Cor ad cor loquitor:
A report into support and collaboration between maintained English Catholic schools and the role of the Catholic Higher Education Institution: distinctiveness, impact and challenge

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April 2019

Contents

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments

About the author

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Twelve Findings

School-to-school partnerships

1. The vast majority of maintained primary and secondary schools in England need to put significant downward pressure on spending in what is a hugely challenging financial climate. Catholic schools are, equally, looking to save money but without undermining mission integrity, understood as Catholic distinctiveness, curriculum breadth and additional support.

2. Catholic schools are positive about school-to-school collaboration, can point to real impact and regard it as intrinsic to their identity. In terms of school management and improvement processes, they place a high regard on trusted relationships with credible practitioners who have direct experience of school life. Equally, they are keenly interested in research-based solutions and enthusiastic to participate in such research, and with academics in the field, where it adds to students' experience and staff engagement.

3. School leaders believe collaboration is impossible – even illogical - if 'relationships' are imposed coercively [except in the case of grave weaknesses], however well intentioned. Collaboration should be fostered and enabled. Further recognising and celebrating collaboration, such as via both Ofsted and Sec. 48 inspections, is one way of embedding this culture, though without making it a requirement such that it is a 'stick to beat schools with'. School leaders understand and affirm Dioceses, too, may have a role in properly celebrating and fostering this approach.

4. School-to-school collaboration is directly impactful in raising standards in many, but not all, cases. It is always strongly impactful in developing the staff – and students – who are party to a healthy collaboration. Relationships with other schools -and with HEIs, where they currently exist – are most impactful when they are given time to evolve, as against *ad hoc* events created [purely] through necessity or a need to react. Of the collaborations examined, the medium term [2.5/3 years] models appear most efficacious. This reflects the value placed on consistency and continuity by Catholic school leaders as against 'quick fixes'.

5. In considering links with the Higher Education sector [HEIs], while links with a specifically Catholic University is favoured by some school leaders, factors such as geography, cost and building up relationships of trust over time take priority.

6. University academics working in, and with schools, especially in more technical and demanding subjects [such as Stem] are welcomed by school leaders. Equally important, especially for more vulnerable children, are role models. HEI students, able to commit to support schools as role models, whether as part of an extended 'service' commitment or purely ad hoc, are welcomed as part of the 'volunteer' cadre by many school leaders.

Specific to St Mary's University

7. There is a clear understanding of St Mary's commitment to initial teacher education by all respondents, together with a recognition of its quality. Some school leaders were aware of its recent, and repeated, 'Outstanding' judgement by Ofsted.

8. Many school leaders were aware of continuing professional development offered by St Mary's, particularly the MA in *Catholic School Leadership*. Few school leaders were aware of the full offer available and also some were not aware of e.g. the extent to which online delivery is now available.

9. Cost, in terms of upfront fees, time out of school and transport costs are important to most school leaders, especially where they have a local HEI with which there exists a longstanding relationship, often coupled with local discounts. Therefore, there needs to be additional 'value added' [by St Mary's] when geography is a factor.

10. HEI-based events supporting Pupil Premium and more vulnerable children would be attractive; again, local HEIs often offer this so there would be a need for St Mary's to demonstrate distinctiveness. Mentoring and role models from St Mary's would be welcomed in many schools as part of a US-style 'service' outreach by St Mary's.

11. There is scope for a wraparound, [typically]three-year partnership arrangement [tentatively termed 'St Mary's Research School Designation'] with St Mary's and designated schools, as discussed below in 'Recommendations'. This would increase St Mary's exposure, add value for schools involved in supporting other schools [which are not necessarily Teaching Schools] and would lead to revenue generation.

12. St Mary's should continue to work with Diocesan Directors of schools [and similar] to better understand the sector needs. One model would be for St Mary's to sponsor/facilitate working groups from Diocesan leaders [and designated school leaders] to generate fresh thinking around collaboration and to showcase this is a Conference format.

2. Landscape for collaboration: financial necessity and mission Integrity

2.1 Financial and operational expediency

Catholic Primary and Secondary schools in England and Wales are engaged in the most significant changes to the structure of the sector for over a generation, whether as participants or interested onlookers. Academisation, increased competition from 'enterprising' [non-Catholic] multi-academy trusts [MATs], year-on-year legislative changes, the fragmented implementation of the National Funding Formula, changes to school inspections, the declining role and capacity of Local Authorities [LAs] together with a real-terms decrease in per-pupil school funding, all represent a clear challenge to operational efficacy and mission integrity. To this threat comes not only the possibility but, increasingly, the requirement for school-to-school collaboration and support. Support can take a number of forms and, within the Hierarchy of England and Wales, the 22 sovereign Dioceses are engaging in a number of approaches including:

[a]   constituting large multi-academy trusts [MATs] within Dioceses
b]   constituting smaller MATs allowed to grow organically, based, for example, on geographical proximity
[c]   facilitating, or encouraging so-called 'Hard' and 'Soft' Federations' whereby schools make a commitment to work with each other
[c]   formalised Diocesan and school-to-school support, such as in the case of 'under-performance' and
[d]   structured informal or *ad hoc* support.

At the same time, the push to Academisation has been somewhat tempered by a perceived change in direction from Government. In May 2018, Education, Secretary Damian Hinds announced a review of accountability measures, stating the Government 'will not be forcibly turning schools into academies' unless 'Ofsted has judged them to be 'inadequate'.[1] The Official Opposition also indicates that they would 'oppose any attempt to force schools to become academies.'[2]

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[1] *Schoolsweek 4th May 2018* https://schoolsweek.co.uk/hinds-announces-sweeping-school-accountability-changes/ viewed 26.5.18
[2] *Labour Manifesto: Towards a national Education Service [2019]* https://labour.org.uk/manifesto/education/
Viewed 2.3.19

Research suggests a mixed picture in terms of the efficacy of the Academies programme. The Sutton Trust identified that:

> 'the evidence is not easy to interpret. The average attainment of pupils in Academies has risen but in certain cases their intakes have changed. There are continuing concerns about achievement levels in a number of Academies. The impact of Academies on the attainment of their family of schools and on the wider community has been even more difficult to gauge. While this part of the objective was perhaps too ambitious, little action seems to have been taken to address the issue'. [3]

Education spending remains the second highest nationally after health, accounting for 4.3% of national income. The level of UK education spending has risen significantly in real terms over time, growing particularly fast from the late 1990s through to the late 2000s. However, total school spending per pupil has fallen by 8% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2017–18. This was mainly driven by a 55% cut to local authority spending on services. Funding per pupil provided to individual primary and secondary schools has been better protected and remains over 60% higher than in 2000–01, though it is about 4% below its peak in 2015. [4] Funding per student aged 16–18 has seen the biggest pressure of all stages of education for young people in recent years. School sixth forms have faced budget cuts of 21% per student since their peak in 2010–11, while Further Education and sixth-form college funding per student has fallen by about 8% over the same period. For 2019–20, funding per young person in Further Education is similar to 2006–07: only 10% higher than it was 30 years earlier. Spending per student in school sixth forms will be lower than at any point since at least 2002. [Ibid.]

The prevalence of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND] is increasing. According to figures published by the DfE, in 2018, there were 285,722 children and young people with statutory EHCPs and 34,097 children and young people with statements of special educational need. [5] There are a combination of factors which are contributing to these rising numbers. These include population growth, advances in medicine which mean that children born prematurely or with disabilities survive and live longer than before (this also means that the types of additional needs are more complex than ever before), increased diagnosis of some conditions (e.g. autism), increased parental expectations about the support their child should receive, increasing levels of poverty and the extension of services for children and young people with SEND up until the age of 25. [6]

The extension to services covering young people up to age 25 took effect from 2014. This means that each year since then, there has been an additional cohort of young people who remain within the responsibility of education services (whereas previously they would have moved into adult services).

[3] Curtis, A., Exley, S., Sasia, A., Tough, S. and Whitty, G. [2005] *The Academies programme: Progress, problems and possibilities* London: Sutton Trust / Institute of Education https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/AcademiesReportFinal2.pdf viewed 3.2.18

[4] Institute for Fiscal Studies [2018] *2018 annual report on education spending in England* DOI 10.1920/re.ifs.2018.0150

[5] DFE https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statements-of-sen-and-ehc-plans-england-2018

[6] Education Policy Institute [2019] https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/high-needs-funding-overview/

Funding for Alternative Provision – alternative placements for children with specific needs – is putting further pressure on High Needs budgets and Funding pressures on health and social care are also having an impact on services

In 2019, according to the Sutton Trust [2019], 69% of secondary senior leaders have reported having to make cuts to teaching staff for financial reasons, along with 70% for teaching assistants and 72% for support staff. 72% of primary school Heads also report cutting teacher assistants. A growing number of secondary leaders' report cutting IT equipment (61%), school outings (41%) and sport (28%). Almost half report cutting subject choices at GCSE (47%). Others report cutting back on classroom materials and CPD for teachers. One in four (27%) secondary school leaders report that their pupil premium funding is being used to plug gaps elsewhere in their budget. For those who do report it plugging gaps, most indicate it being used on teachers and teaching assistants or absorbed into the general school budget. Just over half (55%) of school leaders feel that their pupil premium funding is helping to close attainment gaps in their school. Primary leaders (57%) are more likely than secondary (50%) to say so. While 15% disagree, 31% are neutral on the impact of pupil premium in their school.

Of those who disagree that it is having an impact, teachers offer a variety of reasons, with many saying the funding is not enough to make an impact or is being spent on other issues. Teachers also point out the difficulty in closing gaps given factors outside the school gates. Heads who reported having to plug budget gaps with their pupil premium funding were less likely to say that attainment gaps were closing (62% v 40%).

2.2 Mission Integrity - the distinctive principles of Catholic education

Notwithstanding this harsh financial landscape, the use of research evidence in schools as a basis for policy has increased again this year[7], and at its highest levels since 2012. 74% of all senior leaders (up from 68%) and 47% of teachers (up from 45%) reported use of research evidence in decision-making. Secondary teachers who reported using research evidence were more likely to report that their pupil premium money was proving effective (46% v 32%).[8] This indicates that, notwithstanding challenging circumstances, the appetite exists to invest in quality-assured measures to support school improvement and, without question, engage with the Higher Education sector where the HEI can make a *distinctive* offer.

