaller and really interesting ones. Sometimes it's badly representing the religion and in some cases outright lying in order to try to show similarities that aren't even there.

B-4: It is a fantasy borne of sociology departments in the 1970s. Yes teach about different religions, but the idea that this can be done neutrally and adequately from a phenomenological or thematic approach is nonsense.

B-2:I don't have anything to do with "re"... Which I see as an ill-conceived offshoot of multi-cultural social engineering likely to result in apathetic atheism and even hostility to faith.

C-28: I guess for some of the pupils they have used what they have learned and taken it completely out of context. You know through saying something to another pupil about their religion. Or using it as a derogatory term to another pupil. There is that emelemnt that has happened in the past because of a lack of understanding.

Positive about including philosophy and ethics in RE

A-8 : The philosophy and ethics is actually an area of RE that I love teaching and I think children find really engaging. It was the part of RE that really made me love the subject. It's just so relevant to life in the same way it was thousand of years ago with the ancient Greeks.

A-8 : Philosophy and ethics, given enough time, can get young people to engage in the world around them and apply the skills they learn in the classroom to what is going on in the world around them.

A-27: Definitely. (Participant A is responding to whether Philsophy should be taught at prep school.)

B-5: I am a big fan, obviously. It can be done very badly, but when done well it can be transformative

C-8: I think its positive. It develops an enhanced level of thinking for the pupils. It can prepare them for their future lives, and current moral dilemmas they face. It is good to give them a platform to how to deal with these situation. I think it is also important to give them a chance to practice listening. Listening to other peoples points. This develops empathy.

C-20 As I said earlier this comes through the subjects of philosophy and ethics, so it would be important to have those in there I suppose. It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason.

C-25: Yes I think so. Ethics is important because its in a way, a non-direct way, Its giving the children exposure to different situations. How people have coped with the situations in the past, how other people would approach this situation and it allows the children to then think about how they might act in a certain situation. ……its giving them the skills to reflect

on their own beliefs and how that influences their actions in the world. It helps them know themselves. It also important they just reflect on things happening in the world to see whether things are right or wrong.

D-8: To answer the question more directly, philosophy and ethics should be being taught in schools, its just a question of whether it is part of the RE curriculum or not

E-8: This is the only RE that I support.

Critical of Common Entrance.

A: 21 it's very Bible based, very confessional, very what comes next in the story kind of thing. That's not helpful and I don't think that's what children need no. We need critical thinkers with a moral compass and a global awareness!

A-22 ……i'm just not sure it's as helpful as the kind of skills based RE you see sometimes.

A-27: A really shallow understanding of the content they were taught.

B-11: What i don't like is people who don't know anything about it and/or who don't care being forced to teach it.

B-21: No.

B-22: When taught well it isn't bad, but it is rarely taught well.

B-22: ….whether they need to be able to parrot stories is questionable. The "coursework" element is a joke.

B-27: Some of the ce "courseworks" that i was forced to mark as senior school hod. Identikit printed powerpoint slides on islam. Really bad.

C-26: Yes definitely. I see it as a bespoke curriculum that we offer. You know its something that our current head of our RS and Philosophy department he has brought in lots of different areas into that curriculum. Not just the CE exam syllabus but much more than that. He has covered areas that the CE syllabus lacks, that I think is really important for the children……You talk to children in his lessons and they love them. Its so great that they are showing this understanding, of not only the religion that is associated with the school but also other world religions

D-13: To be able to operate with tolerance and in that society they need to have a very good understanding of these different beliefs.I do believe that at the moment we are failing our children in many prep schools in that regard.

D-20: **the CE syllabus is such a narrow syllabus, way to narrow and very heavy on knowledge of the scripture without allowing for it to really fulfill its important aims as**

a subject. It doesn't create balance in my view or give children a knowledge of world religions other than Christianity.

D-20: Even then, its knowledge based really, not focused on the pupils engaging with it or even really understanding it. An imbalance.

D-20: CE has a very heavy leaning on the Bible and Christianty and although I know that that a good knowledge of scripture is important, but the leaning was too much. In my view the CE at 13+ doesn't deal enough with moral values, ethics, philosophy and world religious views. The moral values cross over so many of the religions and that is why it is so important to educate the children this way.

