

NEGOTIATING FUNDAMENTAL BRITISH VALUES

Research conversations
in Church Schools

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

In England Church schools seek to express Christian values. They are also obliged by UK government policy, the law, and inspection frameworks, to support fundamental British values. This project sought to find out more about how schools managed and related these two things — how school leaders in schools and academies with a Christian character, negotiate fundamental British values and Christian values in the life of their schools. How do they respond to the dual expectation of cultivating an educational philosophy and ethos that is reflective of or inspired by Christian values, and also supportive of fundamental British values? How do they make sense of these distinctive ideas? Are they viewed as complementary or are their tensions?

The researchers spoke with over 50 school leaders from 15 Church schools in the southeast of England. School leaders included Headteachers, other members of school leadership teams, chaplains, teachers of religious education, teachers with responsibility for SMSC and school governors. Schools were formally invited to participate. Local dioceses were asked permission for the researchers to approach schools although they were not informed which schools would be approached. It was not a random or scientifically representative selection. The teachers involved were self-selecting with the support of their Headteachers, and some were nominated by their Headteachers. The researchers spoke to teachers from state funded primary and secondary schools and academies over a period of one school year 2015-2016.

Stimulus questions were used to start conversations around the topic of values, but the teachers themselves articulated their views in their own terms and the research conversations were steered by their answers. For the most part, conversations took place in groups meeting on school premises. A few of the teachers were spoken to individually.

This document contains the information used to stimulate questions, some background information and an interpretation of the responses. It captures some of the thinking of school leaders in some church schools, and begins to form a picture of how this situation is being discussed and thought about. It uses that picture to form questions and discussion points that schools might use to reflect on their own thinking about the negotiation of Christian and British values in their own school settings. It hopes to inspire and support productive conversations about what is meant by expressions of commitment to both Christian values and British values in 21st century English schools.

We would like to thank all the teachers, school leaders and Diocesan directors of education who facilitated and encouraged this project.

Bob Bowie
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Living out our school values

THE STIMULUS QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to stimulate many of the conversations.

Discussing values generally

- What values are most important in your school?
- How do pupils/teachers/parents know that these values are important?
- Where do these values come from (are they arrived at through committee, the result of a working party, tradition etc.)
- Can you enforce values?
- How would the school respond if teachers/pupils rejected the values of the school?

Christian values

- Would you describe the most important values in your school as Christian? If so in what way are they Christian?
- Are these values applicable to everyone (even the non Christians? What about Muslim kids or agnostics).
- Would you say in your school pupils are encouraged to:
 - 'take on' Christian values (accept them as their own)
 - reflect on them
 - critically engage with them
 - none of the above (can they say what?)

Exploring the relationship between Christianity and FBVs

- As a school have you ever engaged with notions/ ideas of Britishness/British identity/British values before? How did this happen and why? If not, why not?
- Can you identify values which you think are British and Christian in your school (or which are only Christian or only British)?
- Please respond to the quote from Nigel Genders
 -For many schools there are serious and far reaching questions that need to be asked in relation to the role of Ofsted in 'policing' and enforcing the new statutory duties proposed under the Bill. Who decides what is 'extremist' thought which children must be protected from? Who sets the bench mark?
- Please respond to the quote from Nicky Morgan
 - ...It shouldn't take any intervention from my department to say that young people should be learning the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, tolerance and respect – because these British values are fundamentally a good thing.