However compelling the accountancy argument to decrease costs and increase economies of scale, the incentive to collaborate and seek best value is not merely driven by financial expediency. The Catholic view of education itself is predicated not on school by school insularity but, rather, by a broader view of Church, at

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7 The relevance of this will be seen below with reference to 'Research Schools' in 'Recommendations'
8 Sutton Trust [2019] *School Funding and Pupil Premium 2019* https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/school-funding-and-pupil-premium-2019/ viewed 18.5.19

Diocesan, Hierarchy-wide and, ultimately, international levels. In terms of the aforementioned 'Mission Integrity', for Grace [2012] this is expressed as 'fidelity in practice and not just in public rhetoric to the distinctive and authentic principles of Roman Catholic education'.[9] The Catholic Church has recognised the challenge and necessity of mission integrity in its charter for Catholic schools, published as far back as 1977

> 'The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education is aware of the serious problems which are an integral part of Christian education in a pluralistic society. It regards as a prime duty, therefore, the focusing of any attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of school which would present itself as Catholic. Yet the diverse situations and legal systems in which the Catholic school has to function in Christian and non-Christian countries demand that local problems be faced and solved by each Church within its own social-cultural context.' [10]

This mission integrity can be evidenced in a variety of ways, including:

- education in the faith in a manner approved by the local Ordinary;
- a focus on the poor and marginalised consistent with the founding story of Catholic education in the Hierarchy of England and Wales since the Restoration of the Hierarchy in 1850[11];
- promoting solidarity and inter-dependence as against isolationism and narrow competitiveness;
- integrity in school leadership and management such that people are never merely means to an end.

What characterises each of these is that they are not *essential* to climb the metric of inspection-based 'success' as a maintained school in England and Wales; they are choices with direct contemporary resonance.

Thus:

- *Education in the faith in a manner approved by the local Ordinary* - reminds Catholic leaders that their primary collaborative role, [through a mature rendering of obedience but also through professional courtesy], is to the Diocesan Bishop [and/or religious Superior].

- *a focus on the poor and marginalised* - Catholic school leaders are aware that Pupil Premium, Free School meals, Hard To Reach families are no mere fads in our shared vision of Catholic education as being, in a special way, at the service of the poor.

- *promoting solidarity and inter-dependence as against isolationism and narrow competitiveness* – the deleterious impact of an embedded league-table culture, characterised by 'who did we beat' and 'who is below us', must be constantly called out if Catholic schools are to be true to their mission.

[9] Grace, G., 'Contemporary Challenges for Catholic School Leaders' in Leithwood, K. and Hallinger, P. [eds.] [2012]. *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration* p. 432
New York : Springer
[10] Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* [1977] §2
[11] 'the first necessity...is a sufficient provision of education adequate to the wants of our poor. It must become universal...to...prefer the establishment of good schools to every other work...' Guy, R.E. [1886] *The Synods in English* Stratford-upon-Avon : St Gregory's Press p. 268

- *integrity in school leadership and management such that people are never merely means to an end* – in a climate of financial challenge Catholic school leaders remain acutely aware that the easy appropriation of language such as *efficiency savings, back-office functions and restructuring* have names – and faces – behind them.

The Catholic Hierarchy of England and Wales issued a statement of 2014 setting out the key principles of Catholic distinctiveness, *Catholic Education in England and Wales.*[12] This document identifies five areas of distinctiveness informing Catholic schools and, by implication, their engagement with others. However, Catholic schools do not operate in a vacuum and there are any number of clarion voices from both within and beyond the sector which present ongoing challenge. What follows are the core principles of the Bishops document, together with comments on the opportunities and challenges these principles face.

2.2.1   The Search for Excellence

'Christians are called to fulfil their potential and strive for excellence in all aspects of their lives. Catholic education therefore strives to offer students every opportunity to develop their talents to the full through their academic work, spiritual worship and extracurricular activities.'[13]

Comment:

The pursuit of excellence takes place within a diverse ecology of publicly [as well as privately] funded schooling – Catholic and otherwise – which has, in recent years, been subject to ever-greater competitiveness. While this may drive up standards, it may also serve to preclude interdependent working where schools' Governance and leadership develop a 'silo' mentality – protecting interests and, as Grace [2016][14] warned, 'playing the market' by effectively drawing in the 'best' families to optimise results. The Catholic school leaders interviewed in this study report these practices in some neighbouring schools, though not in other Catholic schools, which they regard as collegiate and open.

The UK school accountability regime is, arguably, the most stringent in the world, England having implemented more of the policies associated with school improvement than any other [Whelan, 2009].[15] European Union longitudinal research in 2014 supported the efficacy of school inspection [E.U. Education and Culture Directorate, 2014][16] while, at the same time, noting that, almost uniquely, English schools also suffered the effect of 'unintended consequences' of inspections. Additional analyses indicated that it's particularly the perceived pressure of inspections and the high stakes nature of inspections (which is highest in England, followed by the Netherlands) that explains both the level of

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[12] *Catholic education in England and Wales* [2014:3] London: Catholic Education Service
[13] Ibid.
[14] Grace, G. [2016:144] *Faith, Mission and Challenge in Catholic Education* London: Routledge
[15] Whelan, G. [2009]. *Lessons Learned: How good policies produce better schools* London: Fenton Whelan
[16] European Union, Directorate of Education and Culture

improvement, but also the level of unintended consequences reported by principals, particularly unintended consequences related to curriculum and instruction whereby schooling can be skewed to 'the test' at the expense of other educational benefits.[17]

Many Headteachers spoken to in this survey commented on the extent to which an over-emphasis on assessment, combined with a reduced curriculum offer as a result of cuts, prevents them from offering the breadth of experience they would like to. In short, the school assessment regime combined with financial challenge meant the integrity of the offer could be compromised. In such a landscape, while collaboration presented challenges, it was generally accepted as a positive approach to maximising resources and securing economies of scale but, interestingly, without any appetite for 'hard' or 'forced' federations/arrangements which were perceived by most Headteachers to be the enemy of genuine collaboration, particularly from the point of view of a 'Catholic approach'. Such a 'Catholic approach' seemed to be associated with a common understanding, a worldview, a sense of treating others [and other schools] with dignity and the practice of the faith.

2.2.2   The Uniqueness of the Individual[18]

'Within Catholic schools and colleges, each individual is seen as made in God's image and loved by Him. All students are valued and respected as individuals so that they may be helped to fulfil their unique role in creation. It is important therefore that we provide high quality pastoral care throughout our schools and colleges in order to support the individual needs of each student.'

Comment

While 'The Uniqueness of the Individual' goes far beyond the issue of class sizes, including, inter alia, questions of curriculum flexibility, careers advice as well as pastoral and special needs support, the pressure put on class sizes when finances are challenging, remains an important debate when examining how personalised an education students actually receive in England's maintained schools. Especially, of course, when contrasted with class sizes in the private, including private Catholic, sector. Schools facing financial challenges face a real pressure to increase class sizes. While there remains significant discussion as to the impact on class sizes,[19] nevertheless evidence does point to a negative impact on students from a lower socio-economic context, at both primary and secondary levels. Schanzenbach's [2014:3] research found that:

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[17] Ibid. http://schoolinspections.eu/impact/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/09/Summary-results-School-inspections-year-1-3.pdf viewed 12.12.2018

[18] 2014, *Catholic Education in England and Wales* op. cit.

[19] The OECD [2012], for instance, is clear that, while increasing class size is a cost-saving policy lever used by the 32 countries within its survey [together with adjustments to students' instruction time, teachers' teaching time and teachers' salaries], the reduction in class size is a less powerful school improvement measure than the improvement of the quality of teaching. 'Education Indicators in Focus, 2012, November' http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF%202012--N9%20FINAL.pdf viewed 3.4.18

- *Class size is an important determinant of student outcomes, and one that can be directly determined by policy. All else being equal, increasing class sizes will harm student outcomes.*
- *The evidence suggests that increasing class size will harm not only children's test scores in the short run, but also their long-run human capital formation. Money saved today by increasing class sizes will result in more substantial social and educational costs in the future.*
- *• The payoff from class-size reduction is greater for low-income and minority children, while any increases in class size will likely be most harmful to these populations.[20]*

The significance of the final bullet point is important to this survey. Headteachers report how financial constraints and curriculum pressures, combined with the challenges of recruiting teachers, often impacts most negatively on poorer and more vulnerable children. These children often require continuity in their lives – great teachers over a period of time, for instance – they may require specialist services which are difficult, or expensive, to source. Their parents may need additional support which, in recent years, has been the subject of so-called 'Outreach to Hard To Reach parents', often undertaken by talented [but costly] members of school Support/Associate staff. The significance here is that, for each of the Catholic Headteachers in this survey, the so-called 'back office' functions such as those associated with providing support for vulnerable learners were seen as both essential and, in the long-term, a greater efficiency as less young people would become disaffected and disengaged from school life.

2.2.3 The Education of the Whole Person[21]

'Catholic education is based on the belief that the human and the divine are inseparable. In Catholic schools and colleges, management, organisation, academic and pastoral work, prayer and worship, all aim to prepare young people for their life as Christians in the community.'

Comment:

The practical manifestation of Educating the Whole Person can be seen in schools in many ways, including the following:

- *Investment in high quality pastoral, counselling and specialist support*
- *The developing of an enriched curriculum and co-curriculum[22]*
- *Ensuring Pupil Premium[23] funding is properly spent and not used as a top-up in the light of real-term cuts to core funding*

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[20] Scanzenbach, D. [2014] *Does Class Size Matter?* North Western University of Colorado, Boulder: National Education Policy Centre
[21] 2014, *Catholic Education in England and Wales* op. cit.
[22] See for instance Uttley, S. 'Contemporary Catholic Headship and the Pursuit of Authenticity in Justice' in Lydon, J. [Ed.] *Contemporary Perspectives on Catholic Education* Leominster: Gracewing
[23] The pupil premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England, designed to help disadvantaged pupils of all abilities perform better, and close the gap between them and their peers.