D-28: Well I mean I have given my views to you on CE and how I don't feel its good for the pupils. I think its just too narrow for me.

E-6: what I've seen of the Common Entrance, most of it is entirely useless. The only part that is worth reading, and hence worth marking, is where students are asked to sustain their own opinion.

Positives of Common Entrance.

Well it's good because they do have the biblical knowledge that is going to be foundational to any RE GCSE they sit. Of course that's an advantage.

B-22: Good that kids should study the bible,

D-20: CE has a very heavy leaning on the Bible and Christianty and although I know that that a good knowledge of scripture is important ,

RE going forward - Suggestions for A New Post-Liberal Model

A-9 : A mix I guess. It's important to know about religion and stuff and Bible stories have had such an impact on art and literature. If I had to pick one of say philosophy and ethics for the reason I just mentioned.

A-23 : Definite focus on the skills. But teaching them through the knowledge. Like with the science and religion stuff it can be all about constructing a good, a convincing, argument and identifying fallacies in your opponents argument.

A-23 I think prep schools should try to mirror how secondary schools assess pupils. So gcse has some short mark questions. 1 2 or 3 marks. Maybe a 4 mark explain question. But they all have a longer, 12 or 15 mark essay type question. Of course they have to include knowledge in this bit but it's mostly about how they can argue, use evidence and construct a convincing argument.

A-26: Constructing arguments, using evidence, addressing opposing views but then analysing them so it fits into your original argument. Writing extended pieces of work too. A lot of kids come to secondary school and are daunted at the prospect of writing a page or a page and a half.

B-3: I think studying the bible is the only worthwhile bit of "confessional" re... It provide some rigour and interest and something of use to the non-believer.

B-9: Philosophy and ethics from 16+ - or perhaps 14+ - done rigorously and in the context of proper rs as described above.

B-11: I think we need to embrace the different strengths of teachers and allow for different styles of teaching, including a more spiritually aware approach. I like chaplains teaching rs, but i like atheists teaching it as well.

B-24:A narrower specification, taught more rigorously by specialist teaches. Pipe dream i know.

B-26: Rigorous study of the bible and religions! I know it often doesn't but it can and should.

C-1: an understanding of Chrisitanity and the main faith of the school you are in. A strong understanding of many different cultures, religions and beliefs that exist in the world. Purely because you are going to surely come across these different beliefs through an average persons life.

C-4: I think that it is something that when we are educating the young we need to prepare them for the world that they are going to live in.

C- 7: (the multi faith approach) I think its important, I really do. Children need to be aware of different faiths and what those followers of that religion believe. And also be aware learn more a bout the important theological aspects of their own religion. Not everyone gets an education from Sunday school.

C-9: For me its to do with the age-range. Ideally you would combine aspects of them.

C-11: It helps them reflect on what they do and how they go about their day-to-day actions. There is an element of giving them time to develop some purpose. Reflect on what they are, what they are about, where they are going and also to help other people through that process. **Its not just about the individual either, its about the people around them in their community.**

C -13: You really need experts to do this. People who have studied and trained to do it. That's why we as aschool have employed a secondary trained RE teacher, rather that have, what many other prep schools do, a history, or English teacher try their best to teach RE. The family home might be good at teaching about certain things and moral lessons but will it give the pupils the skills and knowledge they really need.

C-20: I think the appreciation of different religions. The moral development of the individual. The ability to offer opinion but also respect opinion, but what is also important is the skill, and its also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view.

C-20: Give the pupils a confident level of emotional intelligence to deal with situations. As I said earlier this comes through the subjects of philosophy and ethics, so it would be important to have those in there I suppose. It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason. Whilst these skills can come through a range of subjects, I think RE needs to incorporate this and be delivered specifically as pare of this subject.

D-1: An understanding of the religions, the background and history of each faith and why people have faith, and why people don't have faith. At the same time once we have the children come to that understanding then we come back to the issue of moral understanding and the development of tolerance

D-8: The question should really be whether or not they should be combined. Religious Education and philosophy should be seen as a combined subject, or at least both subjects should be taught separately. The study about religions is just as important as philosophy…… **To answer the question more directly, philosophy and ethics should be being taught in schools, its just a question of whether it is part of the RE curriculum or not.**

D-11: I think the active teaching of all faiths is important. Part of that is that they only have to pick up the newspaper and see , or their history books, that religion has played such a huge role in world conflicts, and we can only change that with a real active education about religion to our children.