BACKGROUND POLICY

Fundamental British values appeared in education guidance in the DfE new Teachers' Standards (June 2011 and updated 2013¹). The revised standards contained many changes but of particular note is part two, 'Personal and professional conduct', which detailed the high standards of ethics and behaviour expected of the professional conduct of a teacher, in and out of school. Teachers are required to:

- treat pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
- have regard for the need to safeguard pupils' well-being, in accordance with statutory provisions showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others
- not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law.²

These 'fundamental British values' link to the counter terrorism Prevent strategy, also launched in June 2011. The values include democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. The Prevent Strategy stated

'First, we will respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it. In doing so, we must be clear: the ideology of extremism and terrorism is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not. But we will not work with extremist organisations that oppose our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society. If organisations do not accept these fundamental values, we will not work with them and we will not fund them.'³

It identified an urgent need to challenge extremism and disrupt terrorism. Extremism is defined in the document in terms of opposition to fundamental British values:

1 DfE (2013) *The Teachers Standards*, London: Crown. Available online at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301107/Teachers__Standards.pdf

2 DfE (2013) *Teachers' Standards*, London: Crown, p.14

3 Home Department (2013) *Prevent Strategy*, London: Crown. p. 102

'Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.'⁴

Additional guidance on values and SMSC is issued by Ofsted. Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools (November 2014) recalls that section 78 of the Education Act (2002) requires schools, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society. The 2014 Ofsted guidance referred specifically to a requirement to actively promote fundamental British values. This included ensuring pupils are:

- encouraged to regard people of all faiths, races and cultures with respect and tolerance.
- expected to understand that while different people may hold different views about what is 'right' and 'wrong', all people living in England are subject to its law.

The school's ethos and teaching should support the rule of English civil and criminal law and schools should not teach anything that undermines it and if schools teach about religious law, particular care should be taken to explore the relationship between state and religious law.

The guidance states:

Through their provision of SMSC, schools should:

- enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;
- enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling
- students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- encourage respect for other people; and
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

Inspection handbooks refer to these values. As part of a section 5 inspection Ofsted inspectors would consider these requirements when forming a judgement about a school. The most recent School Inspection Handbook used for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act (2005):

'134 The moral development of pupils is shown by their:

- ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong and to readily apply this understanding in their own lives, recognise legal boundaries and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England
- understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and actions
- interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.

135. The social development of pupils is shown by their:

- use of a range of social skills in different contexts, for example working and socialising with other pupils, including those from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds
- willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, including by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively
- acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.

4 Home Department (2013) *Prevent Strategy*, London: Crown. p. 107

136. The cultural development of pupils is shown by their:

- understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and those of others
- understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain willing to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities
- interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their tolerance and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socioeconomic groups in the local, national and global communities.⁵

In judging the effectiveness of leadership and management of a school inspectors will consider, "how well the school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith."⁶ Schools deemed Outstanding (grade 1) will have fundamental British values at their heart.

The development of the Ofsted guidance on SMSC and the revisions in the School Inspection Handbook in 2014, occurred after the publication of the Prevent Strategy and the revised Teacher's Standards in 2011. There was a change from focussing mainly on teacher professionalism to school accountability around SMSC.

In the spring of 2014 the so-called Trojan Horse letter led to allegations that schools were being infiltrated by people sympathetic to extremist organisations. A series of no notice inspections were carried out on twenty-one schools in Birmingham⁷. A number of schools dropped in grade and some from Outstanding (1) to RI (3) or Special measures (4) as a result of the re-inspection.

An investigation into the Trojan Horse was carried out by Peter Clarke, a former leading anti-terrorist police officer⁸. Clarke made recommendations to review the extent to which Teacher's Standards were being robustly monitored. He suggested the Ofsted Framework for Inspection should be revised and governor appointments' processes should be reviewed. Clarke criticised the speed in which some schools had changed hands in terms of governance, through the academisation process.

5 Ofsted (2015) *School Inspection Handbook*, London: Crown p.36-37

6 Ofsted (2015) *School Inspection Handbook*, London: Crown p.38

7 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-27765372>

8 Peter Clarke (2014) *Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter*. London: Crown.

Resilience Tolerance : Respect for all religions.
 Respect for all backgrounds & cultures : Fair play.
 Respect for both genders : Respect for people of all ages.
 Respect for other people's property : Respecting public property-
 It's your school, your park, your place. They belong to everyone.
 Taking responsibility for your own actions.
 Treating others as you'd like to be treated yourself.
 Helping people who are in trouble or difficulty.
 Listening to other people's points of view.
 Asking how well do we match up to our own values.