- *Ensuring high quality teaching which means securing good teachers notwithstanding a national teacher shortage*

Clearly, there are financial implications for each of these measures as well as synergies to be exploited through collaborative working. The desire to share and collaborate must always be seen in the context of traditional school Governance where the desire has been to retain the best staff and avoid 'poaching'. One of the implications of this study is to strongly recommend that collaborative working – where it has been possible - becomes a properly-recognised, and celebrated, 'judgement' in the forthcoming revision to the Inspection of schools with a religious character.[24]

2.2.4 The Education of All[25]

> 'Their belief in the value of each individual leads Catholic schools and colleges to have the duty to care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged. Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society has always been central to the mission of Catholic education.'

Comments:

The issue of Education for All is multifaceted for maintained Catholic schools, particularly [1] in terms of supporting vulnerable children and [2] in terms of the requirement that new ['Free'] schools take no more than 50% from the faith tradition.

Vulnerable children and Off rolling[26] - All respondents demonstrated a genuine desire that their school be welcoming and 'inclusive' and all stipulated that they would not seek to frustrate the admission of a more vulnerable ['troublesome'] pupil without very good reason. This issue has become very pertinent, particularly in the Secondary sector, where a charge has been made to some schools

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[24] In addition to a standard section 5 Ofsted inspection, any school designated as having a religious character will have its school ethos, the content of its collective worship, and its denominational religious education inspected separately. These are known as 'section 48 inspections' as they are set out in section 48 of the Education Act 2005.These inspections are carried out by inspectors appointed by the appropriate religious authorities.

[25] 2014, *Catholic Education in England and Wales* op. cit.

[26] Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil. Off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of 'gaming'. [HMCI Annual Report 2018 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201718-education-childrens-services-and-skills/the-annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-201718#offrolling viewed 3.4.19

that they deliberately 'off-roll' more challenging students,[27] whether to improve behaviour, placate parental complaints or to massage academic outcomes.

In 2017, *Education DataLab* drew the following conclusions:

- *outcomes for all groups of pupils who leave the roll of a mainstream school are poor, with only around 1% of children who leave to state alternative provision or a special school, and 29% of those who leave to a university technical college (UTC) or studio school, achieving five good GCSEs;*

- *there exists a previously unidentified group of nearly 20,000 children who leave the rolls of mainstream secondary schools to a range of other destinations for whom outcomes are also very poor, with only 6% recorded as achieving five good GCSEs;*

- *there is wide variation in leaver numbers observed from mainstream schools – in some schools, the number of pupils who have been on-roll but leave at some point between Year 7 and Year 11 is more than 50% of the number of pupils who complete their secondary education at the school;*

- *pupils leaving can have a very flattering impact on the league table results of a school – with GCSE pass rates up to 17 percentage points lower in some cases if league tables are reweighted to include all pupils who received some of their education there, in proportion to how much time they spent there;*

- *sponsored academies tend to lose more pupils after becoming an academy. No such trend is true of converter academies.[28]*

  The significance for this survey is that the overriding impression is one of school leaders wishing to find solutions and keep children in school as far as possible. This is important as the political climate is moving against schools being seen to 'get rid' of students, even though the reality is generally far more complex [Ofsted 2019:68].[29] Collaboration offers opportunities for more flexible respite care [particularly at secondary level, where some schools [not in this survey] use other schools to provide short-term alternative provision.]

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[27] A charge made, for instance, by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of schools in her 2018 Annual Report. Op. cit.

[28] 'Who's left?: The Main Findings' *Education Data Lab, 2017* https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2017/01/whos-left-the-main-findings/ viewed 5.10,18

[29] Recognised by Ofsted in *Safeguarding children and young people in education from knife crime* [2019] section 68 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/785055/Knife_crime_safeguarding_children_and_young_people_110319.pdf

2.2.5   Moral Principles

> 'Catholic education aims to offer young people the experience of life in a community founded on the Christian virtues. In religious education in particular, the Church aims to transmit to them the Catholic faith. Both through religious education and in the general life of the school, young people are prepared to serve as witnesses to moral and spiritual values in the wider world.'[30]

Comment:

while a full treatment of Catholic moral philosophy would be unsuitable here, there are, nevertheless, key elements which are common to all the school leaders spoken to in this study.

Gospel Values – though a much used and oft misunderstood expression[31], the basing of moral principles on the life of Jesus Christ stands, in many ways, at odds with non-religious schools which identify, inter alia, notions such as 'rights' and 'respect' as foundational principles. Not only do Gospel Values open up the Catholic school to the transcendent, theologically, but also to the global character of Catholic education, to the authority of the local ordinary [Bishop or Superior of a Religious Order] and the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. In specific areas of doctrine this can produce tensions with prevailing social, and especially, sexual and 'identity' mores. School leaders are now dealing with issues such as gender fluidity which, for even the most 'autonomous' of Catholic school leaders, is necessitating their engagement with Diocesan advisors or the Catholic Education Service. [32]

At an operational level, the 10% curriculum requirement[33] for Religious Education puts a constraint, however justified, on curriculum planning. The requirement that the Headteacher, Deputy Head, Head of Religious Education and School Chaplain be practising Roman Catholics places a further challenge, not only in recruiting good teachers but, in particular, succession planning for school leaders, remains a key challenge. Some school leaders find the hard requirement for senior staff to demonstrate Catholic practice challenging, especially where other colleagues are, for example, devout Christians of other traditions. Others recognise the importance given the ecclesial nature of the Catholic school.

The Catholic school leaders' investment in the kind of broad and balanced curriculum that encourages the human flourishing necessary, if not sufficient, to the development of moral principles, remains a defining desire among those interviewed, notwithstanding the costs and dwindling resources.

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[30] 2014, *Catholic Education in England and Wales* op. cit.
[31] For a helpful exposition of Gospel Values see Raymond Friel, *Catholic Independent Schools' Conference 2017* https://www.catholicindependentschools.com/2017/05/gospel-values-and-the-catholic-school/

[32] Dan Hitchens, 'Can catholic schools resist the new gender confusion?' *Catholic Herald, 23rd November 2017* https://catholicherald.co.uk/issues/november-24th-2017/can-catholic-schools-resist-the-new-gender-confusion/
  Viewed 24.11.17
[33] Catholic Education Service for England and Wales http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/religious-education/item/1002967-about-religious-education-in-catholic-schools

This can appear to be hampered by Governmental constraints such as the EBacc[34] measures which, in requiring students to study specific courses such as modern foreign Language, may be seen as being in tension with the Government's desire to 'free up' Headteachers and schools to do what is right in their communities.[35]

[34] 'The English Baccalaureate' Department for Education advice [updated] 24th January 2019 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc viewed 3.2.19

[35] See, for example, '10 facts you need to know about academies' 13th April 2016 *Department for Education* https://www.gov.uk/government/news/10-facts-you-need-to-know-about-academies viewed 3.5.16

3. Scope of Research

This research aimed to address the following five questions:

- What is the current landscape of collaboration and support between maintained Catholic schools?
- To what extent is this having a discernible impact on outcomes?
- What, if anything, is distinctively 'Catholic' about this collaboration and support?
- What are the challenges?
- What role is there for the Catholic Higher Education institution in this emerging ecology?

4. Notes on questioning

This research involved structured conversations with fifteen leaders of Catholic school, ten Primary and five Secondary, in 2018. All the schools were located in the South East of England. Three of the primary schools and two of the secondary schools were part of a Multi Academy Trust. Further discussions took place with school leaders who had received support as part of a collaborative relationship, and, in addition, the CEO of a Catholic MAT also provided some invaluable input. The interviews were conducted in accordance with the ethical research framework as required by St Mary's University and it was made clear that all participants would remain anonymous.

By 'structured conversations' is meant a combination of set questions and free discussion.

5. Emerging perspectives in the sector

The basis of the research needs to be understood in the context of four perspectives developing among practitioners and shared with this researcher anecdotally, in the last three years.

5.1 School to school collaboration is piecemeal, leading to missed opportunities for economies of scale, sharing best practice and improving standards

Schools lacked coordinated approaches to securing best value. This was particularly the case at the Primary phase where historical practices and risk aversion drove current thinking.
Best practice was being shared in two ways: for successful and secure schools it was delivered through 'trusted relationships' [colleague Heads, well-regarded Local Authority advisors and, on occasion, the Diocese]. For schools in difficulty, it was typically being brokered by third parties, such as the local Authority or MAT Trust Board.

5.2 School-to-school collaboration at the level of Catholic schools rarely, if ever, includes shared vision of Catholic distinctiveness

School-to-school collaboration generally begins either through necessity or through the building up of trusted relationships. While individual schools typically publish a mission and values for their institutions, often couched in the language of 'Gospel Values', it is less common for a Mission of Partnership to be produced. This is beginning to change within Catholic MATs[36] though the relative powers of school and MAT Board Governance remain fluid[37].

5.3 In an increasingly fragmented system, there is less clarity regarding the best sources of school support leading to market inefficiency through asymmetric information, particularly for smaller schools that lack a significant infrastructure. Examples of fragmentation include regional funding, the implementation of the National Funding Formula and the implosion of Local Authority school support structures.

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[36] See for example the guidance of the Diocese of Salford: 'It is the Bishop's view that the effect of the academy programme must be to strengthen relationships and partnerships between the local and diocesan-wide family of schools. Hence the proposal to establish Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) rather than allowing schools to convert to a Single Academy Trust'…and this …'formalises the collaboration between schools in a family of schools…' *Multi Academy Trusts: Initial Information for Headteachers and Governing Bodies April 2016* p. 6 http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Salford-MAT-initial-advice-for-GB-and-headteacher-April-2016-3.pdf viewed 5.12.17

[37] 'The schools in the MAT would decide and agree between themselves how much responsibility and control is to be taken on by the Board of Director' [ibid]

5.3.1 Funding variations

In addition to the cut in school per pupil spending detailed above, school funding varies across England, adding to the asymmetric character of the sector with 'winners and losers'. For instance, outside London, the highest figure in mainland England is in Tameside (£5,729) while the lowest is in Blackpool (£3,363). Both of these local authorities are in the same region – the North-West. In the capital, several authorities have per pupil expenditures that are greater than those seen elsewhere. The highest of all is in the City of London (£6,920). In Birmingham, the average spend is £5,008, while in nearby Coventry it is just £4,458.