D-20: I would have philosophy in there. If there were no constraints, I would have maybe a separate subject to RE about philosophy. I would have it so the children need to show a greater understanding of world faiths as well as an understanding of atheism.

Specific Skills to be taught at prep school

B-22: Clear and accurate description, developing an answer with several points, giving reasons and evidence to support a point.

B-25: Basic literacy. Skills in developing written answers using evidence, multiple points, other points of view.

C-20: It gives them the confidence to speak, and have the confidence in themselves to give their opinion and not only that but back it up with a reason. Whilst these skills can come through a range of subjects, I think RE needs to incorporate this and be delivered specifically as pare of this subject.

C-20: The ability to offer opinion but also respect opinion, but what is also important is the skill, and its also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view.

C-24: Presentation skills and listening skills is a part of that. Being able to understand other peoples opinions. Ability to think wider than maybe just their own opinion. And have that understanding of others. But not just know what other people think but actually understand why other people think in that way. Emotional intelligence. Being able to create a well balanced argument when in discussion.

C-24: Give them the skills to see something that has happened in the past but then work out, okay, well this has happened, how can we make the future better for everyone.

D-24: Writing to argue, debating skills, both paper and verbally. A broad understanding of the major world religions. I think that's it. If they are able to have the knowledge and the skills, then they can debate and discuss real issues in the religions. They would be well prepared. There is a crossover with English and Humanities subjects.

E-21: Philosophy for kids, Social awareness, Awareness of sources, Religious pluralism, Moral dilemmas
E-22: Without the ability to read, write, develop opinions and construct arguments one will not do well at GCSE. Such skills are prerequisites for explaining and evaluating the content of the GCSE.

E-24: Develop those skills. Stimulate debate, get them to think and question.

Collaboration between secondary and prep school

A-25: Maybe more work between them. Behind the scenes I know a lot happens in boarding houses but maybe more interaction between classrooms and classroom teachers. Like if a secondary school has one or two main feeder schools they could set up a day or half day for students to visit and see what it's like. I think teachers already do a good job trying to communicate more. Twitter and Facebook groups are great for that but it happens face to face too.

C-18: We also need to look at what other schools are doing to. Collaborate with our other prep schools around us. Sharing of best practice, also with the state schools as well as independent.

The importance of spiritual development in school:

A-11 : Yes. It doesn't have to religion but to me spiritual means something greater than your self. Than your material self. If you understand you're part of a bigger picture it will make you a better person. Spirituality affects your actions

A-12: I think it makes you more reflective about how you act. If we are purely material organisms there's no reason to act for anything but self preservation.

A-12a I certainly think so. (benefits well-being) Richard Dawkins would disagree with me but I think life must be so empty for people who have a purely naturalistic view of the world. You're telling me we are just atoms? That's it? Some sort of spiritual awareness is what makes you special and what can help you make moral decisions.

B:14 Yes, Obviously.

Schools should contribute to make the pupils into positive members of society who are socially responsible and tolerant of others

A-12c: Schools shouldn't just be a building that students come to to learn facts and then they leave at 18. It's about making them into better people…….

A-12c: Little children are naturally selfish and self absorbed. The job of a school and a teacher, as well as parents and other people they know in the community, is to make them better people.

A 14: Morality is in everything we do.

A:19 Definitely. They need to learn to be good people before they are unleashed into society.

B-1: When done well it should become about helping young people to become fully human by reflecting on and contextualizing their whole education and life.

B-13: They are currently contributing more to the creation of an apathetic society!

B-3: There is a hackneyed quotation about not producing "**learned** monsters, skilled psychopaths or educated **eichmanns"...**. Without rs - or something doing the job i describe above - education becomes battery farming, a training-school for call-centers.

C-24: Give them the skills to see something that has happened in the past but then work out, okay, well this has happened, how can we make the future better for everyone.

C-24: To be able to empathise with others to, you know have that skill so they can actually in their own actions, put others first.

D-13: Whether a child or a school is of faith, it is irrelevant, because they are living in a society that is filled with millions of people of faith, also different types of beliefs or no faith.