WHAT SCHOOL LEADERS IN CHURCH SCHOOLS SAY ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL BRITISH VALUES AND CHRISTIAN VALUES

The relationship between Christian values and Fundamental British values.

All interviews with teachers involved a discussion about the relationship between Christian values and fundamental British values (hereafter FBVs). There were a variety of responses ranging from the belief that the two sets of values were essentially synonymous to the view that fundamental British values were problematic for schools with a Christian character. We have grouped the responses of teachers to the question of the relationship between Christian and FBVs in three broad categories, they are outlined below in order of how often they were voiced:

'In my book Christian values trump British values every time'
 (Head teacher Church of England primary school)

The most common theme was that although there was a perceived overlap between Christian and British values, Christian values were the 'higher' values. About 50% of all respondents articulated views that could be placed in this category. In the interviews participants located the superiority of Christian values over British values in various ways:

- Christian values are morally and ethically more demanding than British values. This point was made in nearly all focus groups and interviews. When participants were asked to explain what they meant by this the most frequent example was a comparison between tolerance and either love of one's neighbour and/or respect and welcoming. Tolerance was understood as a minimalist requirement that demanded an acknowledgement of others that was shallow, tokenistic, perfunctory and extrinsically motivated by the desire for social cohesion. In comparison the act of loving a neighbour was challenging, demanding of genuine empathy and motivated by love. In some discussions participants justified their commitment to British values because British values and Christian values were positioned on a continuum:

"If anyone asked me what were doing in this school to promote Fundamental British Values I'd be very confident in, just pointing to our Christian values and saying 'there's everything there that you want from British values and more!'"

- Christian values are universal, where as British values are nationally and politically situated. Participants who made this point sometimes questioned the motives behind the introduction of FBVs while maintaining their belief in the positive nature of the values themselves. In contrast the motivation for the development of Christian values were presented as independent of political factors or as motivated by faith and education alone. All groups/participants were asked about the origins and contexts in which the Christian values of their schools were developed. Even though a number of schools appeared to have developed their specific values in response to requirements from the diocese, the values themselves were understood to be timeless and universal.

In answer to a question about the origins of the Christian values of their school — ‘I think we had to come up with them when We were told to choose, that’s right, we were given a selection and we could choose which ones we liked, that were the best for us. But I think, they’re perfect for us.’

- Christian values are timeless where as British values are political and subject to the agendas of politicians.

‘I mean British values haven’t been British for very long have they? Not quite in my memory but certainly in my fathers it was legal to discriminate against Catholics in all sorts of ways. Christian values, even when they’re interpreted differently speak to something more’

A number of teachers were suspicious both about the motives behind the initiative to implement FBV but also the extent to which politicians were genuinely committed to these values. This was in contrast to the commitment of the schools to Christian values.

‘I mean they’re the same aren’t they?’

About 40% of all respondents believed that British values and Christian values were effectively the same values but expressed in a different language. Some teachers and school leaders were able to demonstrate how they had mapped Christian and British values in ways that demonstrated that they embraced/included the same qualities. Others articulated the relationship as ‘two sides of the same coin’ with British values representing Christian values in a secular context.

A significant number of participants who expressed this view argued that the articulation of Christian values as also British meant that these values were then more inclusive because they could be embraced by all. Participants who argued that British and Christian values were the same tended to argue that these values could be accepted by all, that they were in effect universal values.

Several schools had mapped not only British and Christian values on one another but had attempted to identify these same values through other religions as well. In this way fundamental British values were interpreted as a form of ‘golden rule’ whereby all other values in all religions could be interpreted as essentially British/Christian. Buddhism and Islam were the two religions other than Christianity that were mentioned by teachers as embodying British values in some way.

In some schools teachers had visually represented Christian and British values so that they complimented each other on diagrams such as pictures showing a clasped hand with British values on one hand and Christian values on the other. Or on a school gate facing each other.