5.3.2 National Funding Formula
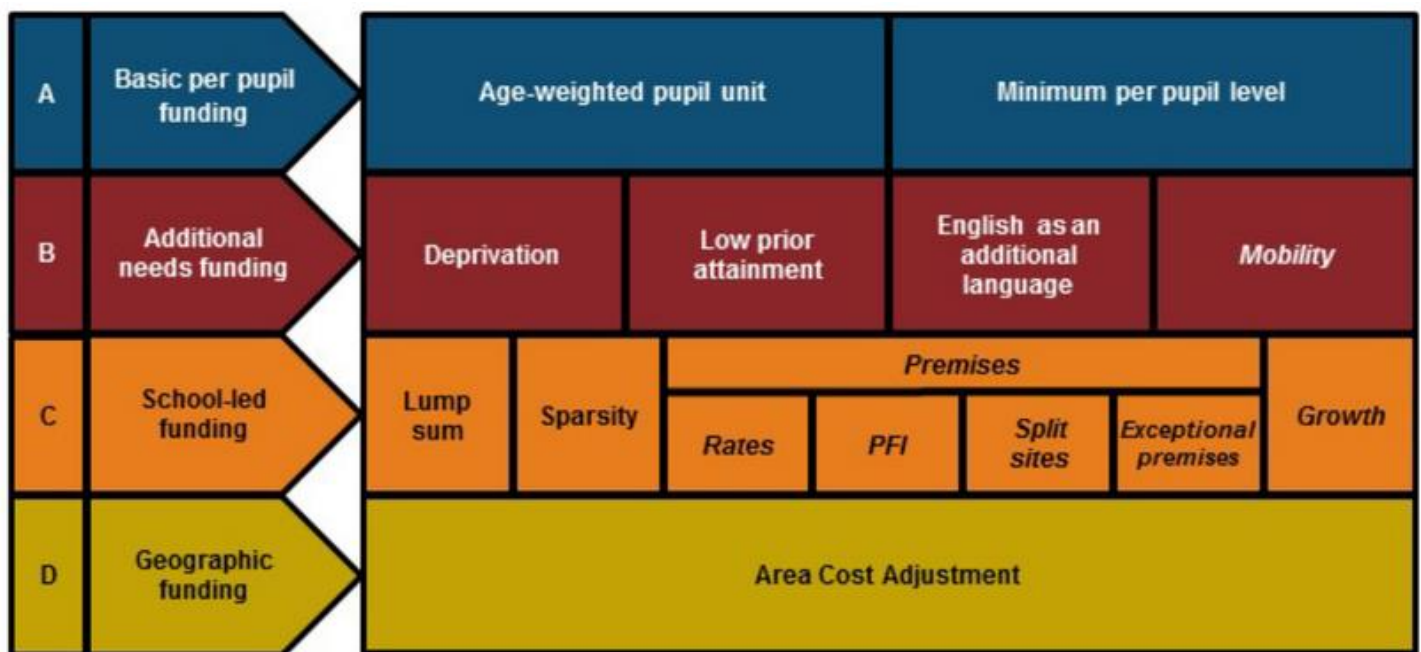
Source: DFE

The introduction of the National Funding Formula, which began last year [2018], will replace the 152 different formulae currently used by local authorities to allocate funding to schools. A school's per-pupil funding allocation is topped up if its overall funding per pupil works out at less than the minimum amount, after the following factors in the formula have been taken into account:

- *Average Weighted Pupil Unit [AWPU] the per-pupil funding allocation which varies across the country*
- *Deprivation*
- *Low prior attainment*
- *English as an additional language (EAL)*
- *Lump sum*
- *Sparsity*
- *Area cost adjustment*

This is leading to both winners and losers. Transitional protections, however, will mean that no school will see cuts of more than 3% by 2019–20 and no school will see an increase of more than 5.6% During the transition period, LAs retain flexibility to set their own funding formulas, often influenced by the composition of the local Schools' Forum. For example, they can choose to include the minimum per-pupil levels in their local funding formulas, but don't have to. While the end game should be more equitable, such variations lead to increasing challenges, especially for smaller Catholic schools.

5.3.3 The local political context and collaboration: The Schools' Forum and the significance of Schools' Forum in collaboration within the Catholic school sector.

It has never been possible, and certainly not prudent, for Catholic schools to act as silos, hermetically sealed from neighbouring schools of whatever type. A key reason for this is the role of the Schools' Forum. Representatives from schools and academies make up the schools' forum. There is also some representation from non-school organisations, such as nursery and 16-19 education providers.

The forum acts as a consultative body on some issues and a decision-making body on others.

The forum acts in a consultative role for:

- *changes to the local funding formula (the local authority makes the final decision)*
- *proposed changes to the operation of the minimum funding guarantee*
- *changes to or new contracts affecting schools (school meals, for example)*
- *arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in pupil referral units, and in early years provision*

The forum decides:

- *how much funding may be retained by the local authority within the dedicated schools grant (for example, providing an admissions service, or providing additional funding for growing schools)*
- *any proposed carry forward of deficits on central spend from one year to the next*
- *proposals to de-delegate funding from maintained primary and secondary schools (for example, for staff supply cover, insurance, behaviour support)*
- *changes to the scheme of financial management.*[38]

For this reason, it was clear from many respondents that they viewed collaboration with all local schools as critically important, especially during the uncertain roll out of National Funding Formula and in the light of the decreasing capabilities of Local Authorities.

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[38] *Schools Forum: A Guide for Schools and Academies DFE [2015]* https://www.gov.uk/guidance/schools-forum-a-guide-for-schools-and-academies

5.3.4   The local political context and collaboration: the role of the Local Authority

A key driver to collaboration for approximately 80% of respondents was the [perceived] deterioration of Local Authority support for schools. In 2001, the Audit Commission could rightly point to excellent practice within a significant number of LA's.

> *'The best LEAs have a clear definition of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support; they use their resources providently, targeting them to greatest need; they make effective use of management information to direct their resources, so that they are not wasted on universal provision. They make a clear distinction between the carrying out of their statutory functions and more general support, which schools purchase. Through effective performance management, they are able to engender a consistent quality of service. They consult well and ensure that decision-making is timely, open and transparent, with the result that it has validity even when it is in some respects not popular. They take Best Value seriously and are open to competition and challenge. They have no automatic predilection, either for public sector or private sector provision, only a preference in favour of what works. …. Finally, they are genuinely committed and have viable strategies to enhance schools' own capacity to sustain continuous improvement.'[39]*

However, in recent years, the landscape has changed, not least as Academies have received funding directly from central government, effectively reducing that available to the Local Authority, and young people's services were transferred from the education budget to children's social care. This has led, in many cases, to a decline in available funding for the advisory and other services once provided by the Local Authority to all maintained schools within its jurisdiction. This is significant to Catholic school leaders in that, those working in Local Authorities which have retained adequate resources [and credible expertise] to deliver an efficacious service to schools are clear that the LA represents a positive collaborative partner and a force for good.

Two contrasting Headteacher comments from the research are illustrative:

HT 'We are lucky: this is a very good Authority and their services are respected. There would be no reason to look elsewhere for support'

HT 'In my time in this Authority I have just seen services cut and cut. No one knows who is still in post and there has been a loss of collective understanding'

The implication for collaboration is clear; there are discernible variations even across regions which are leading school leaders to different levels of confidence – or despair -as to the support available to them.

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[39] *Local Education Support for School improvement [2001] Audit Commission. 4*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/250906/lea.pdf viewed 5.9.18

This undoubtedly impacts their attitude towards collaboration, though, as demonstrated in two more contrasting statements, how is less obvious:

HT 'In this area the lack of support means we feel on our own. We have to do the basics right even if we can't do all the things we used to. Going out to other schools and releasing staff for collaboration is not easy'

HT 'It is important we pull together as Catholic schools. We are distinctive and we need to work together.'

A recurrent theme was vulnerable children and ensuring the school was doing its best for them, irrespective of whether the school was in a MAT or Voluntary Aided. While the Academies agenda has been seen as one way to ensure better collaboration within a Multi Academy Trust, Local Authority leaders, too, can point to evidence that their school support is, in fact, equally – and often more – efficacious than that of the quasi-privatised Chain academies.[40] In addition, as Andrews observed, The variation between different local authorities and between different multi-academy trusts is far greater than the variation between the two groups. This implies that it is more important to ask whether a child is in a high-performing MAT or a high-performing local authority than it is to ask whether a child is in an academy school or a local authority school. For example, moving from a school in a high-performing local authority to a school in a low-performing multi-academy trust would appear to risk a significant decline in progress and attainment. The difference between the highest-performing local authority and lowest-performing large multi-academy trust in secondary education is equivalent to just over 7 grades for pupils across their GCSEs.

'Taken in aggregate there appears to be little difference in the improvement seen in schools within local authorities and schools within multi-academy trusts.'[41]

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[40] For instance, Comparison with previously maintained schools that became a sponsored academy shows that since 2013 a larger proportion of council-maintained schools (75.7 per cent) are now good or outstanding, compared to sponsor-led academies (59.4 per cent). Of those schools judged inadequate in 2013, 75.7% of council-maintained schools are now good or outstanding, compared to 59.4% of sponsor-led academies. www.local.gov.uk/academy-maintained-schools viewed 5.2.19

[41] Adams, J. *School performance in multi-academy trusts and Local Authorities [2015: 5]* Education Policy Institute https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/school-performance-in-multi-academy-trusts.pdf

5.4 The role of the University as an aid to school improvement is unclear and under-developed

The HEI sector's relationship with schools varies considerably in form, but it is by no means insignificant

Examples:

5.4.1 **Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)** *has established close partnerships with schools serving educationally disadvantaged communities in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Havering.*
In particular, the university has taken on the role of the lead trust partner at St Paul's Way Trust School, in Tower Hamlets, which has now noticeably improved its GCSE results.
Senior members of QMUL staff chair the governing body and Trust Board as part of a broad, long-term programme of academic and governance support being provided by the university.

QMUL has worked with its Trust partners to develop an innovative and exciting curriculum for the school. Its biomedical science programme, for example, examines how to tackle diabetes, a subject with particular relevance to the school as the condition is a serious public health problem in the local community. Pupils studying the programme can talk to Queen Mary's research scientists and use the university's world-class labs.