D-13: To be able to operate with tolerance and in that society they need to have a very good understanding of these different beliefs.

A positivity and belief that RE has a positive impact on the moral development of pupils.

A-20b: It's really a space in the curriculum for students to ask questions and be given time to contemplate different ideas and to hear different people's views in the class. They can challenge stuff they've heard.

B- 13: Absolutely

B-13a: Yes

B-20: Yes.

B-21: Some impact, but it does not bear all the responsibility.

C-12: Yes it should. They cross over

C-12a: - Yes (RE) definitely is. It's a class in which the pupils can engage with moral issues, both religious and non-religious.

C-19: Yes. I think so. That for me, as a parent and a teacher, you want your children to be the best they can be…… Understanding of what's right and wrong, have an appreciation of different people and different cultures. And have a capable level of emotional intelligence to be able to

C-19a: As I touched on earlier this comes from RE, but also everywhere else.

C-19 b: It definitely does. Through different versions, you can find many good examples of that.

D- 12: Yes I do, If moral education was simply taught through one subject then it would impact on its effectiveness. Morality is a part of everything therefore it should be taught within all disciplines. If we are really going to embed moral values into childrens' thinking it needs to be coming from everywhere. In both academin and non-academic. Inside and outside o the classroom.

D-19: I think everyone has a role to play in that regard, including schools, including RE lessons, to help make pupils become adults who are going to contribute positively to society in a tolerant and respectful way.

E-13b: Any subject should deliver an education that is stimulating and enquiring but some subjects lend themselves easier to particular questions than others. Hence PER is more suited to discuss moral aspects than Science, even though Science should pursue its own critical agenda.

E-18: Schools have a duty to educate their students about the world and their place in it. As such it is incumbent on schools and parents to make students realise that no one is an island.

A positivity and belief that RE can have a positive impact on pupils ability to challenge morally wrong things, even radicalisation.

A-20b: It's really a space in the curriculum for students to ask questions and be given time to contemplate different ideas and to hear different people's views in the class. They can challenge stuff they've heard. …….So many times I've heard students say something outrageous that's clearly just been parroted from something they've heard their parents say. In RE the teacher can actually say "why do you think that?" Give them time to contemplate it and more often than not if it really was an outrageous thing then they realise it. And I think that's amazing. Imagine if we lived in a world where people didn't think about why they believed something

B- 17: I think that RS, done well, is a great protection against radicalisation in that it teaches kids to think and question what they are being told, and to be suspicious of definite answers and promises about the afterlife!

C-3: RE needs to make sure that pupils can express their own opinions about certain religious beliefs, but also so that they can be educated to be respectful of other peoples religious beliefs and to see that others should respect their opinions as well.

C- 9: Developing the skills of how to form an opinion and to respect an opinion, but also how to debate against things and challenge things that you disagree with. That is an important life skill, particularly in this day and age where you have intolerance out there in the real world. Just look at what is going on in the States at the moment, I mean Charlottesville. Kids need to be able to have the basic skills that will help them challenge those sorts of things in the real world. But it also starts with knowledge and understanding of other people and building awareness of religious and non-religious beliefs.

C-10: But the age range I teach its about making them aware of the bad things, but importantly teaching them why. When you look at redicalistaion, you know, children, even young, can be radicalized. There is no age limit to it and its important that children are aware of that an are equipped to deal with it. I think schools can help with that.

C-20: The moral development of the individual. The ability to offer opinion but also respect opinion, but what is also important is the skill, and its also confidence too, to challenge things that a wrong, formally. Formally as in through academic argument as well as just stating their view.

C-24: Develop their moral compass and the understanding of right and wrong is really key! You know when they see something happen that is wrong they need the skills to be able to be able to challenge it rather than just accept it.

C-25: And their opinion on that. Just seeing how some people behave in certain situations, then question would they behave differently. That's an important skill for school, but also for later life when they are more active members of society.

D-1: **Another thing that it should support is not only to be tolerant of other faiths but also to actually be intolerant, maybe not the right word, but what I mean is to give the children skills to argue against what is unacceptable.** For example extremist views. I see what is going on in America at the moment and I see young people being swept along with this tide of intolerance towards others. It makes me think that maybe we need to make sure

we are doing all we can to help our children in this country see why that is wrong. If our children are not brought up to understand the positives of difference between cultures and people then they will become adults who are single minded and intolerant. Let's face it we need tolerance in our society now then we have ever needed.