One consequence of this view was that teachers who thought that British and Christian values were synonymous were less likely to problematize either the introduction of FBV into education policy, their interpretation in church school contexts or to tolerate any criticism/questioning of these values by pupils.

‘If anyone thought that there values were different I would ask them to think very carefully about what we mean by British values, you can see the main values: equality, fairness, respect, in all religions, not just Christianity. There’s really no reason why anyone couldn’t say that these values were there’s.’

‘You can hold extreme views and still be a really reasonable person’

A minority (about 10%) of participants problematized the relationship between Christian and British values. This group were more likely to question the political motives for the introduction of FBVs in the Teaching Standards and in further policy as well as wider criticisms of Prevent, WRAP training and the requirement to promote FBVs with pupils. With the exception of two interviews/focus groups this group was composed of teachers in secondary schools.

It (the WRAP training) was very narrow wasn't it and the pictures that went along with it, they were very leading weren't they? They all referred to one religion, they didn't talk about there being extremism in Christianity, it was all focused on Islam.

Some teachers in this group also problematized the notion of extremism and raised the issue of Islamophobia as both a motivating factor for the introduction of FBV and as a possible consequence of PREVENT initiatives.

Personally I'm not sure, I mean a long time ago Christian and British meant the same things to people and I think I don't think that that was necessarily a good thing? And it feels like a step backwards to suggest to young people that they are the same when clearly they aren't?

These teachers were more likely to believe that not only was the relationship between Christian values and British values problematic but that the very notion of British values was intrinsically problematic. The most common way this view was expressed was through the question of 'why can't they just be human values, why do they have to be British?' Some of these teachers thought that calling values British was exclusive and that some students would feel justifiably alienated by this.

Discussion of the relationship between FBVs and Christian values – conversations in a climate of inspection.

The responses of participants can be grouped into three broad categories that are outlined above. However the responses were frequently contradictory, that is the same participant would sometimes articulate different views about the nature of FBVs and the Christian nature of their school. Within the same schools teachers, head teachers and schools leaders would articulate different views in different parts of the interviews/focus groups. The level of confusion would suggest that many teachers are genuinely puzzled about the significance and meaning of Fundamental British values in schools and especially the interconnection between those values and Christian values.

When the responses of participants were compared between schools a further pattern emerged. There were a further three key kinds of conversation about the relationship between fundamental British values and Christian values. Conversations here is a loose term referring to what research conversations that took place, and the conversations that were said to be taking place within the schools and in the minds of teachers. Often the three kinds of conversation would happen within the same school, expressed by the same people. Though they are contradictory they exist in the same concentric circles.

There was an internal conversation which happens at the level of internal to the school, amongst adults. This conversation dialogue was often anxious about British values and what the agenda really was. It was very anxious that the actual tenants of fundamental British values were in some cases counter to Christian values, and there was an awareness that they were politically motivated and that those politics might be at odds with what the Christian mission of the school was.

The second conversation was pupil focussed. This changes radically in different kinds of schools so a common theme in the pupil centred or pupil focussed conversation was a resolution of British values and Christian values. In secondary schools there was clearly much more overt confidence that the resolution could be part of the process with children. The example example that was most commonly picked on was the difference between tolerance and respect. In the internal conversation there might be some reasoning that respect was linked to love and recognition of the image of God in another, whilst tolerance was really viewed meant putting up with another, a contradictory sense to the Christian sense. In the pupil focussed conversation this tension was attempted to be resolved. Secondary schools were sometimes more critical of the tension.

The third dialogue was the conversation around inspection. There was clearly a tangible sense of a desire to meet expectations of the inspection. Teachers expressed an ultimate concern of the need to respond to inspection and notices and displays became visible signs of that need to meet both Ofsted and SIAMs (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) expectations, although these were also symbols for inspection and the school community. Within the dialogue of inspection there was an explicit focus on issues of controversy that might indicate a concern around allegations of extremism in aspects of Christianity, notably around homosexuality.