5.4.2 *The* **University of Liverpool** *is working with North Liverpool Academy - one of three academies with which the university has strategic links - and its feeder primary schools. The university's Educational Opportunities team provides learning materials for pupils aged 11 to 16, and supports a wide range of bespoke activities including master classes at the university. The school has very high levels (97.9%) of students from areas of multiple deprivation, but applications from the academy to the university have risen as a result of this hands-on engagement, with 38 students applying in 2014. Consequently the number of students from the academy taking up a place at the University of Liverpool has more than doubled.*

5.4.3 **The University of Birmingham** *runs Forward Thinking which is a programme for groups of local schools. Each year the schools involved select five Year 8 Gifted and Talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part in a programme of activity through to Year 11. They are encouraged to think about their future education and career path in order to make informed decisions about progression to university,*

and to help motivate them to succeed at school and achieve. This programme has a particular focus on progression to selective institutions such as the University of Birmingham and other Russell Group universities and giving participants an idea of what academic study and student life might be like.

In addition, the University of Birmingham is explicit as to its desire to work with local schools, referencing support in the following areas:

- *Teacher training*
- *Professional development*
- *Engaging with research*
- *Opportunities and activities for pupils*
- *School visits*
- *Role models for younger children, particularly from under-represented groups*
- *Summer school residentials for Year 10 students*
- *Working with student mentors and volunteers*
- *Insight into professions – delivered by mentors provided for, or brokered by, the University*

5.4.4 *The University of Winchester*

This project involved researchers working with early years teachers to explore the potential for the use of curiosity and investigation in science learning in early years. The project documented practice in foundation phase science and explored how practitioners can develop and encourage children's own ideas and curiosity to foster creativity and achievement. The project grew out of three areas of existing research: research around children's ideas (which had been developed in other settings but rarely in early years science), research around working with adults (in this case involving other school staff, governors, parents, local authority advisers and inspectors), and research around effective CPD.

This project involved university researchers working with the science coordinator and an early years' practitioner from each of the 24 schools involved in the project. The project consisted of individual action research projects brought together in an overarching framework. Action research challenges traditional academic approaches as it is practice-based rather than more abstract enquiry traditionally undertaken by research professionals. Individual projects featured a range of topics, including the use of stories as starting points for investigative activity and the development of suitable resources for children to access independently. The practitioners worked together with those from other schools in small clusters and with the university staff. Individual developmental work around their own action research projects were then worked up into case studies so that the whole team could, together, systemise learning.

Project funding bought teaching time (10 days per teacher in the first year, eight in the second) which allowed the teacher-researchers space for reflection on action and for the systemisation of this reflection in the form of case studies of practice. This process ensured the move from action project to research project. Four characteristics were used to describe the theoretical approach developed in order to systematise the findings of the action research projects :

• Creating space an important element both in terms of teachers involved and for children having space to explore their curiosity

• Appreciative inquiry – working with positive emerging objectives

• Action research as rhizomatic growth – a non-linear model of action research whereby the temptation to close down by constructing hard [and often inaccurate] conclusions is replaced by a greater fluidity [Deleuze, G. 1987].

• Collaboration – working as communities of practice outcomes and impact

The project has had considerable positive impact, not just on the teaching of those teachers directly involved in the project, but through the sustained legacy of the work in the schools, through dissemination at practitioner and academic conferences, and the development of a continuing professional development unit enabling other early years practitioners to learn from this research and improve their practice. Teachers reported that both children's and staff's thinking was challenged to improve and extend science learning. They also noted an impact on girls' attitudes and attainment in science and technology. The work has also led to valuing open-endedness and the balance between planning and following emergent objectives in lessons.

The sustainability of the work in the school was a key aim for the second phase of the project (Year 2). In some schools the approach was used successfully across other subject areas and year groups. In all the schools involved in the project, the work had impacted on school planning through specific planning in science in the foundation stage or through the school's development plan. The evaluation of the project concluded that the sustainability of the project, at least while current staff were in place, seemed highly likely. The children's interaction with 'real life' experiences was considered to have stimulated their enjoyment and learning in science. One teacher reported, 'We are buzzing at the moment … we are really harnessing the children's natural creativity'. Head teachers agreed with teachers participating in the project that, 'More enthusiastic children enjoying sharing and building on own learning as they move up the schools' was a likely impact of the project in their schools.

The project has also informed two new modules at the University of Winchester: Curiosity and Exploration in Learning for the BA in primary education and Research in the Early Years for the MA in professional enquiry. Several teachers have presented their projects at the annual Science Coordinators Conference.

5.4.5 The University of Exeter [April 2008 – January 2009, £70,000]

A team from the University of Exeter (as part of the Skills and Learning Intelligence Module [SLIM – a module of the South West Regional Observatory]) was commissioned by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) to undertake research in order to gain a greater understanding of the demand and supply of STEM skills in the south west region. This included analysing trends in take-up and attainment from Key Stage 2 onwards as well as the demand for STEM skills by employers in the south west. The research objectives were to develop an understanding of:

• regional trends in STEM subject take-up and achievement from Key Stage 2 through to higher level degrees and first graduate occupations

• key leakages from the education system – whereby young people, either through choice or low levels of achievement, who study or achieve well at a given stage of their education do not go on to study STEM subjects at subsequent stages

• the current demand for STEM skills on the part of employers in the region

• evidence for skills gaps and evidence of unmet demand, particularly as expressed by Sector Skills Councils

• the future needs of employers for STEM skills

• the barriers faced by those in schools, further education and higher education institutions in delivering STEM qualifications

• practical measures that could be taken to improve take-up and achievement in STEM subjects in the future

The research team employed a combination of primary and secondary research. Evidence was collected in four areas: policy context, demand side, supply side and stakeholder views. Data gathering for the policy context involved desk research, including a substantial literature review of existing evidence and policy. To gain a picture of the demand side for STEM skills in the south west region, data from the National Employer Skills Survey was used to provide an insight into skills shortages and skills gaps. Working Futures data was also used to forecast future demand for skills in particular sectors. The demand-side data analysis was complemented by a number of case studies developed from interviews with sector-based, employer-led bodies in the region. The supply-side trends, including where the 'leaks' were in the system, were analysed using data from the National Pupil Database, the Higher Education 28 Universities UK Supporting STEM in schools and colleges in England Statistics Agency and Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Multilevel modelling techniques were employed to assess the predictive value of a range of determinants affecting the attainment of STEM skills. These were then used to forecast future attainment levels (SLIM, 2009a).

The final component involved collecting stakeholder views in order to contextualise the quantitative data found in the previous work. The qualitative data, collected mainly from interviews with stakeholders responsible for delivery of STEM teaching, enabled researchers to validate, clarify and interpret the findings of the data review. Many of the issues discussed in the interviews related to the choices made by students in determining their GCSE, A-level and higher education choices. Interviews took place with Headteachers, Heads of Departments within schools, careers advisers, colleges, higher education institutions, education business links and organisations already delivering STEM support activities, including those in other regions. Consultation was via semi-structured telephone and face-to-face interviews. The research explored factors such as the availability of staff and equipment; teacher, parent and peer attitudes; and access to information, advice and guidance services. However, the focus was on identifying 'what is missing that would help' and the evidence for this. This then enabled the researchers to consider how to cost and ultimately fund appropriate actions in the final phase. The sampling included high- and low-performing schools in order to address the issue of divergences in performance and the factors that might account for them.

Outcomes and impact

The project reports and findings have been endorsed by the South West Regional Employment and Skills Partnership and have fed into the region's planning in this area.

5.4.6 *The HEI and the promotion of Diversity and Equity*

The local HEI can do much to collaborate with Catholic schools to achieve greater diversity. As the University Alliance made clear, the best way to support under-represented groups to apply to university is to encourage deep and sustained partnerships with the schools where these students typically study. To do this requires working closely with schools as well as collaborative outreach with a range of organisations to raise aspirations and attainment. This collaborative approach helps to increase the reach and impact of university activity, allowing institutions to share expertise with relevant organisations and reduce duplication. Universities that are ahead of the game in supporting access into higher education work closely with local stakeholders including schools, local councils, businesses and charities. However, in an increasingly competitive HE sector that continues to experience considerable change, incentives for collaboration are not always there. Incentivising collaboration in the local context, while recognising the added cost associated with widening participation students and targeting resources accordingly, will support universities to ensure their activities achieve maximum impact.[42]

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[42] *Supporting thriving communities: The role of universities in reducing inequality Universities Alliance [2016:8]* https://www.unialliance.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Supporting-thriving-communities-UA_WEB.pdf

6. Empirical Findings

6.1   Research scope

This research involved a small sample size comprising:

10 maintained primary schools
5 secondary schools of which
2 are Academies, part of a Multi Academy -Trust involving a small number of other schools
1 is a Teaching School
[In addition, an interview with the CEO of 1 Catholic Multi-Academy Trust.]

While the sample schools are anonymised, the Roman Catholic Dioceses from which the sample was taken include:

The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
The Diocese of Portsmouth
The Diocese of Southwark

Limitations: the core recipient group did not include Headteachers of schools currently in receipt of support. However, a further interview was conducted with two Secondary Headteachers in receipt of support but not part of this survey.

Descriptions as to quantum will be made with the following conventions:

All	constituting a unanimous response of all schools / sub-set of schools
Most	constituting a string response of 75% of the schools/subset and above
Significant	constituting a response between 25% and 74% of the schools/subset
Not significant	constituting a response on 1%-24% of schools/subset

6.2   Private and Extended Returns

'Private' and 'Extended' returns will be used to identify the positive value of collaboration to the individual school itself [Private] and to what can be termed the common good [Extended][43].

All the school leaders identified their primary responsibility as being to their school, whether in the form of parents and children or, in a formal sense, to their Governing Body. In some cases [slightly less than half] they saw their responsibility as extending to the wider *educational* community. In less than 25% of cases was this *specifically* associated with the Catholic educational community, however this seems to reflect not a lack of commitment to Catholic distinctiveness but, rather, their immersion into the local ecology of general schooling where, for the most part, the school leaders in question appeared to be well integrated and respected.

6.3   Findings

6.3.1   **The significance of 'Executive Leadership'**

An executive head teacher, executive head master, executive head mistress, executive head or executive principal is the substantive or strategic head teacher of more than one school in the United Kingdom.

The position role of an executive head teacher usually comes in one of three forms: The appointed executive head is responsible for the management of more than one school. They remain the head teacher of their current school, but also become the strategic leader of one or more other schools. The executive head has no substantive headship in any school but remains the strategic leader of a chain, federation or collaboration of schools. In the case of the third option, the executive head teacher is above the head teachers appointed to manage each individual school within the consortium.