D-17: of course it might lead children to question things they hear at home, which is a good thing. We need to give them the skills to challenge wrong and be advocates for the morals we teach them. RE has a role to play because it gives them a platform for discussion that can help them build self-confidence and the confidence to challenge what is not right.

E-17: Every person in school and outside has a duty to challenge dogmatic opinions.

Reality of Prevent in school

B-15: The head of department reads a power-point once a year. Box ticked.

C-14: With that we have our RE curriculum. The staff are trained. The children are aware as it is covered with the children through the curriculum.

D-14: Timing couldn't be more perfect as I have literally walked out of a Prevent training. Literally 18 minutes ago! So of course clearly, training for staff, giving the teachers an understanding of what Prevent means and how that links into what we are teaching our children about British Values.

D-15: Through regular training and questionnaires sent out to staff.

Should Prevent impact on curriculum design

B-18: If this means should the prevent agenda means that we all should do islam for gcse then no. I think that it could show the importance of teaching critical analysis and evaluation early though.

C-15: I think it needs to be covered. I don' think you can ignore it. I think it needs to be picked up on, as of when is necessary. You could argue its age-appropriate to certain ages in the school. I mean we start in nursery at 2 and a half, but there will be the right time to bring it into curriculum within our age range.

D-17:I don't think its relevant to what is being taught in the subject, but I think that what is being taught in the subject happens to be instrumental and relevant to helping Prevent radicalization.

D-17: There is the danger that Prevent and a government scheme hijacks the RE syllabus which would then take away from all the amazing things that RE can teach about the world

RE is important but It's everyone's role to enforce PREVENT.

A-15: I think it's everyone's job. It's not fair to put it on a single subject. Really it should be the responsibility or at least the biggest responsibility on who sees that student the most.

C-14: I think radicalization is wider than just subject specific. It's a society thing and I think schools should be looking to educate the children about it explicitly. RE has a large role to play, there is no doubt about it. But we also need work shops, assemblies, and all subjects and staff within the community should contribute.

D-16: I think that RE departments have a big role to play, but I don't believe they have a responsibility for it alone. It will really help in the challenge but every single person in the school community from the headmaster, the groundsman, the teacher, the cleaner, the matron – whoever it is, everyone has that responsibility to help stamp out intolerance of others. It's why ongoing training of all staff is so important. In terms of RE it comes down to giving the pupils knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs, this will help develop empathy when it comes to seeing the differences between human beings.

A government issued national curriculum for RE?

A-19: I went on a training course where hey talked about a national curriculum for RE like science has where you're building on key concepts year on year and it consists of like 40% of the RE curriculum for all schools nationally. I love the idea but don't know if it would work in practice.

B-19: God save us from the DFE or their proxies... Because that means consultation with faith groups and a list of jargon being confused with a curriculum. Clearly some schools need help, but we need a "national curriculum for re" like a hole in the head.

C-3 - I think there needs to be some guidance but I believe that there should be something that becomes an open topic within the delivery of it, that it allows for discussion but within certain boundaries

D-5: I think probably it does. I think the danger of there not being some sort of curriculum is that you have a teacher that has a particular leaning when educating children in RE and that will impact upon their teaching, even if they don't realize it, and then of course on the pupils learning. I don't think that's fair. We need the pupils to have a broad understanding of religions. I do think the state should actually have a strong say in what is delivered and how it is delivered.

D-28: I think there is a danger that RE teachers, which traditionally have come from 1 faith , are quite narrow in their own thinking and even subconsciously are leaning towards a particular type of religion, and that blurs the objectivity of teaching, either consciously or subconciously. This is why it might be an idea to have a state imposed national curriculm for RE.

Timetabling:

A -8: That's another thing that's tagged onto the RE teachers job. And it's often with much less timetable allocation that most subjects. How can we be expected to do all of this in an hour a week?

C-21: I mean part of it would come down to time and timetabling. Obviously this would be what is ideal but… you know… realistically can we do this?

Relevance in today's society

B-10: It makes it increasingly important, as most countries (barring this one) are realising.