These three dialogues took place at the same time. The three dialogues may reflect in siloes in that teachers could express this sense of a dialogue within themselves and with other adults in their community apart from the dialogue with the children, which is again apart from the dialogue they have in inspection. However, in talking to teachers, these three dialogues inter-react and inter-relate. Many teachers showed a critical consciousness to the complexity. Many were aware of the political difficulties between certain aspects of Christianity and government policy, such as homosexuality and human rights. Teachers would say their Christian ethos gives them space to be critical of inspection, and government policy but that enacting those values could be challenging.

There was a strong sense that the teachers genuinely held both British and Christian values to be important – these values mattered. There were not simply superficially adopted for compliance purposes.



QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

These questions are intended for use by those who work in and with Church schools

1. How are values established and expressed in your school?
2. To what extent do your school values protect and conserve and to what extent do they challenge or inspire change? What's the right balance for your school?
3. What kind of 'values fit' is there between your school values and local communities, Churches and national stories? Is it comfortable? Are there any rough edges?
4. How comfortable are people in the school in talking about questions they have about values?
Consider:
 - a. children talking amongst themselves
 - b. adults (teachers or other adults in school) talking with children
 - c. adults talking amongst themselves (such as in meetings or the staffroom)
5. What opportunities might your school facilitate to encourage 'values talk' with and among children, and with and among adults? Could such opportunities for reflection and discussion facilitate better 'values talk'?

6. Values might be:
 - a. ideas that are **aspirations or hopes** and
 - b. principles that **guided attitudes and behaviour** (virtues)
 - c. stories or examples that **embodied examples** of the hopes and aspirations and the principles that guided attitudes and behaviour.

Consider the values of your school in relation to these three elements.

7. When talking about values and schools it can feel as though there are many waves or lists of values: Olympic values; Christian values; British values; personal values; professional values. Research suggests there may be facilitating ideas that help make sense of the bigger story of how a school's values fit together, such as around hospitality, compassion, reconciliation, hope, dignity, or wisdom.

What could be your school's facilitating idea, value or virtue, that other values might feed into or flow out from?

In the Government's different documents related to fundamental British values the following are mentioned:

- universal human rights
- equality before the law
- democracy
- full participation in our society
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith
- tolerance and harmony, appreciation of and respect of one's own culture as well as different cultural traditions
- respect for other people

There are many sources of Christian values in the Christian tradition. One selection arranged for schools to draw from is available online here: <http://christianvaluesforschools.com/> and lists:

- Reverence
- Wisdom
- Thankfulness
- Humility
- Endurance
- Service
- Compassion
- Trust
- Peace
- Forgiveness
- Friendship
- Justice
- Hope
- Creation
- Koinonia (fellowship)

However, there is no definitive official list of Christian values. Different theological and denominational traditions will express different values. Interpretations of the Christian tradition offers many things that could be perceived as values such as prophecy (the idea of the gift of discernment, speaking out, bringing a message of challenge and change) discipleship, faith, hope, and being of and for the kingdom (the idea of a coming better future, a changed world for the good, a restoration). The word hospitality has come to prominence in some articulations of church school values as a key unlocking value or virtue, for example, that involves many of the things on the list above⁹.

In the process of talking to school leaders we found that people were very willing and open to talk and that there was a strong sense that a great deal of thought was being given by Church schools to the topics explored by this project.

9 See the 2016 *What if Learning Character Development* Project Final Report available online here: www.canterbury.ac.uk/education/four-work/research-knowledge-exchange/national-institute-christian-education-research/docs/nicer-what-if-learning-report.pdf ; see also Cooling, T., Green, B., Morris, A., and Revell, L. (2016) *Christian Faith in English Church Schools: Research Conversations with Classroom Teachers* (Religion, Education and Values), Oxford: Peter Lang.

Other recent publications from NICER include:

- Character Education in Church of England Primary Schools (online report available)
- Christian ethos and teaching and learning in Church Secondary Schools (online report available)

Find out more from www.canterbury.ac.uk/nicer

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