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[43] The notion of the *common good* is foundational to the Church in England and Wales, not least as it reflects the partnership approach adopted [both willingly and, sometimes, reflecting necessary pragmatism] after the Restoration of the Hierarchy in 1850. In 1996, the Bishops of England and Wales said: 'The Catholic Church now sees itself as working alongside and often in alliance with other bodies, secular and religious, state and voluntary, on behalf of the common good. It brings to this task its own moral and spiritual priorities and vision, and it therefore approaches social problems in distinctive ways. We believe this distinctiveness can be of benefit to the whole community.' The Common Good and the Catholic Church' A statement by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales [1996: 9]
file:///Users/simonuttley/Downloads/THE%20COMMON%20GOOD%20AND%20THE%20CATHOLIC%20CHURCH_1996.pdf
viewed 3.5.18

The role of executive heads was first introduced in 2004 when in 1996 the then Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that a new policy would allow head teachers who had been classed as outstanding to take over the leadership of schools who had been designated by local authorities as failing. The idea put forward was that once the standards in those failing schools had improved, a new head teacher could take over.

There are a number of system leader roles currently in currency:

- **national leaders of education (NLE)** - outstanding headteachers who, together with their national support school, work with schools in challenging circumstances
- **national leaders of governance (NLG)** - highly effective chairs of governors who use their skills and experience to support chairs in other schools and improve the quality of governance
- **specialist leaders of education (SLE)** - experienced middle or senior leaders with a specialism, who work to develop other leaders so that they have the skills to lead their own teams and improve practice in their own schools

Three school leaders were 'Executive Principals'. In each case this reflected their work in supporting another failing, or struggling, school. In one case this was recent [one year] and in two cases, more than one year. In two cases they had been approached by the Local Authority and then [sanctioned by] the Diocese. In one case the first approach had been made by the Diocese.

6.3.2 Private return

All

- Fulfilling to support another school

- Secured an impact in their own school through this experience, measurable in outcomes for children

- Professional development of the Headteacher from supporting school

- Professional development opportunity for staff from supporting school

- All Headteachers reported that designations such as Specialist Leaders of Education were highly attractive to staff. The constraints were in terms of time out of school.

Most

- Financial return for time spent

- Would be interested in undertaking the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership

[or similar][44]

- One Headteacher saw the support as intrinsic to the role of a National Leader of Education

6.3.3 Extended return

Most
• The school partnered is improving, reflected in in-year data and inspection evidence

Significant
• The two schools have worked collegiately so the school partnered did not feel inadequate • Staff development has been a real bonus – on both sides • Parents from both schools seem happy with the arrangements • The Partnership working had been picked up by other schools and seen as good practice, leading to the development pf further, elective partnerships

Notes

Of the schools offering support the median time this had been in place was 3.5 years The median time spent on the partnership by the School Leader [and team] was 2 days per week Two schools are Teaching Schools

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[44] The National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL) for those aspiring to, or already in, a leadership role across more than one school, such as that provided by 'Outstanding Leaders Partnership https://www.outstandingleaders.org/qualifications/npqel/?gclid=CjwKCAjwndvlBRANEiwABrR32D-8GW8yrzs5yXciobLHabB8cwjLVr47Db_gz9KiP2V-DmT89AIoKR0Ct_8QAvD_BwE viewed 3.4.19

Headteacher Comments

'This was a real opportunity to support another school. It is not a Catholic school but our school has a good reputation in the Authority and I was able to make a connection with the Headteacher.'

'I was a t the right stage of my career to try something new. The school was secure and my Governors were supportive.'

'The relationship between the Heads is crucial. It is all about Trust.'

'Schools tend to trust each other more than others.'

6.3.3 **Examples of school-to-school support <u>provided</u> and, where reported, high impact [from many responses to minority responses]**

All
- Mentoring of school leaders, whether as 'hard support' [formalised and reporting to Governors etc] or 'soft support' [less formal] [High Impact]

Most
- Developing teachers via SLE ['Specialist Leaders of Education'] [High Impact]

- Developing teachers [other than by SLE] [High Impact] including: Learning Walks, joint training sessions, colleague-to-colleague observation and coaching, 'Quality Circles' [supportive cross-school groups for, typically, new staff]

Significant
- Providing a teaching and learning audit

- Auditing leadership capacity

- Auditing safeguarding compliance [High Impact]

- Teacher recruitment

- NQT support [High Impact]

- Ofsted preparation

- Middle Leadership development [High Impact]

- NQT + 1 etc support [High Impact]

- Providing 'clusters' for teachers to share good practice and develop resources

- Acting as a 'Hub School' for the development of specialities in specific teaching areas [such as TEEP, Pixl, 'Leading Edge School' etc].

- Provision of network and time out for School Business Managers leading to best value and cost reductions

- Secondment to another school as Head / Deputy [High Impact]

- Sharing Site Staff support [also reduces costs]

- Share Work Experience ideas [secondary sector]

- Share paid specialist sports coaches [lower costs, quality assurance]

- 'Magpie' inset/training: produce 'directory' of good practice that colleagues from other schools can tap into on an 'open door, no cost' basis [High Impact]

- Support colleagues from other schools undertaking the National Professional Qualifications [Subject Leadership, Headship

Not significant but mentioned once

- Review of Governance

- National Leadership of Governance support

- Joint inset days [High Impact]

Notes

- In most cases the support relationship came about as a result of an approach by the Local Authority. In less cases by the Diocese.
- In one case a school about to embark on a supportive relationship approached a Teaching School for advice.
- In two cases the schools concerned approached the Diocese for advice as the remit of the support.

Headteacher Comments

'Inviting other school leaders into your school is quite a personal thing. It is important that the trust is in place.'

'I wouldn't rate the LA [Local Authority] to do school improvement now. Their capacity is so limited.'

'It is really important that Catholic schools support each other.'

'Out Emotional Literacy] support officer received support as part of a cluster of schools facing similar issues.'

'Our HLTA runs full time nurture provision and shares practice with other schools.'

'Our Deputy Head is the County Moderator for writing which gives us a lot back in terms of expertise as well as supporting other schools.'

'Being a Hub School for English helped us deliver the National Strategy' and share good practice. It also about our school on the map.'

'Our Bursar gets to meet other Bursars at their networking meetings.'

6.3.4　**In <u>seeking support</u> from another school, which of the following would be most important in making this decision?**

All
• Perceived qualities of the supporting school Headteacher
• Previous experience of working with the supporting school
• Perceived qualities of the specific member of staff from the supporting school [e.g. an SLE]

Most
• The Ofsted rating of the supporting school
• Evidence of rapid impact

Significant
• Advice from the Diocese
• Advice from the MAT/LA
• Local reputation of the supporting school
• The supporting school being a Catholic school
• Location of the supporting school

Not significant but mentioned once
• The supportive school is a kitemarked school [Leading Edge/Pixl]
• The supporting school's most recent published examination results

Headteacher comments

> 'When I have needed any support, I have known the right person to speak to generally. We tend to know each other in schools, don't we?'
>
> 'Credibility and relationships – that is what makes the difference.'
>
> 'The support has to be the right support – bespoke, not just off the shelf.'

6.3.5 **In seeking to <u>offer</u> support to another school, the most to least important factors for the school offering the support are as follows:**

Most

- The location of the school to receive support

- Costs covered

- Support of the Local Authority/Multi Academy Trust

- Advice from the Local Authority/MAT

- Financial remuneration for the supporter school[over and above costs]

Significant

- The 'capacity to improve' of the receiving school's Headteacher

- The receiving school being a Catholic school

- The opportunity of the Headteacher of the support school to become an Executive Headteacher

- Support of the Diocese

- Advice from the Diocese

Mentioned once
• The supportive school is a kitemarked school [Leading Edge/Pixl]
• The supporting school's most recent published examination results

Headteacher comments:

'You need to go into these things with your eyes open and not let things become open-ended.' 'Heads generally trust other Heads more than officers and individuals they have never met, particularly where they believe the other Head is credible.'

6.3.6 **Which of the following services provided by a University / HEI, and particularly St Mary's, would be of interest and in what way – beginning with the elements about which school leaders were most positive? [Quantum of responses].**

Service	Comment
Most	
• Masters [and similar] level qualifications, including and especially where these pertain to Catholic identity of the school	• Must be affordable; tensions as to 'time out of school' especially for smaller schools. Also, as much flexibility as possible with module selection would be very welcome to ensure fitness for purpose and value for money • Good for staff retention and development.
• Specialist A Level/Level 3 Btec teaching support	• This is welcomed by Secondary Headteachers. Subjects included: Stem, Sport and Modern Foreign Languages

• Specialist teaching other than A Level	• Primary Headteachers welcomed HEI staff wishing to give special one-off or regular classes in subjects to which they were unlikely to be able to easily recruit
• Most Headteachers explicitly aware of the St Mary's 'MA in Catholic School leadership' programme	• Positively disposed to this: half saw this as 'good to do' rather than essential
• Initial teacher education	• Recognition of St Mary's as a Catholic provider and most that it is an 'Outstanding' [Ofsted] provider. Just over half respondents felt the Catholicity of the candidates was very important; the others ranged from 'quite important' to 'not very' – all prioritised the competence of the teacher
• Most schools had a link with an HEI and many valued the proximity and the relationships built up over time	• Cost, contacts and convenience took precedence over the Catholic identity of the HEI when it came to choose. Local historical partnerships combined with the outreach of the local HEI were also important.
	• Relationships are critically important
Many	
• Middle Leadership Development	• Where universities could provide, whether directly or through brokerage of some form,

	'M' Level accreditation or National Professional Qualifications, it was felt they could have a role in Middle Leader development.
• School improvement partner brokered by HEI but coming from school	• Assuming it is affordable – the idea of a brokered service taking from current practitioners, including some [academic] input and giving meaningful accreditation was an 'interesting idea' [see below, 'Recommendations']
• Strengthening the school's Catholic ethos	• A strong awareness of courses such as the St Mary's MA in Catholic School leadership and a general positivity towards it. Issues of affordability and time out an issue.
	• Still not a general awareness that a school could request St Mary's to become a 'Hub School' for the delivery of this kind of programme
	• Many HTs said they would be happy to provide some financial support to 'talented and suitable' staff wishing to pursue an MA [or similar].
	• Running high quality, accredited professional development improved status; local and regional impact; aid recruitment and retention of staff; consistent with 'lifelong learner' philosophy; consistent with Catholic educational idea of 'Education for All' and 'Education for the Whole Person'
Not significant but mentioned by one HT	
• One Headteacher aware of Christian Spirituality Course at St Mary's	• Awareness of programmes available in nearest Catholic HEI still not comprehensive