D-11: **I think the active teaching of all faiths is important. Part of that is that they only have to pick up the newspaper and see , or their history books, that religion has played such a huge role in world conflicts, and we can only change that with a real active education about religion to our children.**

D-13: Whether a child or a school is of faith, it is irrelevant, because they are living in a society that is filled with millions of people of faith, also different types of beliefs or no faith.

Get rid of the CE in RS

B-27: Examples of great research projects produced by our prep-school once they abandoned doing CE in RS.

C-11c: We don't have an exam, are exams the be –all and end all, I don't know. But it allows us to make the subject more about the knowledge and skills the children need, not just biblical studies.

C-21: I mean part of it would come down to time and timetabling. Obviously this would be what is ideal but… you know… realistically can we do this? I mean maybe without the CE exam we could. Do we need to do exams in it? You know there are questions that need to be answered. In an

C-26: I think the impact that the subject has had on the school and community as a whole has been really positive. I have been at the school for 6 years. One of the interesting areas that a school is measured on is behaviour and pupils understanding of right and wrong and what is the right thing to do in certain situations. That's something that has improved over time and I think that part of that is down to the curriculum that the RE teacher has delivered. Our children are reflective. They have an understanding of themselves and their place in the world. How they should conduct themselves.

C-27: They are using the skills they learn in RS & P to help them in other curriculum areas such as history and English. On big impact is that its created a community that is…. …. a just more open minded. Where the pupils, wherever in the world they are from, are able to appreciate each other for who they are, what they believe in, what they don't believe in. It's amazing I guess how tolerant the children are of each other in our school, compared to others I have worked in. They have the emotional intelligence to understand each other and respect each other for who they are. That is quite special.

D-20: This is why at the prep school I led, I pulled out of it which allowed room for a new curriculum that incorporated teaching of other religions and secular belief systems.

D-20: Having time in RE and Philosophy is so important, that is why in the Prep school I led we withdrew from CE and the exam at 13+. My worry is that schools just do not have time to teach it all, whilst giving pupils time to explore and reflect on the big mysteries of life, particularly they don't have the time because they are so constrained by the exam syllabus. One might argue that when they are younger they shouldn't be examined on this topic. They should have time to think and talk and debate. I wouldn't have a formal exam on it at CE - Its too constraining.

Appendix 4:

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Director Professor Jo-Anne Baird

Mr A
S1 Address
Monday 31st October

Dear Mr A,

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in school this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by Dr. Liam Gearon. In my final research project "**What is Religious Education for? A study of Independent Secondary school views of the aims of Religious Education and how this could impact on the preparatory schools curriculum design."** I will investigate this subject from the perspective of the most senior of leadership during this current geo-political climate as well as explore the very nature of religious education.

The research will take place with 5 Headteachers of independent senior schools, and where necessary follow up with interviews of the RE leaders in the schools chosen. I am developing ways of introducing new ideas into the Religious Studies and Philosophy curriculum at S1.

By participating in the research, the school would be contributing to a project that will deepen our understanding of the current views that Headteachers at secondary schools hold of the aims of Religious Education and also the Religious Studies at CE 13+ examination. More importantly this project will deepen our understanding of the importance of what curriculum changes are needed to improve the learning for students and so contribute towards developing ways of improving the skills, knowledge and understanding of our pupils and for students in the school in the future. It will also contribute to Religious Education more widely and contribute towards discussion in our next area three district meeting and meetings amongst the family of schools.

I hope to conduct this research between January 2017 and September 2017. If necessary I might need to be going off-site to interview/audio-record the participants.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. As practitioner research however, the University recognises that schools have the

highest ethical standards in any event. Therefore only your formal consent, as headmaster is necessary, and not that of individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, any participant will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants and the schools will be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor (Dr. Liam Gearon) and me, and only used for academic purposes. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

If you feel you would like to take part in the study, or need more information about what is involved, please contact my supervisor or me. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, though:
research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

"**What is Religious Education for? A study of Independent Secondary School views of the aims of Religious Education and how this could impact on the preparatory schools curriculum."**

Christopher Cripps
University of Oxford, Department of Education

……...

S1

MR A

☐ We do not wish to participate in this project.

☐ We would like to find out more about this project.

☐ We would like to take part in this project.

_____

Headteacher's signature

Please return this form to me.

Thank you for your help.