• One Headteacher aware of St Mary's MA in Leading Innovation and Change	• When this programme was explained to a Headteacher by the researcher the HT responded very positively, contrasting it favourably with the MA in Catholic School leadership which would, in the HT's opinion, 'leave out' areas needed for moving into senior leadership

No demand

• Recruitment and interview support	• Not needed
• Senior Leadership Development	• Cluster or area-wide [including Diocese] initiatives combined with mentoring by serving school leaders seen as most efficacious.
• School improvement partner from HEI	• Prefer serving practitioners, though happy to work with HEI staff on the basis of action research / critical friend
• Provision of 'MOT' style check-up of school	• No. This can be done by existing School Improvement Partners [or similar], or at a school to school level. Alternatively, [already

[from HEI]	known and respected] consultancy can be sourced for this purpose.
• Support with curriculum	• Headteachers pick up ideas from a range of fora, including local Headteacher meetings, quality improvement groups[45], research.
• Support in optimising administration/organisational processes	
• Support with financial management	
• Strengthening teaching by HEI staff direct intervention in school in a quality assurance role	
• Support with Academisation	• This now seems 'old news' and the landscape is unclear given ambivalence towards academisation and limited returns therefrom

6.3.7   The broader landscape of HEI involvement in schools

Higher Education Institutions are required to engage ever more robustly in the community, including in schools.

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[45] Quality improvement groups referenced by school leaders in this research included the following: *The Pixl Club* https://www.pixl.org.uk/, the Teacher Effectiveness Programme [TEEP] https://www.teep.org.uk/ and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust [SSAT] *Leading Edge* group https://www.ssatuk.co.uk/ssat-membership/leading-edge/

In 2018, the Director for Fair Access strengthened guidance on Access Agreements, by asking the sector to increase the pace and scope of its work with schools to raise attainment for those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups. This message is reiterated in the guidance, published by the Office for Students in February, on preparing 2019-20 Access and Participation Plans[46]. It asks providers to develop strong links with schools, colleges and communities where rates of progression to higher education are low or where there are significant proportions of students from underrepresented groups. The Government endorses this guidance and expects more universities to come forward to be involved in school sponsorship and establishing free schools, although support need not be limited to those means. What is important is that institutions can clearly demonstrate the impact their support is having on schools and pupils.

Universities may choose to engage with academies and trust schools as lead sponsors, co-sponsors or partners, and in other less formal ways. Both types of sponsorship give the university a chance to shape teaching, learning, curriculum and organisation. It may help with student recruitment, give access to new funding sources and offer teaching opportunities within the university. Institutions not wishing to make this commitment or incur the liabilities of sponsorship of academies can choose to be education partners.[47]

Universities may also decide to make links with trust schools. Because such schools are constituted differently from academies, the role of universities will be slightly different. They may partner a single school or play a partner role in a consortium of schools forming a trust. The link may be less formal, perhaps involving a member of the university acting as a school governor, with the university and school(s) having a memorandum of understanding about the respective institutions' relationship and shared aspirations.

This commitment has been demonstrated by an increase in spending by universities on their activity to support attainment and aspiration. Expenditure has increased to £196.9 million (under 2018-19 access agreements)[48] A number of universities are working with the Department for Education to develop plans to enhance existing partnerships, or establish new ones, across a range of activity including MAT sponsorship, secondment of university staff to underperforming schools, tailored support on specific subjects such as maths, membership of governing boards, and working with local providers to source school improvement expertise, teacher recruitment and retention.

However, universities have more to offer. As Constable [2018] notes, academics are good at thinking, re-thinking and re-imagining – this is the foundation of their professionalism. How would it be then to take as a professional challenge re-thinking what universities have available to offer? University departments of education have many things in common with schools, but they also have distinctive resources that schools do not have. These include:

- - Extensive International links within and beyond education departments in universities
- - Easy access to experts within education departments
- - Memberships of national committees

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[46] 1 https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1038/ofs2018_06.pdf 2 viewed 4.12.18

[47] *Academies and Trust schools: where do universities fit in?* [2009] https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2009/guidelines-academies-trust-schools.pdf

[48] 3 https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/OFFA-Access-agreements-201819-key-statistics-andanalysis.pdf viewed 3.1.19

- - Distinctive national networks
- - Internal links with other departments
- - Expertise in research
- - Links with research councils, or at least knowledge of research councils' priorities and programmes
- - Experts outside the university

Schools may not want or need any of these on an immediate basis but each of these is intellectual capital and part of the educational landscape in which schools are placed. [49]

The implications for an HEI such as St Mary's seem clear. Whereas attempts to replicate what is already happening within the sector, delivered by school-based professionals 'at the coal face' appear less attractive to school leaders, there is, nevertheless, an appetite to work with a Catholic HEI, though possibly a lack of awareness on both sides as to what would be genuinely useful and add value. Therefore there appears to be an immediate need to secure medium-term [3 years plus] relationships with a number of schools so as to

- better understand the sector through the eyes of practitioners
- gain and maintain presence and develop Brand St Mary's
- develop products which are better able to meet the needs of school leaders in a cash-poor, aspiration-rich and integrity-rich environment

7 Recommendations for St Mary's University

7.1 **More assertive marketing of MA and Diploma courses**

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[49] Constable, H. [2018] 'Universities, supporting schools and practitioner research' *Research in Education* Volume: 101 issue: 1, page(s): 39-62 Article first published online: March 29, 2018; Issue published: August 1, 2018
https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523718763637 viewed 2.3.19

While all schools were well-aware of, and positively disposed towards, St Mary's as a Catholic HEI, some were not aware of the recent reaccreditation as 'Outstanding' in terms of initial teacher education. Knowledge of MA and other programmes was good for some Headteachers but patchy for most, reflecting a need for further, targeted marketing.

7.2 Greater flexibility in modules offered

An emerging theme was flexibility in terms of externally provided professional development. Clearly, had the survey been centred around St Mary's / West London the issue of geography may have been less problematic. However, geography and cost [time out of school, travel] is an issue, particularly for primary school leaders. The implication is a need for targeted, relevant programmes which can be delivered in a blended form, both online and with some one-to-one time – especially where this can be out-of-hours or at the weekend. There is patchy knowledge in the schools' sector as to just how much can now be delivered online and this knowledge deficit should be addressed.

The provision of 'Practitioner Bursaries' on a competitive basis. This would involve school practitioners applying for a competitive cash award which they could spend on professional development at St Mary's. The advantage would be to increase market penetration for relatively little cost.

7.3 Leverage the alumni community

Catholic schools are often cash poor but aspiration and integrity rich. But this does not exclude the many other schools that are seeking best value and quality. This survey demonstrates clearly that personal relationships are everything when it comes to schools engaging with providers. While St Mary's currently keeps in contact with alumni, the extent to which their presence in the schools to which they ultimately work could be further leveraged. One way would be to offer a discounted programme at St Mary's for staff [NQTs, Lead Mentor] at a*ny* schools in which a recently-qualified Simmarian is now working.

This would have the effect of increasing exposure of St Mary's to schools, illustrating the 'St Mary's dividend', and indirectly leveraging the experience of the newly-in-post St Mary's teacher.

7.4 Redouble publicising of 'Hub School' model of delivering MA [and similar] programmes with a 'Research Partnership Designation' to the 'Hub School'

Most Headteachers were aware of the possibility of running St Mary's programmes from a 'Hub School' and some were, or had been, such a hub. However, many did not connect this with raising the profile of their school, retention and recruitment – though some did after this was drawn out. This model, though limited in scope, is attractive once the **return for the host** school is spelt out more clearly.

7.5 **Towards a new, medium term wraparound approach whereby St Mary's increase market penetration, supports school-to-school scholarship and is able to showcase professional development products via local, designated schools.**

Premise:

All schools wanted to collaborate. All wanted a return, to their own school and, in some cases, to the Heads themselves in terms of career development. All wanted their schools to gain an ever-greater profile in their communities.

Hints and suggestions from existing practice:

Models of participation are proving to be empirically efficacious. Two examples are the *Lead and Emerging Practitioner School Pathfinder Project* in Wales and the *Gaining Ground* project. In England. The other is the Research School model which, while very attractive, is very limited in availability.

A] Welsh Model

In Wales, the Welsh government has been trialling a collaboration initiative called the *Lead and Emerging Practitioner School Pathfinder Project.* The project aims to raise the standards of educational practice and attainment within primary and secondary schools in Wales by facilitating school-to-school support. During the Pathfinder, a "Lead Practitioner School" works with an 'Emerging Practitioner School' to share, disseminate and implement good practice approaches to teaching and learning on a systematic basis for 18 months. The evaluation of the project found a range of collaborative practice is undertaken and could be grouped into three broad categories:

- teaching and learning,
- leadership, and
- using data and assessment.

Most schools engaged in activities which covered all three categories, with a main focus on teaching and learning. There was evidence that whole-school systems and processes had been refined and strengthened as a result of collaboration. Staff described how the work in which they had been involved had promoted greater harmonisation across the different phases/year groups or departments. These 'structural and procedural changes' included activities in areas such as teaching and learning, assessment, pupil tracking, school management and professional reflection. However, many interviewees also articulated the belief that effective and lasting change required attitudinal and cultural change, and that this needed to occur alongside the structural and procedural changes described above. Moreover, while many interviewees were confident that the structural and procedural changes were becoming embedded in practice, there appeared to be more uncertainty as

to the extent to which sufficient numbers of staff in Emerging Practitioner Schools had undergone the attitudinal and cultural changes required for their schools to make sustained improvement. [50]

B] 'Gaining Ground'[51]

The strategy was launched with a budget of £40 million and ran for two years (September 2009 to July 2011). It supported school improvement in secondary schools that had reasonable-to-good GCSE examination results but had poor progression rates in English and mathematics. The strategy comprised four main strands focusing on: school-to-school partnership working; additional support from School Improvement Partners (SIPs); additional training in Assessment for Learning (AfL); and study support.

Gaining Ground made a valuable contribution to enhancing participating schools' strategies, plans and interventions for improving pupil attainment and progression. This strategy provided significant stimulus and resources which mobilised schools to accelerate changes, to strengthen leadership and improve classroom practice, study support and pupils' progress. Gaining Ground enabled schools to take stock of their strengths and limitations and further develop their infrastructure to lead, manage, and coordinate improvements related to the performance of staff and pupils. Improvements came from helping to make schools more outward-looking and learn from the effective practice they observed in partner schools. There were indications that the improvements made were becoming embedded in participating schools.

C] Research Schools

This designation has already been offered to some 23 schools nationally. The Research Schools Network[52] is a collaboration between the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) to create a network of schools that will support the use of evidence to improve teaching practice. Research Schools act as regional hubs for the Research Schools Network. Through the network, they share what they know about putting research into practice, and support schools to make better use of evidence to inform their teaching and learning so that they really make a difference in the classroom.

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[50] Welsh Government *Evaluation of Tranche 2 of the Lead and Emerging Practitioner School Pathfinder Project* 2016:6 https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/25900/1/160310-lead-emerging-practitioner-schools-pathfinder-project-evaluation-tranche-2-en.pdf

[51] DfE *Evaluation of the Gaining Ground Strategy* *https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184088/DFE-RR216.pdf* viewed 4.6.17

[52] https://researchschool.org.uk/about viewed 2.2.19

7.6 The 'St Mary's Research Schools' proposal

This report has clearly recognised the following:

- Catholic schools are keen to collaborate and respond to incentives, including the designation of partnership with an HEI
- Catholic schools are cash poor, aspiration and integrity heavy
- Catholic school leaders are very enthusiastic about research driving practice and keen that their schools should generate new practice
- With staffing shortages and recruitment difficulties, providing a research environment would aid recruitment and retention at relatively low cost
- Catholic school leaders place a high degree of confidence in trusted colleagues with relevant school-based experience. The HEI needs to not try and replicate this but, rather, harness it and add value through its research and academic practice
- Such a designation, if supported in principle [and, possibly, replicated with other regional Catholic HEIs] at the Diocesan / CES level, could provide real penetration for St Mary's and also add real value to the schools' sector

Proposed sketch of a wraparound model of collaboration between St Mary's and schools:

Academic integrity

i. The 'St Mary's Research Designation' would be a high-status kite mark reflecting a designated school's commitment to being 'Authentic communities of learning, reaching out to others'. While, of course, this would need to be available to all schools,[53] the model would need to provide specific space to celebrate Catholic distinctiveness so as to make this approach particularly attractive to Catholic schools [and Dioceses]. The schools would make a commitment to research, as well as to outreach, the latter being deliverable through local [Catholic] schools' networks and partnerships.

ii. The designation would reflect, influence and affirm a [Catholic] *way of working* and would not, therefore, cost St Mary's substantially. However, it may be deemed possible to divert some funds associated with outreach to the schools *based on the impactful partnerships they subsequently secure.*

iii. There would be real value in undertaking such a programme in concert with Diocesan Directors of Education [and, indeed, Bishops/Religious Superiors] to secure maximum buy-in.

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[53] Unless the CES/Dioceses wished to run this in collaboration with St Mary's as a specifically 'Catholic' pilot, whereby the need to open it up to all schools would not apply.

iv. St Mary's identifies a lead in-house academic, admin support and brokered support [taken from current school professionals] to support the programme on an invoiced payment basis. This will have the advantage of providing up-to-date, credible experience which school leaders patently respect. The work could be quality assured by the lead academic, but supported by, for instance, a current St Mary's post-Doc or EdD candidate who is able to study the programme as a basis for research, thus having the effect of both providing an academically robust metanarrative as well as assessing impact longitudinally [3 years].

Process of designation

v. 'School A', a Good or Outstanding school[54], applies to become a St Mary's Designated 'Research School' by February of the academic year. They are required to make a formal application which could be signed off by St Mary's staff but scrutinised by brokered staff. The questionnaire and subsequent visit establishes the school's existing capacity, current levels of outreach and commitment to a three-year programme [by April].

vi. the school's planning includes costings for action research and partnership working over three years. The one stipulation is for the school to secure one discounted St Mary's-led CPD programme either per year or for Year 1 only. This is the primary source to cover staffing and marketing.

vii. Schools can map on their current SLE, NLE, NPQ and similar accreditations as evidence of suitability, therefore avoiding repetition.

viii. St Mary's staff [own and brokered] staff decide on suitability of applications and decisions made [April/May].

ix. Designation awarded with permission to use appropriate logo for, for example, three years.

x. *If unsuccessful, signposting for a future submission not less than one year later.*

xi. If successful, Designated Schools invited to ceremony at St Mary's, October

7.7 Leveraging 'St Mary's Law'

Most Headteachers were unaware of St Mary's Law. Law, for Secondary schools and for Primary [such as Year 6 activities] carries significant weight given its attraction to young people. It also adds significant prestige to St Mary's which, while being known for its care and Catholic identity, is also seen as a 'recruiter university'. The Law programme should be marketed to schools more effectively, including the possibility

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[54] Or equivalent from the Independent Sector

of a 'Law for schools' programme bringing schools into St Mary's for Mock Trials. This will a] increase St Mary's profile in general b] challenge preconceptions.

7.8 Pupil Premium and serving the more disadvantaged

This is a priority for school leaders. The HEI could perform a role in providing aspirational university-based experiences to which a group of schools could send, specifically, Pupil Premium students. This would address both the need to improve the awareness in hard to reach families of university as a viable destination, as well as assisting schools in providing a meaningful, high-impact, low complexity solution.

7.9 The St Mary's Teacher Scholarship

Based on the Farmington Scholarship[55], the provision of a month-long [or similar] funded [costs only] scholarship at St Mary's for teacher practitioners to undertake action research under the supervision of a designated St Mary's academic.

8 Concluding Remarks

The Government's consultation paper (2016) *Schools that work for everyone*, highlighted the importance of 'leveraging the expertise of high performing institutions to… turn around existing schools' (DfE, 2016).

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[55] Farmington Scholarship, http://www.farmington.ac.uk/index.php/farmington-scholarships/

"Our aim should be to create a school system which is more effectively self-improving ... it is also important that we design the system in a way which allows the most effective practice to spread more quickly and the best schools and leaders to take greater responsibility and extend their reach."[56]

All partnership working takes time and administration, particularly to develop the clarity of roles and responsibilities required. Partnerships and cooperation require trust, a constant theme in the responses of all Headteachers. The impact of partnerships and cooperation on pupils' learning and well-being, on teachers' professional development, and on school improvement is difficult to track, particularly in a system where schools have, traditionally, been judged individually. The biggest problem for school partnership & cooperation is the drive for schools to compete, often – but not always – even when the neighbouring school leaders do not, themselves share this hyper-competitive, *winner takes all* mindset. At the same time, the school leaders interviewed were able to point to clear value added by such partnerships, which stood up to external scrutiny.

A very 'English' approach is to hold schools accountable for the education of young people across a local area, not just those in their own schools. This would require new thinking about accountability, and the role of the local authority or local governing boards in managing high quality education for all pupils. League tables, where schools can improve their positions only if other schools move down, do not support a vision of all schools being excellent.

A more Catholic approach would be to *incentivise* collaboration such that it is highly prized in inspections *but also* it has intrinsic value in the life of the school. The suggested 'St Mary's Research School' model [above], may contain elements of a way forward, drawing in the HEI with the school not for one-off or *ad hoc* events, typically benefitting a few, but as part of a wraparound relationship including training, critical friendship, access to cutting edge research and the strengthening of the school as a place of lifelong learning.

This research has seen a range of school-t—school partnership working in operation. These include:
- school-to-school within a geographical area or across different areas;
- school to school across different phases (e.g. between secondary schools and their local 'feeder' primaries).
- Models involving an 'Executive Principal', presenting opportunities but also challenges, where the role becomes demanding in terms of time.

Other partnerships not examined include:

- schools worldwide through collaborative partnerships;
- local behaviour partnerships [though this was alluded to in terms of schools attempting to keep children in school while having a responsibility to maintain behaviour.
- independent schools and maintained schools through requirements around charitable status.

We have seen that partnership working can operate at different 'levels' of staff, subject leaders/co-ordinators, Bursars, Site Managers. In each of these spaces, colleagues identify potential for cooperation to include:

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[56] Department for Education, *The Importance of Teaching: the Schools White Paper 2010*, Cm 7980, November 2010, para 7.4 viewed 5.8.18

- sharing resources including expertise;
- offering peer-to-peer challenge and support
- overcoming short-termism (where one's professional competence can be reduced to annual public examination results)
- overcoming 'them and us' misconceptions of local schools

Clearly, there are costs:

- administration of partnerships
- 'shoe leather' costs in initiating partnerships
- Monitoring and evaluation
- 'selling' the value to some stakeholders [such as Governors] where the current system still does not properly incentivise partnership working and where school leaders are clear that the 'answer' is not a coercively 'forced' partnership [MAT or otherwise]

However, as we have seen, with the costs come the benefits. The best incentive to develop meaningful partnerships remains the positive impact on pupils' learning and on teachers' professional development. From the point of view of Catholic distinctiveness, Catholic school leaders generally do recognise their responsibility to the broader ecclesial community *and* to the towns and areas in which they work. There is no shortage of generosity.

While the Catholic HEI occupies a particular, favourable, place in the thinking on Catholic school leaders, often supported by their buy-in to St Mary's teacher training – which they recognise as being very good – there remain areas in need of further clarity:

- More information as to suitable programmes, at M, Dip or Professional level, particularly coupled with greater flexibility as to which modules are taken.
- In the context of tight finances, release from school and travel are particular areas of expense. Catholic school leaders would welcome further information as to online programmes of study – especially where their efficacy is supported by the testimonials of other school leaders.
- The HEI brokering support from school-based practitioners (SLEs etc) *as well as* HEI based academics as part of a branded, blended and medium-term relationship could allow St Mary's to make an offer which is both distinctive in its Catholic character, as well as in the value it can add.

Professor Simon Uttley
April 2019

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